

# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, November 12, 1959.

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

## QUESTIONS.

### EMBARGO ON EXPORT OF WHEAT.

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—It had been my intention to move a motion for the adjournment of the Council for the purpose of discussing a very important question, namely, the export of wheat, but I shall content myself by asking a question and stating my reasons for doing so. On September 15 I asked the Chief Secretary if the Government would approach the Australian Wheat Board with a request that an embargo be placed on the export of wheat from South Australia. The Chief Secretary replied that Cabinet was considering the matter. Since then this matter has been referred to in another place and in the Commonwealth Parliament. I have brought this matter up on three occasions but cannot get the replies that other people can get. The position has deteriorated considerably since I first introduced the matter and I ask the Government to protect the people of South Australia by urging an embargo on the export of wheat from this State. The responsible Minister in Canberra said yesterday that they would investigate the position, but I want to know why the Government has not done something, because I can foresee an increase in the price of flour and bread if it does not take some action, for it means we shall have to import wheat from other States.

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—The honourable member did not tell us what information was given in another place that has not been given to him. However, I assure him that the matter has been under consideration, and the Premier will make a special visit to Canberra early next week when the question will be dealt with.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Is it a fact that the secretary of the Australian Wheat Board is in Adelaide today conferring with the Premier and the Prices Commissioner regarding the importation of wheat from other States and prices to be charged in future for bread, flour and other commodities?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—I have not that information. I do not always know

what is going on with other Ministers. I have enough administrative responsibilities of my own and I am not always informed of who is conferring with the Premier.

## SERVICE CHARGE FOR MEDICAL PRESCRIPTIONS.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—I ask leave to make a statement prior to asking a question.

Leave granted.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—A Bill is now before the Commonwealth Parliament entitled The Medical Benefits Bill which, I understand, has been agreed to in the House of Representatives and which provides for a charge of 5s. by pharmacists for all prescriptions under the free medicine scheme. I understand that it applies also to both out-patients and in-patients of public hospitals. Will the Minister of Health make representations to the responsible Commonwealth authorities with a view to some mediation being brought to bear in connection with this imposition before the Bill is passed?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—I can only say that the matter has not been brought before me regarding its effect on anything to do with the operation of our hospitals. However, I will examine the question and see what effect it would have.

## HALLETT COVE TO PORT STANVAC RAILWAY BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

## PASTORAL ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

## HIDE, SKIN, AND WOOL DEALERS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

## LAND AGENTS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

## APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2).

Read a third time and passed.

## WRONGS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

## STOCK DISEASES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

# LOTTERY AND GAMING (CHARITABLE PURPOSES) BILL.

Second reading.

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN (Chief Secretary)—I move—

*That this Bill be now read a second time.*

The Bill provides for a totalizator licence for an additional day in 1960, as there will be 53 Saturdays in that year. Section 19 of the Lottery and Gaming Act, 1936-1956, sets out the maximum number (per annum) of ordinary and charitable race-meetings at which each club holding a licence for the purpose is entitled to use the totalizator. When all the racing fixtures have been allotted for the year 1960 in accordance with that Act, there will be one Saturday remaining unallotted and the Government proposes in this Bill to provide for the issue of a totalizator licence to enable a charity race-meeting to be held on that day. Subsection (4) of section 15 of the Act also provides that not more than one licence shall be granted to any one club in respect of any one year.

Clause 3 accordingly provides by subclause (1) that notwithstanding those provisions of the principal Act, a totalizator licence for one race-meeting to be held in the year 1960 may be issued to such racing club as the Chief Secretary approves. Subclause (2) provides that the licence is additional to those issuable under the principal Act; is to be issued for the purpose of holding such charity race-meeting for the benefit of such institution or institutions as the Governor may determine; and shall be issued subject to the condition that the net proceeds of the meeting are to be paid to that institution or distributed among those institutions in accordance with the directions of the Governor, and to such other conditions as the Chief Secretary approves. Subclause (3) provides that the club shall comply with every term and condition subject to which the licence is issued.

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

## UNDERGROUND WATERS PRESERVATION BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 5. Page 1439.)

The Hon. A. C. HOOKINGS (Southern)—This Bill is one of grave concern not only to honourable members, but to the people of South Australia generally. I would not support it in its present form. There are some localities where fresh water basins are proving

a great boon, and it is essential to ensure their freedom from contamination. It has been explained to me how basins of fresh water in this State are likely to be contaminated from salt waters in adjacent basins. Later I shall refer to a geological survey conducted by the Mines Department near Adelaide, concerning which a pamphlet was published. It shows how seepage is likely to take place and thereby contaminate fresh water basins. The main object of the Bill is to protect our fresh underground waters from contamination, rather than ensure the actual volume of supply. I suggest that we concentrate our thoughts in this direction. No-one can deny the importance of good water to this State, nor its importance to Australia generally. I am sure that all members will agree that the growth of population and secondary and primary production is demanding more and more water from our underground sources. If we can learn lessons from other countries, it is all to the good. In parts of the United States of America contamination of underground waters has taken place, particularly in the State of New York, where some years ago salt water contaminated the fresh water basin, from which supplies were drawn for New York itself. It was four years after restrictions had been placed on its use before the water could be restored to the condition prevailing previously. Therefore, I think it is our duty in this State not to wait until it is too late, but to pass legislation that will prevent anything of that nature happening.

It appears to me that the Bill is too far-reaching, too embracing and rather frightening to many country people. South Australia is a big State with many varying conditions. The average rainfall varies considerably and we have varying basins of fresh water. In some places water is easy to get, whereas in others it is most difficult. It is almost impossible to provide for the legislation to apply generally. Therefore, I suggest that the Bill should be amended to provide for one area alone to be defined. Then I am sure we should get the support of honourable members. That area, as mentioned by other members, would have to be fixed by regulation. This is essential. The area of the Adelaide plains is one which should be very carefully considered, and I believe that legislation to cover that area should be introduced by the Government to see how it would work. Then legislation could be considered for other areas as it became necessary. Members have referred to the Murray Basin and to the South-East, but I would prefer legislation at this stage to

be confined to the area adjacent to the City of Adelaide where so many people are dependent on water from the River Murray and from underground sources. It is most essential that no contamination should take place in that area.

Let us see what effect this Bill has on the areas around Angle Vale and Salisbury. We have been told how land has been cut up for the establishment of market gardens and where previously one bore existed 50 are now operating. What happens when water is not controlled in an area like that? Fears have been expressed of the possible contamination of water supplies in the South-East, but there contamination would be caused by a different reason. Salt water contamination is not, in the Lower South-East, looked on as a source of contamination, but more harm may result from contamination by sewerage effluent. Other parts of the South-East do have salt water areas and there are some places in the Keith area particularly where salt water could be deleterious. I do not know whether all honourable members realize that the City of Mount Gambier has no sewerage. In that town all sewerage is discharged into holes or bores in the back yards of homes, business premises and hotels in the main street. That is something which has been going on for many years, and it is something which the Central Board of Health has been and is worried about. As far as can be ascertained at the present time, there is no danger to public health from the discharge of this effluent. As Mount Gambier is certain to get a sewerage system in the next year or two I do not think it is necessary to bring in any form of control over underground water in that area, but I believe there are areas a little to the north around smaller towns where sewerage disposal is taking place at much shallower depths and where water is available much closer to the surface. No trouble has occurred there and there is no likelihood of that water becoming contaminated to any great degree.

When speaking on another matter recently I mentioned the unique nature of the South-East which, though it has no surface rivers, enjoys a vast storage of underground water. In my opinion any contamination which did occur in that area would be of a minor nature only. If we look at clause 21 of the Bill we find that the Minister has power to appoint an advisory committee, and I hope there will be some local representation on it. That was probably the idea behind the clause and I am

sure all country members in this Chamber realize the great advantage of local knowledge and local representation on any board or committee of this type.

I think the Bill as presented is of a far-reaching nature and it presents a great amount of difficulty in its implementation. If legislation could be drawn up to cover a certain clearly defined area I think we should support it because it would help to preserve that most wonderful asset—underground water.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY (Central No. 2)—A number of members have spoken on this Bill and the speeches have been varied in their nature—much more so than on the average Bill. The opinions expressed, in the main, have been opinions based on the knowledge possessed by the speaker and, from the differences of opinion, I think it is shown clearly that some form of control over our underground waters is desirable. South Australia is not over-supplied with surface water. It does not rain here as much as we would like, but there is a source of water underground which comes in some places from close at hand and in other places from hundreds of miles away. In some places it is derived from local soak-ages. The fact remains that underground waters have been a very big factor in the development of the State. I am quite sure that large areas of our back country would not have been developed at all if it had not been for underground water supplies. Consequently, underground water should be and has been a matter of considerable importance to the State and we now have before us this Bill which seeks to control those waters.

The Bill centres around two words, “contamination” and “deterioration.” Those two words are as negative as they could possibly be and I would much prefer a Bill drawn for the development and control of our underground waters. I prefer a positive approach using the actual resources we have and using them to their fullest extent. The Bill, while using the terms “contamination” and “deterioration,” seeks to control underground water, but those words are not entirely self-explanatory. I can understand “contamination,” but “deterioration” is a word that can be applied in many ways and used on many different issues. On first considering this matter I wondered why it was under the control of the Mines Department, which provides a geological service for the State. I thought that our Engineering and Water Supply Department should have been the controlling authority over

underground waters. On looking a little further we find that artesian waters are controlled by the Lands Department under the Pastoral Act. That arrangement is working satisfactorily, but if this Bill is passed our water supplies will be controlled by the Engineering and Water Supply Department, the Mines Department and the Lands Department. Since those thoughts first came to mind I have seen the publication *Underground Water Handbook* which has a foreword by the Minister of Mines and is edited, I understand, by the Director of Mines and presumably prepared by his department. It provides a very good general approach to our assets in underground waters. It states in simple language what our supplies are, where they are mainly located, and provides a guide for users or searchers for water. Everybody must be impressed with the work of the Mines Department and the possibilities that the booklet reveals for the development of underground waters. I will quote one short paragraph on page 8 as follows:—

Closely akin to the disposal of surplus waters is the operation of artificially recharging underground water reservoirs. That operation is widely practised overseas, and the time may not be far distant when serious consideration must be given to it in South Australia. I cannot quite understand the contents of that book and its relationship to this Bill, coming as they do from the same department.

The Hon. C. R. Story—That is covered further on in the book.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—That may be so, but I am talking of the general tenor of the book and of the Bill and I cannot understand a book of that nature and a Bill of this nature issuing from the same department. I think that they should have another shot at it.

I know that a somewhat similar Bill was introduced at an earlier stage in another place which did not meet with everyone's approval, and this book may be an attempt by the department, following that, to inform the public more of its activities and the possibilities of using underground water. It seems to me, however, that the Bill does not fit the book.

The Mines Department drilled over 500,000 feet for all purposes from 1945 to 1958, two-thirds of it for private individuals. The volume of water obtained for all purposes was 100,000,000 gallons, which equals the consumption in the metropolitan area on an average summer's day. No statistics are available of work done by outside authorities or private contractors, of whom there are about 20 or 30 fully employed in boring for water throughout the State. It

will thus be seen that this is an important industry which supplies an important service for people, particularly those in the outback.

I find that my ideas run closely parallel to those expressed by other speakers, particularly Mr. Hookings. I believe that this Bill, in the first place, seeing that it is a type of legislation new to South Australia and, except in Queensland and the outback of New South Wales, new to pretty well the whole of Australia, should have been tried out in the metropolitan area and in the Gawler River district just north of Adelaide where the extent and nature of the underground water basin are fairly well known. However, I do not think their capacity is fully known and I think that it is necessary to ascertain it if at all possible, for we must concede that knowledge of the capacity of our underground reservoirs is difficult to obtain, and any opinion regarding it must be accepted with considerable reservations. The Adelaide Plains area is very large and contains a great deal of water. I believe it is the proposal of the Government this year to pump 1,000,000,000 gallons to supplement the metropolitan supply and that this volume may grow to 2,000,000,000. Consequently, this supply is well worth preserving and well worth using, though at present we use it only under drought conditions and it is not the most desirable water for household purposes.

Just north of Adelaide in quite recent times considerable areas have been subdivided into 10-acre blocks which are being developed by market gardeners. I passed through the district recently and observed many elevated tanks and water being pumped for irrigation purposes. For that use it is quite satisfactory and I think it is of advantage to everybody to be able to use it, but what we must guard against is over-consumption. The supply is not unlimited and an inquiry should be instituted to ascertain, if at all possible, what is available. The future development of this area for market gardening must be of advantage to the people of the metropolitan area. I understand that supplies in and around Adelaide can be replenished; there is a stratum through which the water can be drained into the Adelaide Plains basin. I remember some years ago that either you, Sir, or I introduced a company from Melbourne that offered to supply Adelaide with underground water. The proposal was that large shafts should be driven in at various places in the Adelaide plains, with drives off them, the water to be directed back into the shafts and then pumped into the reticulation system.

The Hon. E. H. Edmonds—From what source would the supply come?

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—I understand that in the Adelaide Hills there are permeable strata which replenish underground supplies on the plains, and that the water levels fluctuate according to the season. This company intimated to me that the method it proposed to use had been adopted in America for supplying towns. The use of underground waters must be regarded with some concern, and everything possible done to ascertain the actual contents of the basins. If we could conserve these underground supplies by natural gravitation, they could be tapped as desired. The volume of water proposed to be pumped by the Government this year from bores is 2,000,000,000 gallons. I understand that the final discharge of underground waters on the plains is into St. Vincent Gulf. I believe that there is a regular slow drift of water in that direction all the time.

The Hon. C. R. Story—There must be some control over contamination.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—I strongly favour the prevention of contamination, but I do not regard a negative approach as the only one.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—What you have mentioned, would that interfere with private rights?

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—It is not known whether the owner of land has the right to water under his property. That does not apply to mineral or oil rights. I do not think that Parliament would agree that such rights could be held by the surface owner, because the water must gravitate, and it does not necessarily follow that it belongs only to one area. It would flow through various areas, and the rights must be so regarded.

The Hon. F. J. Potter—Do you know whether the construction of the South Para reservoir has prevented the gravitation of water in that area?

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—I understand that an inch of rain falling on a square mile produces about 14,000,000 gallons. Much water on its way to the sea is not used, and the more we can prevent underground water running to waste the better. I am opposed to the Bill as it now stands. A large number of amendments have been placed on the file and they will have to be good before I am prepared to vote for the third reading. I think that the approach to the Bill has been too niggardly and that the Draftsman was not in

the right frame of mind to draft it. He has made it restrictive and used words that cannot be regarded as having the meaning generally accepted. The Government should be able to produce a Bill that would be more equitable to the users of water and those who would have to fill in the forms provided for in it. I do not want a paper war. There should be something positive and not so much a matter of filling in forms to be tabulated in the Mines Department or in another Government office. I therefore hope that as a result of the discussion on the measure we shall be able to get a positive approach to the subject, and a Bill in a much better form.

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN (Minister of Mines)—I have listened with considerable interest to the discussion that has taken place on this Bill and I express appreciation of the opinions given by honourable members. This discussion has produced absolute unanimity on one thing, and that is the absolute importance of a water supply in what can be termed a dry country. We have one river, which we cannot call our own, and we are continually making further use of it, but on just how much further we can go beyond what is already planned I shall not venture an opinion, though I am not a big enough pessimist to agree with the opinions that have been expressed that by 1961 the River Murray will be dry. Those opinions perhaps could be given as much credence as some of the remarks made during this debate.

I assure honourable members that there is no sinister move in this legislation, which has been before Parliament before. It was before another place and the objections raised there have caused certain original provisions to be omitted from this Bill, but new reasons for this legislation have now been given. Some members have said, "Do it in a district other than ours. It is all right for someone else but not for us." I think this problem is so serious that we have to take full responsibility in Parliament for the benefit of the whole of the State and not for only portion of it. I regret any suggestion that the Mines Department is one which is looking for some way in which to interfere with the use of water in this State or that it wants to have some stranglehold on people.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—The Opposition has never suggested that.

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—I am not blaming anyone. I have taken serious note of everything that has been suggested and I do not think even the Parliamentary Draftsman

would suggest that his first effort on this problem is word perfect. I shall indicate my opinion on that by moving a number of amendments to show the sincerity behind the legislation, which has nothing behind it but the prevention of contamination and deterioration. That is not so decadent as has been suggested. Authorities on this subject may be obtained from the Parliamentary Library and there is an authority for the words used in the drafting of the legislation. That need not come from me.

The Mines Department, as indicated by the Hon. Sir Frank Perry, has done much to obtain water supplies and its whole job is to prove supplies and to bring whatever water supplies are available into use. That is demonstrated by the figure given by the Hon. Sir Frank Perry that a hundred million gallons was used each day. What is the source of supply? I hope it does not all run to the sea and I hope we catch all we can. The Mines Department officers have some knowledge of geology and can estimate where the catchment areas of the supplies are. Everybody knows the water from the Adelaide Plains has been used on many occasions to supplement the supply of water from the reservoirs. I would have thought that members were also aware of the result of that. A remark was made to me only yesterday by a landholder with property on the Adelaide Plains in the vicinity of where the first flowing bore was put down. I cannot vouch for the authenticity of his statement, but I think it was that water was obtained at 50 or 80ft. We did not know when we were pumping to augment supplies in previous dry periods that the water level was so lowered that some wells were rendered completely ineffective and an alternative supply had to be made to those people because we had taken from them the supply they had used for many years. That demonstrates that we thought we could pump water out indefinitely. The whole purpose of the Bill is not to prevent the use of water but to maintain the quality of the supply. In view of what I propose to do when this Bill goes into Committee no lengthy remarks appear necessary at this stage, but I shall refer to one or two points that have been raised in a general way.

One point was a suggestion that the legislation should be applied to parts of the State defined by regulation rather than by proclamation. I am quite happy to accept that. There is no intention to put anything over in the Bill and if that is regarded as an additional safeguard I am in favour of it and am pre-

pared to meet the suggestion. The second suggestion is related to the definition of "well." The Government will define it so that it includes such things as soakage pits, septic tanks, and so on. The third suggestion refers to clause 10 and the Government would not have any objection to an amendment that would provide that a permit should remain in force until lawfully revoked rather than for only two years as now provided. The Government is prepared to meet these matters and does not want to have a dispute or humbug people just for the sake of doing it. In clause 17 the Government is prepared to accept an amendment making it obligatory on the landholder to make sure that work is executed in a workmanlike manner.

The Government in constituting an advisory committee is quite happy to have representation from private drilling contractors. I agree with the Hon. Sir Frank Perry that they do important work and they do a mighty job in bringing wells into operation. The question of deterioration seems to have caused some difficulty. It has been said that this word could be used in a quantitative sense. It was not intended to be used in this sense, but in the Oxford English Dictionary sense. That dictionary defines "deteriorate" as "to make worse, to lower in quality or value, to become worse, to become impaired in quality or value, or to degenerate." The word was used in addition to "contamination" because it was felt by experts that it was necessary to provide, not only against contamination, which seemed to import some form of contact with a contaminating agency, but also against deterioration, which could occur through other influences of a less tangible nature. I would stress that restriction on the output of water under the legislation could only be imposed where the Minister had reasonable cause to believe that contamination or deterioration in quality in underground water was likely to occur. That is, if we get beyond a certain depth and lower the water level too much, we may get contamination from another source.

Honourable members have expressed some difficulty over the intention of clause 7 in relation to permits, and a minor alteration of wording will be submitted in this clause to clarify the matter. Under the legislation a permit will be required for the sinking, repairing or deepening of a well or for the conversion of a well for drainage purposes, but not for the use of any existing well in a proclaimed area, whether it be a water or a drainage well. It is really a construction

permit. Notification of existing wells must be given under clause 6, but the use of a well for any purpose can be controlled in one or two ways. Where a permit has not been obtained because it is not required under the Bill the Minister can act under clause 18 by issuing a notice to the owner or occupier of the land requiring him, among other things, to restrict the amount of underground water taken out or the effluent run in. But this action can be taken by the Minister only if he is satisfied that the required action is necessary for the purpose of preventing contamination of underground water or the use of contaminated underground water.

Use of a well can also be regulated in the case where the owner or occupier is a permit holder under clause 11, which empowers the Minister to include terms and conditions in the required permit. But here again the terms and conditions must be terms and conditions which the Minister deems necessary for preventing contamination, and would only be those consistent with what had already been decided should apply to all wells in a proclaimed area, existing or otherwise. In other words, inclusion of such conditions in a permit to construct a well would be to save the landholder from having to comply later with conditions which would be imposed under clause 18 by issue of a separate notification.

Another matter to which I desire to refer is an assumption that the legislation will be applied to the whole or a substantial part of the State. I should like to assure honourable members that there is no desire to interfere with landholders' private water supplies. Only areas defined by proclamation or regulation will come within the provisions of the Bill and this, of course, means that permits will be required only in such defined areas and notifications of wells will be required only within defined areas. Furthermore, I can envisage no circumstances under which any control would be placed on stock or domestic water supply wells.

I do not think that honourable members need have any fears that the legislation will be administered in a harsh or arbitrary manner. It is necessary that the powers should be granted in broad and general terms. I believe that, with the amendments which I have referred to, the legislation will be workable and effective while relieving honourable members who have expressed reservations as to the implications of the Bill.

None of the actions of the department or the Government has been to restrict the use

of water, but on the contrary every effort has been made to increase supplies. With increased supplies, however, it is essential that they should be of a quality to give effective value to the community.

I wish to indicate now that when the Bill reaches the Committee stage I shall move that the many amendments in print on members' files, which would be very confusing and difficult to handle in Committee, be accepted *pro forma*. We can then report progress and have the Bill reprinted. Subsequently, on recommendation of the Bill, the Committee can start off with a Bill that includes all the amendments, which will make it much simpler to understand and I hope you, Sir, will accept that suggestion.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN (Minister of Mines)—As I indicated on the second reading, I move—

That the Bill be amended *pro forma* by the inclusion of the amendments in print.

The CHAIRMAN—This is an unusual procedure, but May lays it down clearly that when there are a great many amendments to a Bill that will complicate its consideration it is better to have a reprint by the method suggested by the Minister of Mines. I assure members that they will lose none of their rights and when the Bill comes back with the amendments included it does not mean that the Committee will have agreed to them.

Motion carried.

Bill amended *pro forma*, and reported with amendments; Committee's report adopted.

#### LOCAL COURTS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

(Second reading debate adjourned on November 11. Page 1526.)

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

#### PRICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 11. Page 1507.)

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN (Central No. 1)—This Bill has only one clause of any significance, and it extends the operation of the Act for another 12 months. I have always contended that price control, to be effective, should be enacted on a Federal basis and not left to the States. Under the present arrangement price control can never be effective, as goods coming

into this State from another cannot, under the Federal Constitution, be controlled. Nevertheless the Labor Party has made it clear that for economic reasons it favours price control. It is contended in some quarters that supply and demand should prevail and when it does price control will no longer be necessary. However, despite our prosperity, some goods are still in short supply and this tempts some sellers to take advantage of the position and inflate prices.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—To what goods do you refer?

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—Nobody knows better than the honourable member that there have been prosecutions for over-charging for goods controlled by the Prices Commissioner. Another important factor is that the Prices Commissioner not only exercises jurisdiction over goods under control, but also keeps a close watch on goods that have been freed from control. I suggest that this acts as a check on overcharging by retailers on goods that have been freed. It has been argued, and undoubtedly will again be argued, that the time has arrived for a discontinuance of this legislation and that there should be a free go. If that contention is correct, wages should also be freed from control. A perusal of the financial reports of companies reveals that profits are still increasing, although wages have been frozen in this State since 1953. Wages and prices go hand in hand and if one is freed from control it is only logical that the other should be freed.

Quarterly adjustments of the basic wage, which operated until 1953, gave the workers the semblance of a chance of being on a par with prices, despite the fact that there was a three-month lag in adjustments; but the Commonwealth Arbitration Court discontinued quarterly adjustments. This State immediately froze the then existing basic wage, despite the fact that the other States still continue to adjust wages on a quarterly basis in accordance with the C series index figures. This action had the effect of saving manufacturers and other employers in this State millions of pounds in wages, compared with those operating in the other States. The recent increase of 15s. a week in the basic wage has already been absorbed in increased prices. If the C series index figures were still being given effect to, it would be necessary to further adjust the basic wage to bring it into conformity with those figures. Despite the recent increase in the basic wage, this State is still

behind the C series figures. It means in actual fact that wages are still chasing prices.

If this legislation were discontinued there would be immediate increases in prices, and the basic wage would be far too inadequate to meet the position. We find that the Chamber of Manufactures is applying to the Commonwealth Arbitration Court for a differential basic wage to operate in South Australia, hoping that by using the C series index figures as an argument it can induce the court to reduce the existing basic wage in South Australia, thus giving a further advantage to employers in this State over those in other States. If this action were successful, the only result would be to reduce the purchasing power of the workers. This would have the effect of reducing the demand for goods and finally would result in an over-supply and unemployment.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—You are in a gloomy mood this afternoon.

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—It is very evident that there are more galahs out of cages than there are in them. If the things that I have mentioned did eventuate, the effect would be to upset the whole economy of the State. In his explanation of the second reading the Chief Secretary said:—

This State has the lowest level of unemployment in the Commonwealth and increased spending power in the hands of the public in this State over the next 12 months is calculated to exceed the amount spent last year by no less than £27,000,000.

We can assume that that statement is based upon the present economic position in this State. Would that position still prevail if this legislation were discontinued? I contend that there would be an immediate upsurge in prices, the purchasing power of the workers would be retarded, as would be the demand for goods, and the amount mentioned by the Chief Secretary would be considerably reduced. I feel that the time has not yet arrived for a discontinuance of this legislation. Despite the comments in this morning's *Advertiser* relative to the number of Bills passed by this Chamber yesterday without opposition, this legislation is one which will have opposition.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—But not from the Labor Party.

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—The policy of the Labor Party is to support price control. Despite its inadequacies, the legislation should be continued. I support the second reading.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY (Southern)—Unfortunately, this legislation is again before the Chamber. Unlike the Government, which



has from time to time changed its grounds why we should have price control, I have no definite reasons why I should not oppose its continuance, and I have not anything new to add on what I have said on previous occasions. I would not have spoken today except for the change of personnel in this Council. We now have four new members and I consider it is desirable that we should again go fully into all the reasons used both for and against a continuance of price control. I consider it has outlived its usefulness and acts to the detriment of South Australia. I should say that Australian citizens, particularly South Australians, are endowed with a great measure of initiative and self-reliance, but I fear that a continuance of this legislation will sap from the people the very attributes we believe are valuable to them. It will tend to instil into them the socialistic doctrine which makes people lean upon the Government rather than think for themselves. That in itself is sufficient reason why one should oppose the Bill. It applies not only in regard to individuals generally, but also to the attitude between our business houses and the people. Businesses in this State have been built up on the basis of production and the earning of goodwill. When a firm has operated for a number of years and created goodwill among the people, almost invariably it is prosperous and does much business, and the people have some pleasure in dealing with it. Under this legislation I feel that the merchants are being forced to take what opportunities they can and which they feel they are legitimately entitled to. I think that the loss of goodwill will be another disadvantage that will be suffered.

I am anxious to have something to say to the new members and hope I shall not weary the Council by quoting extracts and recapitulating the various reasons submitted by the Government from time to time for a continuation of this legislation. It will be remembered that during the war, when most of our able-bodied men and many of our women also were away winning the war, many of our citizens were taken from their normal jobs and called upon to provide the munitions of war and the food and clothing required by our troops and those of our allies. Under those conditions it was only natural that there would be shortages of those things which the public had been used to having at their disposal and which they had learned to appreciate. I do not think any one would question that the Commonwealth Government under the National Security Regulations should have set about providing the

requirements of our fighting forces. It was only natural that great shortages should prevail and that it was desirable to keep prices within the capacity of the wages being earned, so that people could buy the goods available, although in short supply. We had not only price control and ration tickets for petrol and clothing and rent control, but also other controls, so that those who were sacrificing so much could retain a reasonable standard of living.

I think we all agree with that policy. We went on for several years after the war and came to a point where the community in general and the State Government in particular began to query the powers of the Commonwealth on price control. Honourable members will remember that at that time several questions were referred to the people by way of a referendum and one of the questions asked was whether they favoured the retention of price control by the Commonwealth Governments. The people showed in no uncertain way that they did not want the Commonwealth to continue with price control. Indeed many people belonging to the working classes, the business classes, and the primary producers were opposed to that function being carried on by the Commonwealth Government and they voted for State control. We found that the Commonwealth Government with almost indecent haste threw price control into the laps of the States. It was not the sort of thing of which we could say, "We are not going on with it" and then throw it away. The Commonwealth did offer its organization and staff to the various States so that the States could have some measure of effective control within their own boundaries.

If we were to agree with all the conditions and all the circumstances under which the State Government has continued price control I say unhesitatingly we would be making a mistake in continuing this Bill for one year. If all the reasons offered are solid reasons they are sufficient to maintain this legislation for another 100 years and we are only playing with the problem if we continue this legislation year by year. I do not think there is justification for doing so. I believe many of the conditions which the Government has from time to time stressed as being essential are based on insufficient grounds. I intend to go through some of the reasons given by the Government for the continuation of price control. I go back to 1948 when the State

took over control from the Commonwealth and introduced price legislation. The Premier then said:—

That referendum was not carried, and the Commonwealth has taken the view, that in these circumstances, it should not carry on price control indefinitely, but that price control, if necessary should be exercised by the States. I do not quarrel with that decision. It would have been preferable if we had had some additional time in which to take over these controls, but again I am not quarrelling with the Commonwealth decision with regard to time because speaking broadly the fact remains that hostilities ceased a considerable time ago, and, if the States are to exercise permanent control of prices and rents, it is fitting that at some stage they should assume the control which the constitution vests in them.

I think I can state without any fear of contradiction that the electors said quite decisively that they desired the Commonwealth to cease control of prices, and I believe the electors felt very strongly that price control should cease as soon as possible. When that first Bill was brought in I, with some diffidence, supported it. Almost all members who had spoken on the Bill in another place questioned the desirability of it and referred to it as an anodyne or a palliative which they hoped they would soon see the last of. The Bill was brought into operation only until such time as we could acclimatize ourselves and get away from price control. The Premier went on:—

We are approaching the position when the Commonwealth legislation, which has been in operation during the war, is to terminate very abruptly; and the question immediately arises whether we are in a position to abandon price and rent control, or whether it is necessary to carry on controls and if so, what form they should take. I say unhesitatingly that it is necessary for controls to be maintained over rents and prices under existing conditions. I dissociate myself from any suggestion that I am subscribing to the point of view that you can cure economic ills by price or rent controls.

One would think that over all the years since then even the Premier would have changed his mind on the statement he made at that time. He continued:—

Price control will not cure an economic evil, and if there is some wrong adjustment in the economy of any country, price control in itself will never correct that.

He said later:—

The Commonwealth Government had undertaken to make officers available, and that control will be a direct control of prices, and although we shall have to take over the price structure in its present form, to a large extent, I hope it will be possible by administration to

get away from the question of profit control, and to confine ourselves more particularly to price control. I do not propose in any way to criticize the administration by the Commonwealth of prices during the war. I know that there has been considerable difficulty and confusion due to the fact that the system in operation in some instances took the form of profit control. In that case it merely becomes a subsidy upon inefficiency, under that system there is no incentive to keep costs down to the lowest figure. In some instances it was expressed upon a percentage basis, and in that case it could happen that the higher the cost the greater the amount of profit.

Many members of this House will agree with the sentiments expressed by the Premier then. We have had experience of the system that gave protection to manufactured goods particularly under the system of cost-plus and we saw enough of that to realize that it was not the best basis upon which we could positively and advantageously develop this country. I agree with the statement made by the Premier that we did not want to introduce profit control in this country. What we wanted to do was to get efficiency in industry and production and if a man could make a greater profit by efficient means than the man who did not trouble about efficiency then good luck to him. This Bill has reappeared year after year. In 1949 the Premier said:—

I shall not discuss at length the question of the price fixation policy; but emphasize that the economic position of Australia requires that prices legislation should be maintained. Devaluation of sterling has already had a marked effect upon prices, and will have a still further effect. Under those circumstances, it is Parliament's duty to see that no exploitation takes place, that prices fixed shall be fair and reasonable to both seller and buyer, and that we do our utmost to maintain the economic structure by keeping prices at reasonable levels, thus enabling our industries to function, and the basic wage to maintain its value.

I rather think that the hopes and aspirations of the Premier were not fulfilled. In 1950 when introducing the Bill the Premier said:—

This Bill provides for only one thing, namely, the continuance of price control for another 12 months. During the recent election campaign the Government stated, as a matter of policy, that legislation would be introduced this session to continue price control; but that the Government hoped that the number of items to be controlled, could be gradually eliminated, because price control as a permanent measure has no attraction for the Government, or other members on this side. In general price control is becoming more difficult. Every member has been made painfully aware of the very steep upward trend in prices but the fact remains that the prices of many commodities in Australia are much below those for similar commodities overseas.

The Premier later continued:—

Two big problems confront the States in price control, one of which is that prices of many commodities overseas are much higher than in Australia. Take base metals. Prices of zinc and lead in Australia are about one-third of those overseas, ranging between £40 and £50 a ton. It is not a world price but an artificial one that has been preserved by arrangements that tend to restrict exports. I think the overseas price is between £130 and £140 a ton. Meat is another product that has given every State the utmost anxiety. For years the upset home consumption price has been fixed just in advance of the contract price of meat to the United Kingdom Government. That was done to ensure that fresh meat would be kept on the Australian market and that only surplus meat would be exported, but apart from the United Kingdom contract, a large number of trader to trader contracts, particularly with hard currency areas, are making an increasing drain on the Australia meat markets. To explain why, I only need mention that in one of those countries the normal price for lamb chops is 4s. 3d. a pound and members will understand what effect that will have on the local market if any attempt is made to keep prices stable.

For a long time now it has been most difficult to buy those chops at 4s. 3d. a lb., so what we were doing at that stage to prevent the export of our meat overseas has really happened in our own country and prices have exceeded those which can be obtained overseas. The British market is not open to the Australian producer and we do find a very low price on the Australian market. The Premier went on to say:—

On too many occasions when articles in ample supply have been decontrolled, there has been an unjustifiable increase, which under no circumstances would have been approved. We find that many applications for decontrol follow an investigation and refusal to grant an increase.

The Premier was commenting on how merchants were charging a higher price on decontrolled articles than on articles under control. If that were so there were very effective measures which could have been taken. In 1951 the Premier said:—

The justification for the extension of control is so well known that little needs to be said on this subject. The strong inflationary tendency now prevailing renders the continuance of the Act more necessary than ever and it has been recently found essential to reintroduce control over many commodities and services which had previously been decontrolled or had not been brought under the Act. The extension of the Act is therefore unavoidable.

I do not say that it was unavoidable because we were having a degree of inflation, but I remind members that those are conditions which

we are faced with this year. Later in the speech the Premier said:—

Experience has shown that price control cannot be considered to be anything like a complete cure for the present inflationary trend which is sweeping not only through Australia but the whole world.

So we had one year of price control. In the following year, 1952, the Premier said:—

The Government believes that freedom from control is in the public interest and leads to lower prices than control provided that adequate supplies of goods are on the market and there are no trade arrangements designed to defeat competition. Unfortunately, these conditions do not yet exist over a very wide field. Many kinds of commodities are still in short supply and when the full impact of the import restrictions is felt the position may be worse. There are also trade arrangements affecting the price of import commodities. In these circumstances, it would be most undesirable to abandon price control. The Government, therefore, proposes an extension of the Act for a further year.

So we get again another story. In 1953 the Hon. C. S. Hincks, speaking for the Premier, said in a very short speech:—

The Bill provides for the continuation of price control until the end of next year. The policy of the Government in connection with this matter has not changed. As the Government previously announced it believes that freedom from control is in the public interest and leads to lower prices than control, provided that adequate supplies are on the market and there is reasonable competition between sellers. Where these conditions exist control is not necessary and, in fact, quite a number of commodities have been freed from control. However, there are still shortages and it is not yet in the public interest to allow the prices legislation to go out of operation. The Government, therefore, proposes to extend the principal Act so that it will apply to all transactions taking place before January 1, 1955.

My comment on that is that surely the position today meets the requirements mentioned by Mr. Hincks. In 1954 Mr. Hincks, when again speaking for the Premier, said:—

The reasons which have influenced the Government in proposing this extension are the same as in former years. The Government would be very glad if price controls could be all taken off without detrimental effects. The fact is, however, that supplies of some essential goods and materials are still substantially below requirements, and if there were no price control, it would be possible for unscrupulous persons to take an unfair advantage of the position and charge excessive prices.

So it gets back to the point where that goodwill that I believe to be essential in a trading community if it is to reach a proper basis of prices has been slowly whittled away through conditions being forced upon the people as an excuse for the continuation of the Act. I know all

this must be wearying to members, but I feel that the story must be told completely to show the very insidious effect price control has had upon the people of this country. In 1955 the Premier, when explaining the Bill, said:—

I propose to state briefly the most important reason is the necessity for South Australia to keep its costs of production as low as possible. Many South Australian manufacturers have to sell a substantial proportion of their output, either in other States, or in countries outside Australia. In either case they have to compete with the manufacturers in other States. But South Australia has not the easy access to the essential raw materials which the eastern States enjoy. Also, trade associations and trade arrangements by which prices can be maintained at a higher level than would otherwise prevail.

In 1956 the Hon. B. Pattinson, when introducing the Bill on behalf of the Premier, said:—

The Government adheres to the policy of not imposing unnecessary controls, but, information in the hands of the Government clearly indicates that there is still a strong case in S.A. for the continuation of price control in the interests of the public. In the commerce in this State there is not at present sufficient free competition to protect consumers against excessive prices.

In 1957 the Premier said when explaining the Bill:—

The Government believes that control is still necessary in the interests of economic development. It is of the utmost importance that the costs of production in this State, will be such, as to enable our industries to compete with those of the eastern States. At this moment South Australia is experiencing the greatest period of development in its history. Concurrently there is an unprecedented expansion of industry. We need more schools and houses, extended transport systems, more roads, water, electricity, hospitals, recreational facilities, and greater supplies of basic materials of all kinds. The expansion which is essential and unavoidable places a great demand on capital, labour and material. These factors all tend to cause inflation, and not much can be done to counteract it except through the medium of Government action.

In 1958 the Hon. C. S. Hincks, when speaking on behalf of the Premier, said:—

The Government is satisfied that the activities of the Prices Department continue to be highly beneficial to the State, and that the continuance of its operations is justified. The department's work is carried out not only by means of the orders having legal effect; but also by negotiations and arrangements. In some cases an investigation by the department, without other action, produces valuable results. Information in the hands of the Government indicates that the prices of many essential commodities are lower in this State than in other States and that this

result is attributable to the work of the Prices Commissioner and his officers.

He finished the speech by saying that while the public has benefited from the work of the department, it cannot be said that traders have suffered any injustice, because during the last financial year, companies in this State operating under price control experienced an increasing volume of business and satisfactory profits. The Premier followed that up with a remark with regard to the increase in the cost of living in South Australia in comparison with that in other States, and pointed out that the increase in some States had been much higher than in South Australia due to the fact that we had price control and the other States had abandoned it. It was therefore interesting to note what Mr. O'Halloran, the Leader of the Opposition, speaking to the Bill in 1958, had to say:—

I agree that the continuation of this legislation is justified, but when one looks at the increases in the cost of living in the last two quarters, as disclosed by the Federal Statistician, one wonders whether the legislation is as valuable as it should be, and in conformity with the principles it is supposed to implement. For instance, the increase in the cost of living in South Australia in the June quarter was 6s. For the last quarter, for which figures are available, and it ended a few days ago, the increase was 4s. In both quarters the increases in South Australia were the highest of the Australian States.

So I say that what we thought we gained in the first year in the lower cost of living we lost as time went on, showing that we were not gaining what we expected we would by price control. I think the reason given for the continuation of the legislation this year is inflation, and I would like to quote one or two remarks from our valued economists. I know how extremely popular economists are with members of Parliament, and how we tend to base our criticism on their statements. Professor Karmel, Professor of Economics at the Adelaide University, in 1955 said:—

Price control in itself does not remove inflationary pressure, but supplements it, and unless control is universal, it will probably result in shortages in controlled lines, and an undesirable expansion in uncontrolled lines. Our other great economist, Sir Douglas Copland, who is held up as being the last word in economists, said:—

Economic growth is the theme song of anyone who wants to succeed. I wish the word "inflation" could be deleted from the English language.

I do not know how we would manage to get price control next year if it were deleted, but I feel confident that some way would be found.

Even though we have covered such a wide range of reasons why we should have price control, surely everything points to the fact that it should not come before us every year but should be permanently on our Statute Book so as to stop all the make-believe about it.

I would like to point to the position in Great Britain. Throughout the world there was a general opinion that England had lost her strength as a great power, and we all know that her economic position was very bad. Recently, an election was held and the Macmillan Government—a Government which had carried on without price control—was returned. Under it Britain had become one of the dominating nations of the world again. Surely that is an argument that should convince us that we could carry on without price control. We have heard statements from the Government and other people from time to time to the effect that they do not want price control and I think we can say that today the very first thing that the Prices Commissioner wants to do is to have a look at the balance sheet of a particular corporation or company he is investigating to see how much it is making. Consequently, I fail to see how we can have anything but profit control. By working on a basis of profit control, through price control, I fail to see how we are going to continue to produce goods in the cheapest possible way. I have quoted the authority of Premiers and others who say that they believe that the cheapest way of getting goods is by freedom of control, and I entirely believe in that principle.

Recently we have had again many requests with regard to meat. Only a few days ago a person writing to the press expressed concern at the fact that meat was not under control. It really amazes me that, when people were selling their stock at almost give-away prices, which left little over after paying freight, we should have people complaining that directly we shall find meat scarcer and consequently will have to pay a bit more for it. I hope that we do, because if we do not primary producers will be in a very bad position indeed, and unable to carry on under the basis that has prevailed in recent months. I trust that the Government will not continue any price control on meat, but refrain from control altogether. We have a new generation growing up and I should be sorry to feel that I had done nothing to help. They should with their own individual initiative and self-reliance be able to carry on and make their own decisions. We read a report in the press the other day to the effect that were it not for the Prices Department people would be paying

very much more for certain commodities. Reference was made to an agreement being reached between certain firms and the Prices Commissioner that price control would be lifted if they sold at a certain price. Not once, but three times, they were under the threat of the reimposition of control before they reduced their prices to the agreed level. It is a poor thing if we have to rely upon such action to bring prices down to a reasonable level and I hope that this system will be abandoned. I believe that would be in our best interests.

If a housewife can get something for 2s. 6d., whereas it costs 2s. 10d. elsewhere, she will buy at the lower price. Sometimes a special line is provided in a shop, which is lower than the controlled price, and people may thereby be induced to buy more of other commodities and be slightly misled as regards values, but generally I think we can rely upon them to look after themselves in this respect; and also upon our merchants to return to a basis of goodwill in dealing with the public. If that is done, I think that South Australia will progress still further. I oppose the Bill.

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

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

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

#### VINE, FRUIT, AND VEGETABLE PROTECTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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

#### RENMARK IRRIGATION TRUST ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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

#### SAVINGS BANK OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 11. Page 1507.)

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH (Central No. 1)—I support the Bill, the object of which is to permit the commissioners of the Savings Bank of South Australia to inaugurate a staff hospital benefit scheme. Since the proposal was first mooted there has been some legal doubt whether the commissioners could use the profits of the bank to establish such a scheme. The proposal will apply to all employees of the bank and will be a non-contributory scheme. It is in conformity with

similar schemes of other banks, both private and Government. Some time ago we passed legislation to set up a superannuation scheme for employees of the Savings Bank. It is pleasing to record that institutions such as this bank have become an integral part of our economy and that the Savings Bank commissioners appreciate the services rendered by its employees and are prepared to utilize portion of the bank's funds to recognize their loyal services. It is a sign of the times and in contrast to the atmosphere obtaining in other States. In various South Australian institutions and organizations there is co-operation between the workers and the captains of industry, and this spirit of co-operation has played a very important part in the rapid development of this State. This development will continue with such co-operation, enabling South Australia to go to the forefront in contrast to the position in some of the older States.

The Savings Bank of South Australia has grown from a very small beginning and has reached the position of great financial eminence in this State. For the year ended June 30, 1930, the total deposits in the bank amounted to £21,866,365, representing an average of £43 8s. 10d. for each account. For 1957, the last figures available in the *Statesman's Pocket Year Book*, the respective figures were £108,811,002 and £111 2s. 4d. That is a beacon light to the other States showing the confidence that the citizens of South Australia have in their own State. A few years ago we passed legislation enabling the Savings Bank to lend moneys to the South Australian Housing Trust to carry out a huge housing scheme that was to be embarked upon. I pay tribute to the trustees of the bank. Over the years the bank has been fortunate in having its operations under the guardianship of notable people endowed with great integrity, foresight and business ability; and the State has been fortunate in having such men on the board to develop, with the co-operation of the employees, the great institution that exists today. I hope it will continue to grow. The board has on many occasions acknowledged the assistance of its employees. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY (Central No. 2)—The Hon. Mr. Bardolph eulogized the Savings Bank's officers. While they may deserve it, I do not think it is necessary in this Bill which simply authorizes the trustees to arrange for the provision of a

medical and hospital benefit scheme for bank employees. Of course, there are associations into which people can pay money and through which they receive such benefits. I have not the slightest objection to authorizing the trustees to make these arrangements, but I point out that in introducing the Bill the Chief Secretary said:—

I understand that the bank has already discussed the establishment of a medical and hospital benefits scheme with the staff and that the trustees have approved of such a scheme which is, I am informed, to be non-contributory on similar lines to schemes already in operation in many other banks.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—If this Bill is passed, won't it be left to the trustees?

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—Yes. I am sorry the Chief Secretary mentioned this. It is all very well for sheltered institutions and sheltered occupations to provide non-contributory facilities when other bodies are not able to do so. I do not oppose the Bill but regret that the Chief Secretary forecast a non-contributory scheme. The type of scheme to be instituted should be left to the trustees and it should follow the usual pattern of such schemes in governmental concerns. I do not know what the Government does by way of hospital benefit schemes, but its superannuation scheme is contributory and I think that is a better standard arrangement than a non-contributory scheme. Had the Bill provided for a non-contributory scheme I would have opposed it.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL (Central No. 2)—I support the Bill. As the Hon. Sir Frank Perry has pointed out, all trading banks have their medical benefit schemes and it is obviously necessary that the Savings Bank should fall into line not only in providing benefits for its staff, but also in its efforts to recruit employees. The Bill leaves it to the trustees to bring in such schemes as they think fit. Non-contributory schemes have been mentioned, but I do not propose to deal with that aspect. It is proper that the trustees should have the same power as the directors of private trading banks.

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

#### HOLIDAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 11. Page 1508.)

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition)—On October 22, 1958, I introduced a private Bill amending the Holidays

Act that consisted of five clauses and on which a spirited debate took place and several divisions were called, the main division being on the time for the commencement of the Act. My proposal was defeated by 14 votes to five and an attempt was then made to fix banks' trading hours from 5 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. on Fridays, but that also was defeated. However, I hope that there will be no opposition to this Bill which is consequential upon an amendment enacted last year to provide for Saturday closing of banks in South Australia. The Bill provided that it should not come into force until arrangements had been made for keeping open trading banks until 5 p.m. on Friday. There were objections from some trading banks, which it is hoped have been overcome, and the proposal is now that the conditions for the issuing of a proclamation shall be the keeping open of savings banks. I understand that arrangements have been made in anticipation of Saturday morning closing. In these circumstances the savings banks operating here—the Commonwealth Savings Bank and the South Australian Savings Bank—are almost certain to close on Saturday mornings when this legislation is passed.

The Hon. E. H. Edmonds—Almost certain?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Yes. The honourable member knows that the reason for the delay last year was because something that should not have been introduced was introduced. There should be no objection to this Bill. This legislation is long overdue and it is only right that bank officers should enjoy the same concessions as other people—concessions to which they are justly entitled. I support the second reading.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY (Southern)—Having opposed the principle contained in this Bill previously I see no reason to change my opinion now. I believe that in South Australia we have a system under which many people will always have to work on Saturdays and Sundays. Country people have persistently requested me to oppose this measure. Almost all branch and district committee meetings I have attended recently have passed resolutions opposing the principle that banks should close on Saturday mornings, for the reason that farmers and farm labourers generally go into the townships on Saturday mornings to do their banking and shopping and to attend sporting fixtures in the afternoons. The annual conference of the Liberal and Country League passed a similar resolution.

Once this privilege disappears another day will be broken for farmers and farm labourers generally. There is considerable hostility to this proposal. I have had letters from people who have asked quite frankly, "What is the Playford Government thinking about in not allowing us to continue a facility we have at present?" Of course, they are not aware that the Playford Government did not introduce this legislation, but that it was introduced by a private member in agreement with bank clerks.

I have said before that I think we should do the same with banks as is done with other public services. Railways, tramways and other services must operate over the weekend, and the public should also have the opportunity of conducting their banking at the weekend. I know that primary producers do not play as big a part in the finances of the country as they did previously and that industry is taking a bigger part, and possibly bank clerks are more closely associated with industry than they are with primary producers but, nevertheless, at this stage I feel it would be undesirable to alter the present situation, particularly as this is a difficult year for primary producers. Surely we do not want to make it obvious to them every Saturday that other people are getting a much easier living.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY (Central No. 2)—When we last discussed this legislation I made my attitude clear, and I still hold the same view. I support Mr. Densley's remarks. Any legislation that is agreed to by owners and employees without enquiry is wrong, and that is the position with this legislation. Parliament, I point out, did not agree to the arrangement but merely made it possible for the banks to enter into an arrangement, and they have apparently done so without considering the interests of their clients throughout the country. I say that when the employers and the employees are prepared to combine to the detriment of their customers it is wrong. As I said before, the matter should have been referred to some other authority to hear both sides of the case as well as that of the people. I intend to oppose this legislation on those grounds and I am sorry that the conditions under which it is to be granted still bring forth complaints throughout the country. Banking is a service that people require, and in most cases it is necessary for them on a Saturday. Despite that, arrangements have been made to close the banks, without giving the people a hearing, except through their members. I say again that

Parliament has not decided this issue. The banks and their officers have done that and we have only passed the legislation so that they can make this arrangement.

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN (Central No. 1)—I support the measure and I fail to follow the arguments advanced by Sir Frank Perry. I feel that the legislation as it now stands should have been passed 12 months ago and then we would not have been called upon to discuss it now. Throughout industry in Australia the general principle of a 40-hour five-day week is observed and has been for some time. Indeed, in one State at least it has been found possible to get along without any trading on Saturday mornings. I see no reason why the bank officers should not have entered into discussions with their employers for the purpose of obtaining more leisure over the weekend.

The Hon. Sir Frank Perry—I do not blame the employees.

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—I thought the honourable member was complaining that the bank officers, through their association, had entered into a conference with the employers and finally reached an amicable agreement to do certain things. To make that possible it was found necessary to have legislation; or should I say, because of existing legislation it was not possible to give effect to the arrangement? It has long been the practice in industrial circles for employees to enter into negotiations with their employers and, if an arrangement can be reached, to approach the court for a consent award. In such cases the court issues a consent order without any investigation.

Is there any logical reason why the same principle should not be followed in respect of bank officers? As I see it, in this instance Parliament takes the place of the court as the arbitrator.

The Hon. Sir Frank Perry—That is a mistake.

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—If the honourable member feels that Parliament should not adjudicate the only alternative is to rescind the Holidays Act and remove the question from the jurisdiction of Parliament altogether. Nevertheless, as matters stand, Parliament is the arbitrator and as such, having given due consideration to the conferences that have taken place and the amicable agreement reached, we should place ourselves in the same position as the Arbitration Court when asked for a consent award, and agree to what is sought.

The Hon. G. O'H. Giles—What about people who come in from the outback only one day in the week?

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—I suggest that they do come in one day a week and that is not on Saturday but on a sale day, and they can transact their banking business then. I hope the Bill will be overwhelmingly carried so that bank officers can get the benefit of the agreement they have reached with their employers.

The Hon. A. C. HOOKINGS secured the adjournment of the debate.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

At 4.55 p.m. the Council adjourned until Tuesday, November 17, at 2.15 p.m.