LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, November 19, 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:—

Appropriation (No. 2).
Fruit Fly (Compensation).
Hallett Cove to Port Stanvac Railway.
Hide, Skin, and Wool Dealers Act Amendment.
Land Agents Act Amendment.
Marketing of Eggs Act Amendment.
Pastoral Act Amendment.
Stock Diseases Act Amendment.

POINT OF ORDER: PRESIDENT'S RULING.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—I rise on a point of order.

The PRESIDENT—There is nothing before the Council so I cannot imagine any point of order cropping up at the moment.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—In that case I claim the right to make a personal explanation involving a ruling by the President yesterday.

Leave granted.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—Yesterday I moved a motion for disagreement with your ruling, Sir, and the procedure laid down in Standing Orders is that immediately objection is taken to the ruling of the Chairman or the President notice of it is taken by the presiding officer and then the mover submits it in writing unless the Council otherwise determines. Yesterday I asked for a ruling from you, Sir, as to what procedure I should adopt. I do not intend to criticize your ruling as I exercised my prerogative in moving that it be disagreed with, but I want to know whether the proceedings of this Council are in future to be conducted upon those premises and upon the same basis in relation to Standing Orders as was the case yesterday. Instead of calling for a seconder to my motion, the rights of members desirous of moving and seconding a motion of disagreement were, in my opinion, peremptorily taken from them by the manner in which the motion was put to the Council and by the way in which it was discharged. I am not attempting to besmirch your integrity, Mr. President, for which I have the highest regard, and I have demonstrated that, as I think you will agree, during the 18 years I have had the honour to be a member of this Council, but for the future guidance of other members who may be honoured to continue to represent their electorates in this Parliament I ask now whether the Standing Orders on the procedure of this Council are to be observed so that yesterday's proceedings shall not be established as a precedent for the future conduct of this Council?

The PRESIDENT—As I read Standing Orders, members were not deprived of any rights because a vote was taken on the voices, thereby showing that members agreed with the ruling I gave. No division was taken as none was called for, and all I can say is that Standing Orders will be administered by myself in the way that I think is correct.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—With great respect, why was not a seconder called for to my motion disagreeing with your ruling?

The PRESIDENT—Members know that we frequently dispense with the need for seconding a motion.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—But we do not want Rafferty's rules either.

The PRESIDENT—No, but the honourable member may be trying to introduce them.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—I am a victim of them, apparently.

VINE, FRUIT, AND VEGETABLE PROTECTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

UNDERGROUND WATERS PRESERVATION BILL.

On the motion for the third reading:

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY (Southern)—As I mentioned during the second reading debate, this Bill has not been drawn as carefully and with as much regard to the privileges of the people of this State as it might have been. It is taking away from the people and giving to the Government rights that the people have always thought they had with regard to underground water. If passed, it can easily become the standard for the future carrying on of the activities of the Government. Again, I should like to say I regret that the House has gone so far in this Bill as it has. I remind the House that, when it becomes an Act, it will give the Government unlimited power in respect of all underground waters.

The people in the early days of the State went out into all parts of the State with no certainty of being able to obtain water; they

developed the country where they found water and, upon finding water and using it, they were able to proceed with the development of the country and with grazing activities. It was a good principle that we should do our utmost to maintain. The Government accepted an amendment to the Bill ostensibly to avoid the deterioration and contamination of water by people putting effluent into wells of no stipulated depth. I agree with that, but I should like to point out, too, that the Government refused an amendment whereby people could draw water from a depth of 15ft. or less from the ground for the purpose of watering their stock.

That seems a bad decision. I shall find it most difficult to maintain that principle amongst my electorate, and I am sure from time to time every member will have this question thrown up at him as he moves about his electorate. We have virtually, without any great fight, given away a right that we have always enjoyed. We have given some privileges under an amendment about proclamations and regulations—that, when an area is defined, this House will have the opportunity of considering it from time to time; but, fundamentally, I think that will not meet the case, as I still feel it was a most undesirable attitude for members to have adopted, namely, that we were afraid of the water being polluted so we should place some restrictions in various places. That is approaching an admission that this State has reached a stage in its history where its development must be controlled. I regret that that is the case and feel that we have before us a future of great development. That can apply not only to land development but also to industrial expansion. In the circumstances, I shall take the unusual step of calling for a division on the third reading so that members may have the opportunity of at least showing their thoughts and attitude on this Bill.

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN (Minister of Mines)—I have no criticism of anybody exercising his right to speak at any stage or on any reading of a Bill, but I do take exception to a repetition of remarks on points already decided by the House, particularly when the honourable member suggests that this Bill takes away something that existed as a right of the people in the past. The rights referred to by the honourable member are rights that have been created by the very department that will administer this legislation. The Honourable Sir Frank Perry referred to it, although not quite in that way; but it is a fact that this department has itself developed a water supply of 100,000,000 gallons a day over a very short period. That indicates how much pioneering work that the honourable member talks about has been done. If the honourable member can suggest how many or what rights exist over a 600-acre block as far as water is concerned, I should like him to give some explanation of them, because it has been suggested that nobody knows. We know that the water has to come from somewhere and there are certain geological formations that hold water in one territory but not in another. There are other geological and hydrological influences that in certain strata of water can cause contamination of one sort or another through the action of bores or wells. That is all we are discussing. We are not discussing every-day rights at all; we are discussing preserving the rights of people, and I suggest that the provisions of this Bill are well justified.

Under this legislation, it will be possible, where the necessity arises, to preserve the amount of good water there is by taking some appropriate action. That is all that is in the Bill—it is the only thing. I take exception to the Hon. Mr. Densley saying that this Bill is taking away somebody's rights. Nobody has defined what those rights are. It is very easy to talk about "taking away rights" but in this case that cannot be justified. The legislation is progressive and wise. We have avoided providing excessive power in the Bill as has been applied elsewhere. It has been kept to the absolute minimum, to deal with cases where action could be necessary and, when action is taken, it will be to preserve the rights of people so that they will not be turned off their properties because of the action of somebody else. These are the rights of the whole community, not those of a few. With all sincerity I commend this legislation as a sound basis upon which to meet the problem wherever it occurs. Already we have equipment installed not far from the city to keep this matter on a proper basis and not have it depending on mere imagination and opinion. I can assure the House that this Bill will create a foundation on which to gather the information necessary so that, when action is necessary, it may be taken on a properly-informed and scientific basis. I commend the Bill to honourable members for their favourable consideration.

The Council divided on the third reading.

The PRESIDENT—The Honourable Mrs. Cooper's name appears on both sides of the division list so I ask her to come to the table

and declare whether she is voting for the Ayes or the Noes.

The Hon. JESSIE COOPER—I vote for the Noes, Sir.

Ayes (10).—The Hons. G. O'H. Giles, A. C. Hookings, N. L. Jude, Sir Lyell McEwin (teller), F. J. Potter, W. W. Robinson, C. D. Rowe, Sir Arthur Rymill, C. R. Story, and R. R. Wilson.

Noes (7).—The Hons. K. E. J. Bardolph, S. C. Bevan, F. J. Condon, Jessie Cooper, L. H. Densley (teller), Sir Frank Perry, and A. J. Shard.

Pair.—Aye—The Hon. E. H. Edmonds
No.—The Hon. A. J. Melrose.

Majority of 3 for the Ayes.

Third reading thus carried.

Bill passed.

MILLICENT AND BEACHPORT RAILWAY (DISCONTINUANCE) BILL.

Returned from the House of Assembly without amendment.

WANDILO AND GLENCOE RAILWAY (DISCONTINUANCE) BILL.

Returned from the House of Assembly without amendment.

NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Returned from the House of Assembly without amendment.

HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 18. Page 1662.)

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH (Central No. 1)—I support the second reading of this short Bill. Where are we drifting with this patchwork amendment of Bills which overlaps existing Bills and the rights and provisions under other Bills and regulations? This Bill deals with the Building Act and, as pointed out by the Minister of Health, it covers buildings and dwellings in country areas that could be covered by the Building Act but which it is more convenient to cover under the Health Act. I cannot see why we should have such a conflict of authority and powers under various Acts aiming to achieve the same purpose. The County Board deals exclusively with the Health Act. We have the Abattoirs Act which lays down provisions relating to butchers and the manufacture of smallgoods. The Building Act deals not only with structures and the strength of materials but with amenities attached to buildings. The Engineering and Water Supply Department is concerned with certain phases of the Health Act. While these amendments on the face of it look good in their purpose they should be examined and consolidated so that we shall not have many authorities dealing with one thing.

I agree with the Minister because corporations and district councils are charged with the responsibility of administering the Health Act. They perform their work in an honorary capacity and if it were not for the efforts of these councils, there would be many Government departments carrying out those duties. It seems anomalous to me that once plans and specifications are submitted to any country council under the Building Act it does not insist upon certain conditions before passing the plans. It was pointed out that the Bill deals only with dwellings and limits the provisions to an area within five acres. The councils can and should, prior to the passing of plans and specifications for the erection of buildings, insist upon amenities and drainage being provided.

It will be remembered that some two or three years ago I moved an amendment to the Building Act which provided that for every building erected a copy of the plans and specifications should be on the site and available to an inspector or any other authority concerned for inspection during the progress of the work. The Council also made it mandatory that these plans and specifications should be signed by a registered architect. Unfortunately, as was pointed out then, and is still the case, there is a lack of building inspectors available for the various municipal and district councils. Some councils are not in a position to pay the salary of a building inspector, and for any project of any size they call in a part-time building inspector to make a report on the strength of materials to be used. His duty is to see that the structure is erected in accordance with the Building Act. Honourable members cannot cavil at this Bill, but we seem to be leaning toward the delegation of multitudinous powers to multitudinous authorities.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY secured the adjournment of the debate.

PRICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 17. Page 1618.)

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL (Central No. 2)—When I first came into this Chamber a few years ago I immediately expressed myself,

as a good Liberal, as being completely and utterly opposed to this legislation, and nothing could possibly have changed since whereby I should alter my view. In my first speech on a similar Bill I analysed the various reasons given in the second reading speech of the Minister and pointed out that different reasons had been given practically every year. Mr. Densley has dealt very adequately with this matter already this year, and I have no reason to go over it again except to say that this year a further reason has been given. The main reason given now for an extension of price control is inflation. That inevitably implies that price control will curb inflation, but it suggests to me that the powers-that-be are still scratching around for new grounds for excuses to continue this legislation. Over the years I have heard what I feel is rather a sickening catalogue of excuses in an attempt to try to justify this completely socialistic legislation, and this year it is inflation. It seems to me that the draftsman of the speech this year, whoever he may have been, did not look up the Premier's speech in 1949 when introducing this legislation, extracts from which have already been quoted by Mr. Densley. In view of what I am saying, it is worth repeating portion of Mr. Densley's quotation from the Premier's speech. This is what the Premier had to say:—

> 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 control.

Later he went on to say:—

> 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.

And yet the reason we are given this year for a continuance of this legislation is the exact antithesis of what the Premier said 10 years ago. Of course, an inescapable conclusion that one must arrive at from the second reading speech is that this is an attempt to cure the economic evil of inflation. Either the Government was wrong then or wrong now, but they do not seem to know which it is. I have no doubt about it. We cannot cure economic ills by price control, and it is about time that this was realized. It confirms my feeling that the reasons given for a continuance of this legislation are excuses rather than justifications, and flimsy ones at that. I do not know who the author of these speeches has been, but it seems to me that their preparation has been in the hands of some amateur economist who is just skating on the surface of things without really getting down to a complete analysis of the real effect of price control on the economy.

Enlarging upon that, I should like to go back to the original intention of price control. It was first introduced about 20 years ago by the Federal Government for war purposes, and was intended to pin the economy and call a halt to general progress in the interests of the war effort and it certainly had that effect. It pegged prices, and I have no doubt that in view of war-time conditions and the shortages of commodities and so on it was a very right and proper thing at that stage. That was the purpose—to pin the economy, to stifle and stagnate progress so that there could be no progress. We who oppose this Bill—and there are some good stalwarts in this Chamber who do—are genuine Liberals, and we stand for progress. I invite other members who think on these lines to get rid of this legislation. The claim made over the years in regard to the so-called virtues of this legislation is that it has kept the basic wage down. That is not claimed, as far as I can find, in the explanation of the Bill this year and I think there may well be good reasons, because I believe I can produce figures to show fairly conclusively that if ever it did keep the basic wage down, it is not doing so any longer. Perhaps the Government has at last realized that, and that is the reason for the omission from this year's speech. I got the Parliamentary Librarian to look up certain figures for me. These figures may seem very favourable to my argument. I did not ask for the interim years because it was not necessary for me to examine them. I do not know what they reveal.

I named certain years which seemed appropriate to me for the purpose of this argument, and they are very interesting. They provide a comparison of the basic wage for South Australia and our next-door neighbour, Victoria, over the years. The years I nominated were 1939, which was an obvious date being immediately before price control was introduced; 1949, which was the time, I think, that the Federal Government released control and the States took it over; and 1956, which was a couple of years after Victoria had relinquished price control and thereby, if there was going to be any alteration it should have shown up by then; and finally the year 1959. The figures are most illuminating, and if the Government has not examined them it might well do so for they might teach it something. In 1939 the basic wage in Adelaide was £3 16s. and in Melbourne £3 19s. That means that ours was 3s., or about 3¾ per cent, less

than Melbourne's. In 1949 our basic wage was £5 19s. and Melbourne's £6 3s. We were both under price control and had been for some years, and the difference was 4s., the percentage slightly less. In 1956, after Victoria had relinquished price control and while we retained it, the respective rates were £12 1s. and £12 5s., which meant that we were still 4s. lower although, if the Government's arguments were right, we should have been well below Melbourne. Today our basic wage is £13 11s. and in Melbourne it is £13 15s., which shows still the same disparity of 4s. and means that while we are under price control and they are not we are only 1½ per cent below them, whereas before the war we were 3¾ per cent below.

The Hon. C. D. Rowe—Twenty years and a war have intervened.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL—I would like to hear my learned and honourable friend argue how it has altered and why. I shall listen to him very intently, but I doubt whether he will make the attempt because when he attempts to find details he may find nothing that will help him; it is very easy to make general statements like that.

I will deal now with some of the announcements made over the years in support of the continuation of this legislation. One of the time-honoured reasons is that when goods are in full supply price control will be taken off. Certainly price control has been taken off some goods, but if goods are not in full supply now, 15 years after the war, they never will be. The only thing that will stop goods being in full supply is price control, because people certainly are not going to enter into price controlled fields, where their profits are curtailed or controlled, when they can get into other fields in which they can make reasonable profits. I do not know which goods are supposed to be not in full supply, but if there are any they would soon be in full supply if price control were taken off, and competition would see that correct prices prevail. Another thing that has been said, ever since 1950, is that there will be a gradual removal of price control. There has been, but unfortunately it has been far too gradual and it seems to me the removal has come to a standstill just when it ought to be carried on. I hope that "gradual" will attain more acceleration, even to the extent that all goods are removed from price control shortly.

Last year and the year before I referred to the cost to businesses of price control, which surely must come into the cost content of goods. Any large firm has to have an extensive staff to cope with price control requirements. I saw a letter some time ago when television sets first came on to the market in South Australia, with a whole catalogue of requirements by the Prices Commissioner as to what goods were to be sold and what the price structure was going to be. I think there were about a dozen or 16 questions which would have taken a week's work to answer, and no doubt did. Television sets are about the most competitive line in the Commonwealth; firms are finding difficulty in marketing them and price cutting is going on; all sorts of gimmicks are being made to sell sets at reduced prices; the competition is terrific and yet the Prices Commissioner is forgetful of the costs of control to businesses.

Then, of course, there is the direct cost to the State of this unnecessary department. Over the years it has risen to a fairly high level. Last year the cost was £84,500 and the year before that it was £91,500, which shows that there has been a slight fall, but it is still very substantial. I also made the point last year or the year before—and I think this is really extremely important—that as far as I knew, and it was not denied, no attempt has ever been made by the Government to assess the overall effect of price control on enterprise and industry. It seems to me that the Government in relation to its price control is far more concerned with the erring individual than with the general situation that arises and has arisen. There will always be people who will take advantage of others and try to make excessive profits. That is human nature and it cannot be cured by Act of Parliament. I venture to say that that aspect will be just as extensive whether we have price control or not. The Government should not be concerned with individual cases except where great principles are at stake. It is said that hard cases make bad laws and that is true, and dabbling in individual enterprise creates bad politics.

I would like to enlarge on what I said last year about the overall effect of price control. We have had a flurry of take-over bids for some of our South Australian institutions. In another place the Premier has very properly said that it is his objective to protect South Australian industries and retain their control in South Australia. I know that he is extremely sincere about that, and that this wish is very close to his heart. Companies become vulnerable to take-overs when the asset value of the company's undertaking exceeds the market price of its shares. In those circumstances naturally, if a company can be obtained at

somewhat more than its market price by bribing the shareholders. as it were, it is possible to make a profit on the deal whether it is carried on as a going concern or goes into liquidation. That is the basis of take-over bids. The market price, in turn, is largely regulated by the dividend that the company pays.

If a company cannot pay adequate dividends, if it has high asset value and its market price falls below that asset value, then the company is ripe for a take-over. If price control is effective it certainly will curb the profits of a company and therefore stifle its earning capacity and peg its dividends—and the market price is regulated to a large extent by dividend rates. Therefore if price control is effective it must render South Australian companies vulnerable to take-overs. So that while the Premier says, and I know he means it, that he does not want to see South Australian companies taken over, he is still supporting price control which, if harshly applied, or applied in a way that is going to have any real effect upon the basic wage, will render the company vulnerable. We cannot have it both ways. Either our companies have to be allowed to make similar profits to those of companies in other States or we have to give up the ghost.

The Hon. G. O'H. Giles—Do you think our retailers are not making profits?

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL—I used the phrase "effective price control" because my claim is that price control is not effective. My point was that if price control has any effect upon the basic wage levels then it must reduce company returns to the extent where they are going to be vulnerable to take-overs. I was not suggesting that this was a factual situation, although some companies may be finding themselves perilously close to it. If price control continues it could well have that effect.

The other direct effect on industry in general is that price control must discourage new enterprises in price controlled lines. It is likely to stop them from being undertaken, and it could also have the effect of discouraging other industries from coming to this State in case they might be under price control—as could immediately happen at any time the Prices Minister got the whim to do so.

An article in the *Sunday Mail* a few weeks ago disturbed me considerably. It was an announcement by the Prices Commissioner—and I do not want to deal with the subject but with the principle underlying this announcement—referring to certain bakers. He said that they had threatened that if certain charges were withdrawn they would no longer deliver in certain districts, and he went on to say that he could not disclose when the Prices Branch might remove the surcharge. It was believed, however, that this might be fairly soon. If that is not propaganda I would like to know what is. Does any member of this Council think it proper that public servants should be allowed to get into the propaganda field? I do not think it is good business, and in any case it is a political matter and not an administrative one. The Prices Commissioner went on to say that the Prices Department was satisfied that the action contemplated was just and he had no intention of being intimidated by a section of the baking industry: a brave statement, but further propaganda.

The Hon. C. D. Rowe—What has been the result? A lot of constituents of Central No. 2 are getting cheaper bread.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL—I repeat, I am not debating what was said or done because I do not know the facts.

The Hon. C. D. Rowe—I will tell you the facts.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL—I ask the Attorney-General, who seems to have become very interested in this matter, whether his Government approves of the Prices Commissioner making a propaganda announcement such as that, and does he personally approve of that? I do not think I shall get an answer. I am correct—I have not had an answer. In future I shall have in mind that this department is not just the Department of Prices; it is the Department of Prices and Propaganda.

The latest word on this question appeared in this morning's *Advertiser*. It referred to Queensland, which is the only State other than South Australia which still has price control. I shall read an extract, which is most illuminating:—

With barely six months to go before it faces a general election, the Queensland Government has the courage of its convictions.

I should like to recommend that to our own Government. It continues.—

Price controls, gradually whittled away over the past couple of years, have now practically vanished. They now apply to only 11 items of goods, as two or three services, compared with hundreds in the immediate post-war years. Latest Prices Acts amendments are regarded as the forerunner of complete decontrol next year. Nobody seems quite sure whether the final steps will come before or after the elections. The Country Party-Liberal coalition Government is facing its first poll since it took office three years ago, after 25 years of continuous Labor rule. But the cut-back of price controls already has been such that most

folk think the Government may take the process all the way as quickly as possible in the interests of competitive trading.

I emphasize those last words "in the interests of competitive trading." That is what I ask for here. The newspaper report continues.—

In any case there's not much left to decontrol—only bread, butter, cream, flour, kerosene, margarine, meat (which is controlled only by wholesale price changes), milk, petrol, power alcohol and wheat. Men's haircuts are the only common service still controlled.

The word "changes" should, I think, be "charges." At least one of our members will not be interested in the last sentence! The report continues:—

During the whittling down process, the Prices Commissioner's staff has been reduced from a peak 250 (in 1948) to about 16.

Finally, if I may quote a famous South Australian, I should like to say that I realize that old members who supported this legislation when it could be regarded as justifiable have found, and no doubt are finding, difficulty in changing their vote. When they do, or if they do, I suppose they feel they can be accused of inconsistency. I recognize that for them it is hard to assess when that time has arrived. With all humility, I would recommend to them that the time has now more than arrived, with the war 15 years past, and they ought to be satisfied to discontinue price control now. I suggest that, in view of the changed circumstances, those accusations of inconsistency could not possibly be levelled against them. I suppose they have got into the habit of voting for price control. Habits are hard to change but I suggest to those members that they get hold of the situation and change them. It is possible they have developed a fear complex from the Government's utterances on this matter over the years about the dire things that will happen when price control is removed. We have heard that for years. Anyone with any experience in public life knows of all the dire things that are said to be going to happen when something is changed in the political arena—and nothing ever does.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—What about clothing and shoes?

The Hon. C. D. Rowe—What do you think would happen?

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL—I am talking in general terms. The same sort of threats were made about the removal of various types of rationing. Mr. Bevan has referred to two things. In particular, I remember that when it was suggested that petrol rationing should be removed, which was a nuisance to everyone, it was said by the Federal Government that there would be terrible chaos and the most dastardly things would happen to change our whole lives, with economic troubles and insufficient petrol. But what happened?—nothing but good. We have had all the petrol we have wanted ever since.

I have referred to the dilemma of the old members. I should like to refer now to the new members because they should have no difficulty whatsoever in casting their vote. Price control is dying on its feet but will not lie down. I recommend to the new members that they put it out of its misery: that would be a most desirable step. I say deliberately that, if any member elected on the Liberal ticket votes 15 years after the ending of the emergency for the continuance of this piece of socialistic legislation, he must accept the brand of having socialistic leanings or at least socialistic tendencies. Has the Government frightened itself by its own eloquence on this matter? Has it developed a phobia about price control? I rather think it has. If so, we should wake it abruptly from its dreams with a little shock treatment; or does the Government think it has a tiger by the tail? If so, I suggest it releases its grip so that it can see that all it has is a mischievous little pussy-cat.

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

DOG FENCE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 18. Page 1677.)

Bill read a second time.

In committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 passed.

Clause 3—"Duty of owner to maintain dog fence and destroy wild dogs."

The Hon. W. W. ROBINSON—I move to insert the following new subsection:—

(2) Where the Board is satisfied that an owner of any part of the dog fence has failed to comply with any of the provisions of subsection (1) of this section the Board may serve such owner with a notice in writing specifying wherein such owner has failed to comply with the provisions of subsection (1) of this section and requiring the owner to comply therewith and within a reasonable time to be specified in such a notice.

I apologize to the House for taking two bites at the cherry. The original amendment on honourable members' files was based upon a provision in the Vermin Act which provided for a reasonable time to be given in the notice. We have today an amendment which alters the

wording considerably, namely, to provide notice of one month from the date of giving notice, which is a much better principle to adopt. That is why I have altered the amendment.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—May I ask the Government to withdraw this Bill and redraft it, because the amendments are bigger than the Bill introduced?

The Hon. C. D. ROWE (Attorney-General)—I do not know whether it is in order for me to say whether the honourable member would be in order in asking the Government to withdraw it. If he is in order, I say I do not think it is necessary to withdraw the Bill purely on that ground.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—The Minister must admit that the amendments are larger than the Bill.

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—Yes, but I do not think that is necessarily a reason to withdraw the Bill and submit it again. It is not as if the amendments are not easily understood because I think they can be read and easily understood. Under the Act as it stands there is a very short section 22 which reads:—

It shall be the duty of the owner of any part of the dog fence to cause the fence to be inspected at proper intervals, to maintain the fence in a proper condition and so that the fence is at all times a dog-proof fence, and to take all reasonable means to destroy all wild dogs in the vicinity of the dog fence.

There is no further detailed description of what is required to be done. The Bill as introduced in the House provides that where the owner of any part of a dog fence fails to comply with the provisions of that section he shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a penalty of not less than £50 or more than £100. I think the Hon. Mr. Robinson feels that by the insertion of this new sub-section the desired result may be achieved. Honourable members will note that the proposed new subsection says "the board may." It does not say "the board shall." It is not mandatory, but permissive. I understand that this is the policy followed at the present time by the board so what we are doing is writing into the Act what is in fact the present policy. As the word "may" is used and not the word "shall" I accept the amendment. If the word "shall" had been used that could have created difficulties because the board would have to prove that it had in fact served this notice before it did proceed under the penalty clause.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—As I understand the Minister's second reading speech time is the essence of the contract, the time that elapsed was too great and the dogs got through or under the fence. This provision will extend the time.

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—Mr. Robinson put one month in this clause because he feels that would be the shortest possible time in which one could expect a man to comply with the requirements and effect the repairs. A specified time was put in to avoid using the term "a reasonable time." There have been judicial decisions that indicate that the words "a reasonable time" are difficult to interpret when it comes to applying them to a particular set of facts.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY—I support the amendment. Where an owner has a fence covering a long distance and wind, fire or a heavy storm does damage to the fence it may be a little while before he is aware of it and it takes time to repair a fence. Any owner whose property abuts the fence and who has sheep or stock in the paddock would be anxious to have the fence repaired as soon as possible. When the fence was built about 70 years ago the honourable Mr. Hawker, when speaking in another place, said he had in six months lost a total of 3,000 sheep caught by dogs and he had scalped 123 dogs and there would have been many others that had been poisoned but which had escaped from the property. That illustrates the magnitude of the problem. The people in these areas must look after the fence if they hope to keep the dogs out.

Sometimes we get inspectors—I am not referring to any inspector on this particular fence but to inspectors under the Vermin Act—who get an owner in the gun or continually pinprick him. I have been associated with an inspector who would every month give a council or the Vermin Board trouble, but another inspector would have the work done effectively and the council would hardly know he was operating. The landholder should be given a reasonable time and if the time stated in the amendment is fixed it would be in the interests of all concerned. No landholder running stock would put up with a fence that is knocked down, thus allowing dogs in, because the loss to him would be too great. As I understand the amendment it gives a man a month to do the job, and I support it.

New subsection inserted.

The Hon. W. W. ROBINSON—I move—

In line 15 to strike out "(2)" and insert "(3)"; and after "fails" to insert "within the time limited by notice served under subsection (1) hereof."

Amendments carried.

The Hon. W. W. ROBINSON—I move—

In line 17 after "section" to insert "specified in such notice."

The Hon. F. J. POTTER—That section seems to read rather queerly if the words "specified in such notice" are inserted after "section."

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—This provision, if these words are inserted, will read:—

An owner of any part of the dog fence, who fails to comply with any of the provisions of subsection (1) of this section specified in such notice . . .

I think the Honourable Mr. Potter's point is well taken and there may be some drafting point that we may have to look into. I ask the Committee to report progress and that the Committee have leave to sit again.

The CHAIRMAN—Shall we carry it so we can have a reprint of the Bill?

The Hon. W. W. ROBINSON—I had some doubts about line 17, but that is how the amendment was prepared for me.

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—Mr. Chairman, if you feel it would be better to have a reprint I am happy to do it that way.

The CHAIRMAN—I think it would be better because it would come out more clearly.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Bill reported with amendments and Committee's report adopted.

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

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 18. Page 1667.)

The Hon. F. J. POTTER (Central No. 2)—I propose to move some amendments to this legislation. I prepared them this morning and intend to have them circulated to honourable members, but in the meantime I desire to move that the debate be adjourned.

The PRESIDENT—The honourable member will have to go on, otherwise he cannot speak again on the second reading.

The Hon. F. J. POTTER—I have not prepared anything to say on the Bill, but I did say something about the subject matter of this Bill in my speech on the Address in Reply. The time has arrived when this Bill should be taken off the Statute Book. It is class legislation of the worst kind and it has very largely outlived its usefulness. Amendments have been made to the Act from time to time over the years and a position has been reached where the whole thing results in a most unsatisfactory state of affairs. Rental fixations today apply to about 6,000 homes and this number represents a pretty small percentage of the houses in the metropolitan area. It is ridiculous for the Government to say it is achieving anything by keeping rents on that small number of houses pegged to about 40 per cent above the 1939 rentals. In other words, in that period of 20 years when, as Sir Arthur Rymill said, the basic wage increased from £3 to the present level, we have had only a 40 per cent increase in the level of rents. This Act deals not only with the question of rent fixation but with the recovery of premises by owners from tenants. There are still, in my submission, a good many legal difficulties arising from the way this Act has been compiled and amended over the years and there are still matters of hardship arising on the question of repossession of premises. That is a state of affairs that should not exist in 1959. I notice that certain remarks of the Premier concerning this Bill were repeated by the Chief Secretary in his second reading explanation. They were that the Government felt disappointed that because houses built after 1953 were freed from rent control—

The Hon. A. J. SHARD—Mr. Acting President, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

The ACTING PRESIDENT—I have counted the House and there are 10 members present, and it is in order.

The Hon. F. J. POTTER—Although the Government claimed that it had opened the door to rental accommodation being provided to the public through the releasing of houses from control that had not previously been leased, or which were built for leasing, the result had been disappointing. The Government was very naive if it thought that by doing this it would alter the attitude of the public toward the provisions of this legislation. Undoubtedly, the lessors have "had" this legislation and developed a psychological complex towards it; of course they will not provide accommodation for rental, having in mind the history of years and years of control. Section 6 (2) (*b*) deals with exemptions from the Act of certain leases and provides that only where the whole of any premises is leased freedom from the operation of this Act is obtained. I saw some remarks in the press recently by a gentleman who said there must be thousands of homes in the metropolitan area which could be subdivided to provide accommodation, and he went on to say it was a pity that such accommodation was not made

available. How can we expect people to make portions of their premises available for leasing when they cannot escape from the controls of this Act? They must lease the whole of the premises before they can get relief from the legislation. It is a stupid position.

Some time ago, I think in 1957, the Government made a worth-while amendment by providing that if there were a lease in writing for a period of six months, then rent control was not to apply. I know that that provision has been extensively availed of and I think it is a good thing, but surely the Government should have taken the obvious step and provided that where a new lease for six months was created after the passing of the amending legislation, that particular lease should be free from all form of control and that the whole thing should not revert to the position operating before the six months' tenancy was created. It is indicative of the attitude of the Government wanting to retain the last bit of control and not being prepared to say, "We will completely exempt leases for six months from the operation of the Act." If a person remains on after six months he can continue at the same rent, but the owner has not the right to evict. That is another stupid position and is completely anomalous, and I intend to do something about it if the opportunity arises.

Under section 54 it was intended that people who were prepared to share their homes should get some protection. If difficulty arose with a tenant in shared accommodation, the owner would have the right to give such unsatisfactory tenant two months' notice to quit, and he had to go or court proceedings could be taken against him. We all know what a big decision it is for any owner to accept an unknown tenant into his home and share rooms and then find after a period that he is not satisfactory and does not live the same kind of life. I suggest that it was to cure this particular evil that Parliament passed the amendment, I think it was in 1951, but extensive use could not be made of it because in order to get the benefit the owner had to have the rent fixed by the Housing Trust. This is ridiculous. Why this provision has been allowed to remain I do not know. People have been unable to benefit from the section because of the ridiculous provision that the rent must be fixed by the Housing Trust before the owner can give notice to quit. If anything is more stupid than that, I should like to hear of it.

Often I have had to say to an elderly woman on the verge of a mental breakdown because some wretched man had been accepted into the house, "I am sorry that you cannot give the two months' notice to quit because the rent has not been fixed by the Housing Trust." It does not matter whether one has a lease in writing, the rent must be fixed by the trust in order to get the benefit of that particular section. This kind of problem arises almost every week. Every legal practitioner in Adelaide will say that this kind of thing arises. It was recently decided by a Local Court magistrate that if a body corporate owned a property and wanted to sell it, it was not a lessor within the meaning of the Act and could not give six months' notice to quit on the ground that it wanted to sell the property. I think the court decision was right, because the provision is restricted to a living person, but I am giving reasons why I think this legislation is a junk heap that has been added to from time to time and I intend to oppose the Bill in its entirety. However, I should like to let honourable members know that if we should be in the unfortunate position of having to consider this Bill in Committee, I will see what I can do to clean up a few things.

Some time ago when it was provided that six months' notice to quit could be given for purposes of sale, it was suggested that there would be a wholesale evasion of the true intent of the legislation. Thereupon, in a rather hurried fashion, at an early session in 1957, Parliament passed amendments in an endeavour to correct that position. In my opinion they were iniquitous amendments, totally unnecessary for the evil that they sought to cure; and they are still working hardship and injustice on some people. It was provided in section 55 (*d*), which was passed at that time, that if notice to quit was given on the grounds that a person wanted to sell his premises and he later got possession, and they were not sold after three months, or after three months following repairs, if that work were to be undertaken, the owner must offer the accommodation back to the original tenant, and if he (the tenant) did not want it, the owner could let it again to some other person, but only at the same rent as the previous tenant paid. Do honourable members know that that section goes on to say that even if the owner does sell within three months and the person who buys wants to let again, he must report the fact to the Housing Trust and fill in a form to disclose that the premises have been sold and that he intends to re-let them at such and such

a rent? Have we ever had such a socialistic piece of legislation before? What possible necessity is there for a man who has bought a house to report to the Housing Trust what he intends to do?

The Hon. Sir Frank Perry—I should not call it socialistic.

The Hon. F. J. POTTER—I should call it totalitarian. It is about time we had a look at some of these things. I do not know whether members are familiar with a very controversial play written some years ago entitled "1984." It was a mythical idea of the playwright of what 1984 would be like under a totalitarian government, and one of the catch lines in it which was repeated over the radio and put up on placards everywhere was, "Big Brother is watching you." Is that not exactly the position here? The Housing Trust is watching you, therefore you must tell us what you are going to do with your own property. Perhaps I am digressing, but I cannot see much difference between what I am putting and what Sir Arthur Rymill said this afternoon on prices legislation.

Coming back to Section 55D—and this is just another little example of how this legislation works—if the owner gets possession of a dwellinghouse for the purpose of sale he is not allowed to re-let it except to the previous tenant, or to a tenant on the same terms and conditions as previously, if he does not sell within three months. Consider the case of a person who owns a pair of maisonettes—and there are a number of them around the city. Everybody knows that in practically all cases maisonettes are on the same block of land and they are owned by the one person. In those circumstances the owner has to sell them both. Supposing I own a pair of maisonettes and have tenant A in one and tenant B in the other, and I give both of them notice to quit on the ground that I require the property for the purpose of sale. I am rather fortunate perhaps with tenant A who gets out within the month, but tenant B says "I am going to stick here until the last day," so at the end of the six months I have to take him to court, and perhaps it is nine months in all before the order is effective. Under the provisions of this section the owner must leave half of the premises formerly occupied by tenant A vacant for six months without a penny rent.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—He can let on a limited tenancy.

The Hon. F. J. POTTER—He cannot because if he entered into such a tenancy agreement he could not get an eviction order. That is the sort of anomaly that crops up under this type of legislation. I shall have some more to say about my proposed amendments if and when the Bill reaches the Committee stage. I hope to have the amendments circulated next week and I apologize to the Council for being caught somewhat off my guard this afternoon. However, I can promise members something on the right lines when I speak on the Prices Bill next week. I oppose the second reading.

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

VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 18. Page 1663.)

The Hon. A. J. SHARD (Central No. 1)—This is purely a machinery measure for the purpose of clarifying section 22a of the principal Act to make quite clear what Parliament intended by giving notice to destroy rabbit warrens. This follows a decision of the Supreme Court which took the view that "reasonable" was not the correct term and that it should be definite notice. Clause 4 merely clarifies the expression "physical features" so that people cannot evade the notice.

I support the Bill because I feel that people who are unfortunate in having trouble with rabbit warrens and who look after their properties while their neighbours do not should be protected. District councils should have the right to give proper notice which must be complied with. I see nothing wrong with the Bill. It is not controversial as so many of the Bills discussed this afternoon have been, and I support the second reading.

The Hon. G. O'H. GILES secured the adjournment of the debate.

RENMARK IRRIGATION TRUST ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 18. Page 1669.)

The Hon. C. R. STORY (Midland)—I commend this Bill to members because it is a most important measure for the protection of the Renmark Irrigation Trust area. It contains an agreement between the South Australian Government and the Renmark Irrigation Trust, and it follows a decision by the Government to make available the sum of £500,000 as a grant and £250,000 as a loan to enable the trust to

carry out certain drainage works and improvements, and for the rehabilitation of pumping facilities and water distribution. The trust for its part must raise the sum of £250,000 from its water-ratepayers in order to qualify for the Government's offer. This will mean that over a ten-year period £1,000,000 will be available to the district of Renmark for purposes such as I have just outlined.

It is provided that each year, commencing from June 30, 1960, the Treasurer will pay the sum of £75,000 into a fund provided for the purpose in the Treasury, and that the trust will provide £25,000 each year for ten years from rates collected from ratepayers. Repayment of this loan is spread over a period of 30 years commencing 10 years after the commencement of the actual period. This virtually means that a term of 40 years is provided for the repayment of the £250,000, which the Government is lending to the trust at 5 per cent interest. Therefore by the year 2,000 the trust should have liquidated its debt to the Government.

The need for drainage first became apparent in the early 30's and there were two main reasons for it. The advent of the locking of the river in 1927 aggravated the little bit of seepage that was then apparent. The year 1931 was a flood year and the water was banked up for some considerable time against the levees. This further aggravated the seepage position and showed up the weak spots. The land affected gradually declined, and it was in about 1937 or 1938 that the trust first decided that it was necessary to do something on a reasonably large scale. After certain experiments it came to the conclusion that one of the best and most economical methods of draining the clay land where seepage showed up was by the open-cut method of drainage. This system proved reasonably affective over a limited area, but it has been extremely expensive in maintenance. In 1893 when the settlement first came under the administration of the trust, at about the time the Chaffey company was liquidated, the first trust had in mind that pumping of water would be done for about six shillings per acre per annum. After a short time, however, it was realized that this was quite impossible, mainly because of the seepage taking place out of the earth channels, and they found that double the amount of water had to be applied because of the losses being sustained. The trust doubled the water rate, and had it then been able to get a loan or grant I suggest that many of the problems being experienced today would have been obviated, because one of the greatest reasons for seepage in an irrigation area is inefficient water distribution coupled with inefficient methods of distribution by the settler.

The Murray lobster, know as the yabbie, has also played havoc by burrowing behind channels and causing drains to allow water to escape, even in the case of concrete channels, so the problem is fairly great. In the main I agree with the honourable member who spoke on this matter yesterday, but he mentioned one or two things that I shall refer to because they are not quite as they appear on the surface.

First, the Renmark Irrigation Trust about three years ago approached the Government for some form of assistance. It was told to go away and prepare a plan giving the Government something concrete to consider. It did not know quite what it wanted, but it knew it wanted assistance. So, with the assistance of the Government and its own resources, it prepared a very good contour plan, and with the assistance of the Department of Lands it printed a comprehensive contour plan of the whole area. It must also be remembered that the Government is contributing £750,000 from the Treasury to the trust in the next 10 years. All that money is interest-free to the Renmark Irrigation Trust for 10 years. A rate of 5 per cent over the period means a distinct saving to the trust. If it had to borrow the money from any other sources, it would be up for some £70,000 in addition to what it owes at present. The trust has the use of all that money interest-free for the whole of that time. Of the £750,000, £250,000 has to be paid back over 30 years, commencing 10 years after June 30, 1960—a lesser period if the work can be carried out in time or a slightly longer period if necessary. This will mean that over the period of 30 years the trust will have to make repayments of interest and principal on an average of £16,000 per annum. That takes into account the decreasing amount of money on which it will have to pay interest over that period. It will naturally be necessary to increase the water rate in the district for the trust to find its £25,000 per annum to match the Government's contribution. As an honourable member said yesterday, the rate is now £7 15s. an acre, and special irrigation is 25s. an acre. It will be necessary to raise the major water rate by £2 10s. an acre.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—Parliamentary sanction will be needed for that.

The Hon. C. R. STORY—That sum of £2 10s. an acre will probably be required as the capital figure plus an increase in the special irrigation rate, which will build it up to about £13 an acre. Honourable members will notice that that is a fairly large increase, from £7 15s. to nearly £13 in one jump to service the amount of £25,000 it has to find.

Where previously the Irrigation Trust had to come before Parliament to get an increase in its water rate, provision is made in this Bill for the trust to have the right to increase its rate at will but, if it wishes to decrease it, it has to get the permission of the Minister of Lands; and provision is made in the Bill for that. As I have said, this rate is a good deal higher than the people of Renmark have been used to paying, and it is more than the people in the districts of Berri, Barmera and Waikerie, who come under the provisions of the Irrigation Act, are paying. The people of Renmark, however, will continue to do what they have done for 70 years: they will at least give it a go and see if it works out. We can be sure of one thing that, if the people had not been able to set this money through their Irrigation Trust at the present time, their asset would have been of little use to them because now is the time to do something about the seepage problem and the rehabilitation of the area. The district is slowly running down to where it could become a completely uneconomic unit.

The next point I wish to touch on is that Renmark is entitled to a good deal of consideration in this matter because it is, and has been, the inspiration for all subsequent land settlement, not only in this State but in other States. Very many of the early mistakes were made in this form of livelihood and subsequently paid for by the individual growers. The early settlers have saved the Government and subsequent growers an immense amount of money in the experience they have been able to hand on to those who have come later into the industry. The Renmark Irrigation Trust and the people of Renmark are entitled to the consideration that the Government has been generous enough to give.

Government settlements function under the direction of the Minister of Lands, who gets his powers under the Irrigation Act. Under the terms of that Act he is bound to protect the Crown's asset because the whole area is under perpetual lease. He is bound to protect it in three ways: firstly, he must supply good water—he is told that in the Act; secondly, he must carry out the necessary drainage for the areas to function so that the Crown's asset can be properly preserved; and, thirdly, he must protect the areas against flood. No such provision, unfortunately, has ever been provided in the Renmark Irrigation Trust Act.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—Is that not a discrimination in regard to the growers?

The Hon. C. R. STORY—One must remember that the Renmark Irrigation Trust Act was in existence for a long while before the Irrigation Act was enacted. I do not know that we can be terribly critical of the people of that day, when they did not come under the Irrigation Act, because probably at that time they were far better off outside the Act; they had complete freedom of operation and were not bound by any bureaucrats (as people choose to call those in authority). They were free to operate, were freeholders and were proud of the fact; they did not desire to come under that Act.

As recently as two months ago, when that same question was put to the ratepayers at a general meeting of ratepayers in Renmark when this subject was being discussed, some people raised the point, but they did not get on very well because the people there still want to be responsible for their own destiny. However, I do not know how much longer that position will continue. My honourable friend's reference yesterday to Mildura and what the Government of Victoria had done for that district was very interesting. I should like to quote from the authority that he used.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—You are not going gack to 1895, are you?

The Hon. C. R. STORY—If it suits my purpose at any time to try to elaborate a point or convince an honourable member I do not mind going back to the Domesday Book, because the roots of all these things are buried in tradition.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—Surely the honourable member does not want to retain the atmosphere of Rip Van Winkle?

The Hon. C. R. STORY—I do not want to detract in any way from what the Victorian Government has done for the Mildura irrigation settlement, for it has done a particularly good job in the assistance given; but, in relation to these rather extravagant figures, I must remind honourable members that the drainage scheme that the Government is given credit for in the speech made by the Honourable Mr. Bevan yesterday was carried out in the depression years; it was financed by a small cash handout and the dole. Practically

the whole of the early Mildura area was developed in that manner. I do not think any of us wants to experience another depression so that Renmark may get the same sort of drainage scheme.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—The Victorian Government has given £1,000,000 to the irrigation trust at Mildura, and is still assisting it.

The Hon. C. R. STORY—I said I was not detracting, but was merely pointing out that the asset that Mildura can show on its balance-sheet for a drainage scheme was obtained very cheaply compared to the value that it got out of that work.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—There was a Labor Government in office then in Victoria.

The Hon. C. R. STORY—There was one in South Australia, too, about the same time. A further point is that in nearly all those comprehensive schemes that have been put in, the loading which the grower pays ranges, according to the scheme, from £5 an acre for 10 years down to as low as £17 for the overall scheme; but the charge is made on the land so that, if you want to transfer your land at any time, you also have to make arrangements either to clear up the debt with the department or to transfer the debt to the new owner. At least under this system here we do get a clear title, and the moneys are left with the irrigation trust so that posterity may take a share in the work being done today; it will take its share over 40 years.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—You still have to pay liabilities.

The Hon. C. R. STORY—Nobody is saying that we shall not; we may have to.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—I am just trying to follow your reasoning.

The Hon. C. R. STORY—I do not think there is much wrong with my reasoning. It may be a bit rough, but it is logical. My point is that this system of spreading it over 40 years will be much better than loading up the individual pieces of land with so much debt. The trust will bear the debt and recoup itself from the owners of the land each year over 40 years. It is interesting to compare the sizes of Mildura and Renmark. At Mildura water from the Mildura Irrigation Trust is supplied to 15,000 acres of land and at Renmark the area is about 9,000 acres or perhaps a little more. The area it is anticipated will have to be drained at Renmark is about one-third of the total area so that approximately 3,000 acres will be involved. Part of that area is drained now, but will probably come under the comprehensive scheme. Mildura drains about 6,000 acres.

Members may be interested to know what drainage will do for a district. In 1929 the average yield of sultanas per acre was 19.5 cwt. After drainage it rose to 28.8 cwt. per acre, which represents an increase of about 11 cwt. per acre. That increase was achieved 10 years after drainage. Those figures should convince honourable members that it is very necessary to have the land in good condition to get the maximum return for the water applied. I particularly mention clause 17 subclause (5) of this Bill. That refers to the powers of the Minister of Lands regarding approval for works to be undertaken. I make a special point of this provision because it is under this that the Renmark Irrigation Trust is required to raise £25,000 per annum to qualify for the Government's contribution of £75,000. The trust will not have enough money even with the increased water rate I have spoken of to carry out its normal maintenance of the installations and the channel system. I would like some explanation from the Minister in Committee as to whether or not his department is prepared to make a clear statement that ordinary maintenance work on channels will be taken into account in the spending of this £100,000 per annum.

It is, in my opinion, quite stupid to put in an expensive comprehensive scheme if sufficient money cannot be raised to do the normal maintenance work on concrete channels. If the water leaks out of the concrete channels it is going to be picked up in the comprehensive drainage scheme anyway but in the process a lot of harm will be done by seepage. I seek an assurance that suitable provision will be made in the schedule to be approved by the Minister of Lands and his officers for a certain amount of money to be provided for the normal patching work required in irrigation areas to maintain the channels. The cost of that work has been as high as £16,000 a year, but it has also been as low as £9,000 a year.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—Doesn't subclause (4) make it clear?

The Hon. C. R. STORY—No. There must be a definition clause stating what "rehabilitation" means.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—If you support the Government it will support your amendment on that.

The Hon. C. R. STORY—Probably so. I now turn to a period about 30 years ago when the Renmark Irrigation Trust, under the chairmanship of the late Mr. C. H. Katekar, was

a most moving force in starting the electricity scheme in the area. Mr. Katekar was instrumental in gathering sufficient support to start the electricity scheme that was to be used principally for the electrification of the pump-installations in the district. That was the first and primary purpose of the scheme and the second purpose was to enable the people of the district to have electricity. Under the provisions of this Bill the trust has been given a franchise to operate the electricity undertaking for the Renmark district and in Chaffey and Cooltong. At various times Renmark provided power for Berri and Lyrup and I think it is proper that the Renmark Irrigation Trust should be allowed to continue with that franchise because it is essential that these pumps at all times be kept under the control of the fruitgrowers. If a fruitgrowing area of that district fails the whole district will fail and I would be most disappointed if at any time the electricity undertaking in Renmark were taken from the trust or if it were found necessary to sell it, no provision being made for the trust to maintain its electricity plant as a standby for the district. What would happen if an industrial dispute should occur 300 or 400 miles from the district and it became impossible to get power with which to pump water? A delay of one week in pumping at a critical time would do irreparable harm in the district.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—There is no suggestion of its being taken over.

The Hon. C. R. STORY—It may be sold. I am voicing a warning that I will oppose its sale if no suitable provision is made for the trust to maintain its standby plant for the future. In the early days considerable sacrifices were made by the growers who paid an extra rating on their land to make it possible for this electricity scheme to be provided. I think it is a most proper attitude for the Government to allow this body to carry on with its electricity franchise. The first part of this Bill states that the Renmark Irrigation Trust is to vacate the field of local government. The trust has had the power of local government for 70 years, but with the additional work it has to undertake as a result of this loan it is generallly felt that the trust should vacate the field of local government and that this duty should be taken over by another body.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—It is a pretty good asset to have.

The Hon. C. R. STORY—Any new local governing body that takes over the Renmark Irrigation Trust area is certainly getting an asset because it must not be forgotten that the Government made approximately £50,000 available after the floods to put the roads in order, and besides that the Irrigation Trust has done an extremely good job in the field of local government. Another Bill before the House will solve the problem of local government in the area, but it is proposed under this Bill that the trust vacate that field. One local government body will take over the whole of the administration of the area. The Irrigation Trust at Renmark has, in my opinion, over a long period of years been a body that has largely stood on its own feet and when one compares the work done by that trust—taking into account the small amount of Government assistance given—with that done in other irrigation areas in Australia it is astounding how rapidly the area has gone ahead. I am proud that I have been closely associated with the trust for some years and I cannot say anything detrimental to it. I am very pleased that this Bill has been introduced and am confident that it will be passed.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 4.37 p.m. the Council adjourned until Tuesday, November 24, at 2.15 p.m.