LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, November 24, 1959.

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

COMPULSORY ACQUISITION OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 18. Page 1663.)

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN (Central No. 1)—As I understand this Bill it is not as formidable as it would appear. The Attorney-General, when explaining it, said it was necessary to make some practical amendments to the Act, and the Bill defines the powers of local courts in relation to compensation claims up to a certain amount. The Act has been in operation since 1925 and this Bill has two main clauses. The first is for the purpose of increasing the jurisdiction of the local court in this field from the amount of £450 now provided to £1,250. It goes further, of course, and makes it easier to deal with estates of persons who cannot be found. The jurisdiction of £450 was determined in 1925 and has never been amended, and in view of present-day money values I do not think that the proposed increase entails any hardship as it merely restores the jurisdiction to more or less what was originally intended.

The Bill also reduces the time limit from six months to one month before action can be taken for assessment of compensation as there is doubt about giving effect to these matters under the principal Act. Other legislation that we have considered recently contained the phrase "within a reasonable time." I understand that the courts have given decisions to the effect that "one month" would be a reasonable time and consequently we amended those measures by deleting "reasonable time" and inserting "one month." This clause merely brings the Bill into line with others we have dealt with and it will give some degree of uniformity in legislation dealing with this and kindred subjects. Beyond these two principal amendments I, as a layman, cannot see anything of great concern and I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL (Central No. 2)—I also support this Bill. It is aimed at two principal matters. The first is to ensure that the local court is competent to hear certain of these cases up to a limited amount, and to increase the amount to a limit of £1,250. The other aim of the Bill is to facilitate acquisitions and make amendments to one section of the Act which apparently is not of much use at present.

As regards local courts' powers, the obvious aim of the Bill is to enable litigants in similar cases to be able to use a cheaper and no doubt just as effective a method of having their claims heard, so I think we can readily support that. Again, the Bill aims at simplifying procedure relative to estates of deceased persons, and so forth. The object is to reduce the time which the promoter has to wait in respect of compensation from six months to one month. This principle has already been recognised to some extent by the Land Settlement Act of 1944. That Act provides by section 26 that in relation to the acquisition of under-developed land section 33 of this Act shall apply, but the time shall be three months instead of six as set out in this Act. The Bill before us provides for that time to be reduced from six months to one month. In the Minister's second reading speech it was said that no real reason could be found for this six months' wait, and I think that is probably correct. I think, therefore, one can readily regard all the clauses in this Bill not only as acceptable but as being an improvement to the law.

I wish to say one thing finally, and that is that during the life of the present Government it has never compulsorily acquired land where it has not had to, and that is a very salutary and good thing and it is one that members can praise the Government for, and should praise the Government for. An owner of land does not wish his land to be acquired except in very rare and exceptional cases, and in nearly every acquisition hardship is entailed, the owners quite often suffering a loss in the long run. That is why I think the Government has done extremely well in this matter. It has never acquired land unless it has had to, and that is a major principle of this Government, namely, that it will not interfere with ownership of property unless it absolutely has to do so, which can often arise in many cases in relation to public undertakings. Therefore, with those few words I again express my support of this Bill.

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

HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 19. Page 1717.)

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY (Central No. 2)—This Bill seeks to amend the Health Act

in a minor way. Section 123 of the Act, which this Bill proposes to amend, goes back to 60 years ago, and it provided that houses in the metropolitan area should be controlled in relation to sanitation. This Bill seeks to apply that provision to all buildings, and I cannot see anything wrong with it. In fact, it seems strange to me that this provision has not been inserted before, although it possibly has in other enactments. The Honourable Mr. Bardolph asked why, as this was a building matter, it should not be dealt with in the Building Act, but I think the Chief Secretary gave the reason. The position is that the Building Act does not apply right throughout the State, although county boards control certain activities. On the other hand, the Health Act does apply right throughout the State.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—The Building Act applies throughout the State.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—The Health Act has State-wide application, but although the Building Act also has State-wide application it applies only to those areas that are proclaimed. I see no objection to this clause because it simply extends the provisions of the Act to district council areas and townships. It will apply only to buildings on land of not more than five acres in area. Where the area exceeds five acres, whether or not the provisions of the Health Act apply will depend on the owner, and he will be responsible for that: the Bill does not make the local board responsible for areas of over five acres. I support the Bill and think it is a step in the right direction.

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 19. Page 1721.)

The Hon. F. J. POTTER (Central No. 2)—I listened last week with much interest to the speeches by the Honourables Mr. Densley and Sir Arthur Rymill and felt that they were both cogent and timely. I do not intend to quote any figures or to read any extracts, but I should like all honourable members to listen to some basic facts about this legislation. I want, as it were, to go to the very core of the matters referred to by those two honourable members, and I should like to challenge any honourable member to refute the truth of the facts I shall put to the Council, or the truth of the remarks I shall make about them. Fact No. 1 is that we have had in this State price control under State legislation for 10 years, and if it is coupled with its twin brother, Commonwealth prices legislation, we have had this control in one form or another for nearly 20 years. Just imagine that! In other words, people have been born and have grown to adulthood during the time we have had this legislation in operation. If I may be pardoned for using metaphorical language, I may say that these people have been taken through the garden of our democracy and shown the precious blooms, but have not seen that there is also a noxious weed there; and I say that price control is a noxious weed, but the trouble is it is not recognized as such by the Government, some of its supporters, and members of the Labor Party. They suggest that this legislation, too, is a precious bloom and each year we are asked to apply some fertilizer and water in the form of our votes to extend it for another 12 months. What is the lesson to be learned from the fact that we have had it for 20 years? It is that the longer we prolong its life, the harder it will be to get rid of it.

Fact No. 2 is that price control as it is at present administered is not price control at all, but profit control. Someone will say that this is only a play on words, and is an empty statement. Of course, all prices include some degree of profit; any final price must include some profit, and therefore it may be asked, what am I really talking about? Let us look a little more closely. The original justification for price control was, as has already been mentioned, that it was a wartime measure. When this control was introduced the defence expenditure was increasing, with consequent reduction in consumable goods, but with increasing purchasing power in the hands of the public. In other words, we had a possible price spiral developing, because basically there was then a shortage of goods. Of course, all sorts of controls were imposed to delay or prevent rises in prices stimulated by an excess demand, particularly in the vital items that were necessary for the defence programme. We all know that in addition to price control we also had the rationing of certain goods. Prices were stabilized at that time at ruling rates, and no-one can disagree with that, and whilst the costs of production remained relatively stable neither the producer nor the consumer had very much to complain about. Then, price control was price control; but over the years this situation, as

I see it, has changed. With enormous increases in the cost of production, price control, ignoring the free market of supply and demand (which incidentally it must inevitably do), developed into a system of cost-plus.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—When did price control first operate in South Australia?

The Hon. F. J. POTTER—I suggest about 1939 when the Commonwealth Government brought it in. Manufacturers and retailers, because the cost of production and overhead costs had increased, could apply to the Prices Branch for what they considered a legitimate price increase. These alleged legitimate increases were readily granted, and so we have seen over the years gradually increasing retail prices. That part representing profit was arrived at in most cases under the provisions of this legislation by some magical kind of formula which was based on the notion of what was regarded in the official mind as a fair price—profits were prima facie illegitimate and were therefore to be looked at with disfavour and suspicion. What is the logical extension of that kind of thing, and of this kind of policy? If we look at the situation carefully, the logical extension is that with the gradual reduction in the items subject to control we find there is a small class of producers who are now singled out for direct treatment. Originally, when price control was truly price control, a large number of goods and services were controlled for the benefit and protection of the whole community, but now we have a small number of what might be called vital goods and services controlled for the benefit, I suggest, of small sections in the community.

If we look at the items now subject to price control, and there is a list available to honourable members in the Parliamentary Library, it is striking to see that in most cases the goods and services controlled are those affecting the building and transport industries. In nearly every case one can see that the number of producers of controlled goods for one reason or another tends to be restricted, and as a result it is probably felt that prices might be dictated by a cartel type of agreement or some other trade practice—if, of course, complete freedom was allowed. I suggest this is the basic fear of the price control advocates, as well as the basic fear of the Government. As a result, it has been found that it is nice to have a bull dog in the form of this legislation to keep these limited vendors of important goods and services at bay. I don't blame the Premier for that. Probably, were I the Premier, I should like a bull dog too, but I hope I should deny myself that right in the interests of what I consider to be the broader welfare of all the people of this State.

This leads me to fact No. 3, which is that in our capitalist economy, whether it contains necessary social welfare aspects or not, there is a basic golden rule that the market should be free. We hear much about freedom, freedom of the press, and freedom of speech, but a vital thing in our democratic way of life is freedom of the market. The law of supply and demand is the life-blood of our system of private enterprise, and the free market is the automatic process of adjusting in every day of our lives the supply of all the multifarious commodities, goods and services to the demand for them. Every day millions of free individual choices are made in the market. The free market must be given credit for our rapid growth and rising standard of living. The freedom whereby price changes respond to demand and supply stimulates higher production and the establishment of new enterprises. There can be no doubt about that. The free market leaves to the public the determination of how much of each product is to be produced in the economy. Price control distorts production and creates bottlenecks in some instances, and in the long-run exacts some sort of moral toll in the community. There are always some attempts at evasion of the regulations and the Act, and ever present is the temptation for the authorities to seek the extension of such controls rather than their abolition.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—It is your Government that is in power.

The Hon. F. J. POTTER—The members of my Party as Liberals ought to believe in the truth of those central facts that I put before the House. If they do, I suggest they ought to be put into practice, and that we ought not to have excuses for finding exceptions to the golden rules because, if we start thinking of possible exceptions, that can only lead us in time to the making of excuses.

That leads me to fact No. 4. We are now, I suggest, getting excuses from the Government for the extension of this legislation. Let us look at the latest excuse. The Honourable Mr. Densley in his speech reviewed the whole progress of this legislation over the years and gave the changing reasons for its continuance.

The latest and central excuse, as I see it, in the speech delivered by the Minister was that it was necessary to curb inflation. Indeed, a figure of some £27,000,000 was given as the estimate of the excess purchasing power that would be in the hands of the consuming public next year. I do not know how accurate that figure is, but will not dispute it; I will take it as correct. I ask honourable members, however, "How will price control help curb the excess purchasing power in the hands of the public?" Let us look at the items still covered by control. If we examine the consumable goods, we find items like milk, bread, tomato sauce and soap. If we are to have £27,000,000 more in our hands, are we going to have a binge on bread or a splurge on soap? Let us be sensible about it. If this excess purchasing power is to be in our hands, where will it go? I suggest it will go, if it is there, in the purchase of durable consumer goods, such as motor cars, television sets, and electrical appliances, all of which are uncontrolled. The control of that kind of excess spending ought to be done by monetary, fiscal or savings policies; it should not be attempted by price control, which in fact not only does not curb inflation but, as any economist will tell you, adds to it. In other words, we must have some control of the credit structure, which of course is a primary concern of the Commonwealth Government. And yet, in spite of this patent fact, the Government still says, "It is necessary to have price control because there is a threat of inflation." It might just as easily argue that it is necessary because there is a threat of deflation, or because there are too many wealthy foreigners in the country.

That leads me to suggest that from all this emerges fact No. 5, which is that the longer we have these controls the more likely it is that we shall never get rid of them. That we can have a situation in which abolition will never take place is, I suggest, not idle fancy. When members of my Party persuade themselves in a time of buoyant production with no shortages that price controls are necessary, I suggest that we have taken a certain step towards the Left. If the Government thinks that even now it cannot do without the officers of the Prices Department, I can only say that history reveals many leaders who thought they could not do without many things in the interests of themselves.

I made a quotation last week. I shall make another. Do honourable members know that lovely little verse by William Blake, as follows:—

> O Rose, thou art sick!
> The invisible worm
> . . . . . .
> Has found out thy bed
> Of crimson joy,
> And his dark secret love
> Does thy life destroy.

I say that the dark secret love of people for controls is the canker in the rose of our democracy. I said earlier that price control exacts some sort of moral toll as well as economic toll, and I think that is perfectly evident today. Originally, it was the people who were controlled who were always seeking to influence the controllers, but today the people who are the controllers seek to influence the uncontrolled. That is the situation precisely.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—You really don't mean that?

The Hon. F. J. POTTER—I do. I read in the newspaper the other day a statement by the Prices Commissioner about some gentleman who persisted in charging some prices that were higher than those charged by somebody else down the road, and he said what a terrible thing it was and that something would have to be done about it. Indeed, he added that he had endeavoured to bring influence to bear upon that person. In other words, the Prices Commissioner said, "You can do what you like as long as I like what you do." That's what we've come down to. When were we ever free from the kind of situation I have referred to and which the Prices Commissioner seems to complain so much about? When did we ever get away from the fact that in a free market somebody might charge more for his product than somebody else? It might even go back to ancient years when somebody wanted two spears for his pony instead of one; we have always had it and it can never change.

It should be the right of the individual to name his price and let his competitors undercut it if they can. If he markets vital necessities and seeks by means of a cartel or trade agreement to hold the community at ransom I think that it could be dealt with; indeed, probably the Statutes of most countries provide some means of dealing with somebody who abuses his freedom, and, indeed, have members forgotten that for 35 years we have had legislation on our Statute Book which can deal with precisely that situation? I refer to the provisions of the Fair Prices Act,

which was passed in 1924. It is still on our Statute Book and it still provides that there shall be an inquiry by a board on any case placed before it where it is alleged that through trade practices or cartel-types of agreement the community is being held to ransom. It would be quite a good exercise, I suggest, for members to have a look at the provisions of the Fair Prices Act, 1924. Is it that that particular Act is ineffective, or is it that the procedure of going before a board is perhaps a little too democratic, or what? Why is it that we must have this particular legislation which cuts across the whole principle of our way of life and our liberal way of thinking?

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—What action has your Government taken to put that Act into force?

The Hon. F. J. POTTER—Any member of the community can join in making an application. There is nothing restrictive about it.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—Do you fully support those provisions?

The Hon. F. J. POTTER—I agree that a case could be made out in a democratic community for legislation such as the Fair Prices Act, but I am not agreeing that any case can be made out for the present Prices Act. I suppose some members will be saying that I have been talking a lot of stuff and nonsense, a lot of airy-fairy stuff that does not really represent the true way of thought of members of my Party. I promised the Hon. Mr. Bardolph a little quiz, and I am going to give him and other members of this Council a chance to join in if they wish. I quote as follows:—

> There is a very thin dividing line between the freedom of the individual and the welfare of the State. The Government, because of its sources of information, always knows when to intervene and impose controls. It always allows the welfare of the State to tip the scales when making its decisions.

Now, who said that? I can imagine someone saying that it sounds like perhaps, the member for Norwood in another place, or the member for East Sydney in still another place, but that statement was made by a leading member of my Party, and I say that that is the extent to which we have drifted.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—Who was it?

The Hon. F. J. POTTER—I shall not name him for I have too much respect for him. I am simply saying that this is the slipshod thinking that we have fallen into when we perpetuate this type of legislation. I believe, and I hope that some other members of this Chamber agree with me, that the time has come to remove this weed from the garden. I will vote against the Bill and I call upon all other members who agree with the truth of my remarks this afternoon to join me.

The Hon. C. D. ROWE (Attorney-General)—I would not have spoken on this Bill but for the fact that the Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill, when speaking the other day, asked if I would give a reply to certain matters, and he assumed on the spot that I would not do so, apparently thinking that if I would not reply by interjection I would be forfeiting the right of reply by way of speech. Sir Arthur said:—

> 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.

I am quite happy to talk about skating on the surface because I think we shall find it has been done by people other than those who are supporting price control in this instance. One of the reasons which Sir Arthur used in opposition to price control was that it had an adverse effect on various institutions and organizations in this State by making them vulnerable to take-over bids. If I understood him aright, he believed that because certain of our companies sold products which were the subject of price control they became, in some way that I cannot understand, the subject of take-over bids, and it is that aspect I want to reply to because, apart from that and one other aspect, there does not seem to be much else that calls for a reply. His further contention was that price control must discourage new enterprise.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—Are you going to answer the other question?

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—I am making my own speech and the first point I want to deal with was the assertion that various organizations in this State were becoming subject to take-over bids because of the operation of price control. I have been at some pains to find out the full details of all the major bids that have been made with regard to take-overs, and I find that in no case are the concerns mentioned or their products subject to price control. In fact, it seems to me that rather the reverse is true; that organizations where no price control exists have been those to suffer or benefit from take-over bids.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—I think you had better read what I actually said.

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—The first case attracted quite a little attention. One Adelaide newspaper made an offer to take over another newspaper. The facts were, in relation to price control, that neither newspaper nor the advertising rates of either of them have been the subject of price control for many years, so in that case the question of price control could not have come into the picture. The second instance was where a large airline company recently took over a smaller airline company. Airline fares and freights have at no time been the subject of control since the inception of the South Australian Prices Act, so that take-over bid cannot be in any way related to the question of price control. On another occasion recently an oil company made a take-over bid for the Adelaide Steamship Company. Here we find that the shipping company's activities were in no way the subject of price control although it is true, of course, that the products of the oil company were controlled in this State. In this instance it was the company which was itself subject to price control which made the take-over bid to the company completely free of it.

To give another instance, earlier this year an interstate furnishing reseller took over a furniture retailer in this State, and it is well known that furniture prices have not been the subject of price control for a number of years. Again, early this year a large South Australian engineering company took over a small local engineering company in this State and none of the products of either of the companies was subject to price control. In still another instance a large retail chain store with Australia-wide coverage took over a South Australian grocery firm. I think it is true to say there are five items which the particular stores sell, out of the many hundreds of thousands they do sell, which are still subject to price control, but in neither of those instances could it be said price control had any bearing. The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill said:—

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.

I omit now words which I do not think affect the context and quote further from his remarks as follows:—

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.

The instances I have given completely explode that argument and show that in no instance where there have been take-over bids has price control been related to them in any way at all, so the first argument Sir Arthur Rymill used in his objection to price control falls completely to the ground and has no substance in it whatsoever. There are instances of other firms that I could give, but I do not propose to do so.

The other claims made by Sir Arthur Rymill with regard to price control were I think that because it operates in South Australia we are not getting as many new enterprises as we should be getting. I have to be careful to quote his exact words because I do not want to be accused of not quoting them accurately. He said:—

The other direct effect on industry in general is that price control must discourage new enterprises.

I would like one or two facts to be given to me on this matter. I would like him to inform me what new enterprises have not come to this State because of price control.

The Hon. Sir Frank Perry—What about the new oil refinery?

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—That came to this State as the honourable member knows even though its products are subject to price control, so I know of no instances where we have lost a new enterprise because of the existence of price control and the facts and figures are there for everyone to see who wishes to make an inquiry. The facts are that new enterprises are coming to this State very much faster, on a proportionate basis, than to any other State in the Commonwealth. Our economy today is more buoyant than it has ever been. The newspapers from day to day carry reports of dividends which companies are able to pay which makes the statement by the Hon. Mr. Potter, that price control is profit control, sheer nonsense. The only time that was ever used was when it was felt there was a combine or some other arrangement in force the effect of which was to ensure that the consumer did not get the goods at a price at which he was entitled to get them. It seems to me, then, that those matters I have raised completely explode the two particular points which have been raised by Sir Arthur Rymill, and by the same token they

completely justify the attitude of the Government to this matter.

The only other point I wish to make is that the principal reason why South Australia has made such progress is that its costs in industry are less than those in some other places. We have numerous disabilities to get over. We have the disability of very great distances; of being a long distance from our principal markets; we have not the natural advantages with regard to the supply of raw materials that some other places have; but notwithstanding these disadvantages, because of the way this Government has managed the affairs of the country and of the confidence shown in it by the people, we are still able to progress at a faster rate than any other State in the Commonwealth.

I cannot feel there has been any argument raised up to the present time that in any sense justifies any opposition to this measure, and I ask the House to support it.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY (Central No. 2)—Year after year this debate creates a certain amount of interest amongst honourable members, and this year the House has not been disappointed. The last three speeches have been given by lawyers. Possibly they are the nearest approach to economists that we have in the House. That being so I do not know why two should oppose the Bill and the other favour it. If the Attorney-General looked back through *Hansard* he would find that some of his speeches bordered on opposing price control. This does not happen by accident because honourable members who are Liberal and Country League members believe in freedom of action and freedom of thought. However, I do not blame any man who does not see exactly as I see things in relation to these matters, because that is human nature. Liberal members are not bound by a cast-iron method of approach to this subject, but I am surprised that over the years so many members of the Liberal Party have stood for this type of legislation. I could understand price control in times of a crisis such as the war, when it was necessary. We then controlled prices, wages, and practically everything else. The only war-time controls now left in South Australia are those relating to rent control and price control.

The Hon. A. J. Shard—What about wage control?

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—We do not have wage control at all, but we do have wage regulation and wage arbitration. I can remember Mr. Chifley, when Prime Minister of Australia, being entirely opposed to the abolition of wage pegging in the same way that he was opposed to releasing price control. We released wages and one would think that in the course of time it would have got into the minds of most people that wages were the biggest factor in manufacture, selling, and whatever else was involved in the price structure. Prices cannot be controlled unless wages and certain sets of conditions also are controlled. I cannot understand why freedom of action and the democratic idea of the basic principles of competition—which are my ideas of the control and regulation of prices—are not applied.

I read the Honourable Mr. Densley's statement which gave the various reasons why price control is still maintained. If those reasons are analysed they remind one of good intentions which are not realistic. We are not applying a realistic remedy to the troubles confronting us. The Premier and the Government have had the support of both Houses on this legislation for the last 10 to 15 years, and I have wondered why. I think it is because of certain difficulties that the Government and the Premier know face South Australia. They have sought this method of overcoming the problems, but I think it is a most dangerous method. If we are not able to stand up to competition from the eastern States or the rest of the world, props like this will collapse sooner or later and the longer we are propped up the greater will be our fall. That sounds pretty drastic, but if we continue this type of legislation that is where it will lead us. We have had this legislation for a long time, and the effect of it on our economy is not manifest. We have had to operate under Arbitration Court awards.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—You would not like our economy to be like that of France and Italy, would you?

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—I believe in arbitration and we have a different rate of pay in South Australia from the other States. At present the difference between South Aus-Australia and Victoria is 4s. a week on the basic wage. That figure has varied over the last 20 years and it has been as high as 6s. and as low as 1s. Since 1953, when Victoria decided to relinquish price control, the difference has been 4s. a week. Five years have elapsed and the difference is still 4s. a week, yet one of the reasons given in the statements quoted by Mr. Densley was that control could assist to stabilize the basic wage.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—If you remove wage control I will vote with you on this Bill.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—I do not know what the honourable member means by removing wage control. I do not know who he thinks controls wages, but I am sure I do not. They are controlled by Arbitration Court awards, and some provision is given from time to time for payments above the basic wage. In the main the employer has no more say in what the rate of pay is to be than the unions themselves; they approach the court and argue their case and the result is a court award which both sides must observe. Price control should be eliminated. Although the Government is continuing this legislation with the best of intentions, I say it is misguided and does not truly understand the ultimate effect, and the longer we remain under the props of this legislation, the greater will be the fall when adjustments ultimately must be made.

Those who mainly complain about price control are those who are under it, and there are only a few. I was amazed when I saw the list of people affected. I understand that only five grocery items are controlled, despite the thousands of lines in this business. Anyone knowing anything about the grocery business knows there has been a vast change in the outlook, and price control has had something to do with it. Price control of grocery items at one time was very intense, and the chain store and the corner shop were kept down to low profits; and the chain store eventually found that the trade did not pay and a substitute had to be found for it. The result was the advent of the self-service store and the super market, resulting in the corner shop and the average grocer who had been subject to price control for many years finding themselves in an unsatisfactory financial position. They have not had freedom of trade and a reasonable profit over the years and the intense competition from the super market and self-service stores has forced them to the wall. I should say that this was the result of excessive price control on grocery items at one period.

The building industry is also greatly affected by price control. All those associated with the industry are subject to price control. That applies not to the manufacturer, but to the merchants—the distributors. Because of the few shillings that can be saved as a result of price control, it seems to me an unnecessary effort by the Government. The superphosphate and petroleum industries are still controlled. Whether the Government knows more about these operations than the average member, I do not know, but I should think that it and the Prices Commissioner must be far better informed of the position. The Prices Commissioner has much authority, but it should not be used when freedom of trade is the goal. I had hoped that price control would end this year. I do not believe that price control has the slightest effect on inflation. It is the wish that is father to the thought. I hope that next year we shall all agree that price control has served its purpose. I should not say that it has not done that—it has served its purpose over a period during which it may have been necessary, but the use it can be now is negligible, and cannot improve the position. I therefore indicate that my vote will be against its continuation.

I agree that it is advisable that somewhere on our Statute Book there should be a measure; whether it is the one Mr. Potter mentioned, the Fair Prices Act, or whether it should be associated with price control legislation as it now exists, I do not know, but I should support somewhere along the line authority for the Government to control cartels used to the detriment of the public. I do not know that they do exist, but they could exist, and if such legislation were available I do not think it would be necessary to have prosecutions at all. If there were any doubt in the mind of the Government as to the main industries associated with that kind of thing, they could readily be brought to halt by the Government. To continue price control legislation on a few items of trade when the vast bulk are free is unfair, ineffectual and unjust to those who are harassed by these controls; not that they lose money—I do not think they do. If a fair price were fixed they would be satisfied. I know enough about fair prices to appreciate that prices fixed irrespective of cost can be very dangerous. I know also that manufacturing and selling costs are not the same in all types of business. I feel that this should be the last time the Council should have to deal with price control in its present form, and therefore intend to vote against the Bill.

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2).

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 18. Page 1677.)

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH (Central No. 1)—I support the second reading. When amending Bills are placed before the Council

the Minister concerned should submit a fuller explanation so that members can be conversant at first blush as to what the amendments mean. When you were on the floor of the Chamber, Mr. President, it was the practice for Ministers to give a complete resume of the effects of amendments to the parent legislation. I therefore suggest that in future Ministers should give an overall picture of the proposals in the various Bills. With the exception of one clause, this is a Committee Bill. Bills dealing with local government are among the most comprehensive we are called upon to debate from time to time. In every State local government is very close to the people, as it is called upon to administer health, traffic and the development of urban and rural areas, and also deals with practically every phase of our material existence. All those associated with local government work voluntarily. They are inspired to do something on a community basis, and for that reason are entitled to receive from the community that commendation they so richly deserve, although at times they are subject to adverse criticism.

Under clause 5 of the Bill power is given to councils to postpone the payment of rates and charges in cases of hardship. Until now, councils have had no power under the Act to grant such extensions. Clause 5 will give the council not only that power but also authority in the case of hardship to old-age pensioners and others in indigent circumstances, who may be occupiers of a home or a building, to defer collecting and then on the demise of such people to recoup out of their estates the rates or charges that had been remitted for the time being. That is wise. Honourable members will recall that that has always been advocated by my Party.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—This does not apply only to pensioners.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—I said it applies to cases of hardship, to pensioners and other cases of hardship where people are not in a position to pay at the time the council makes its demands. All taxes are something of a hardship, of course: that applies generally.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—This clause applies to everything.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—Yes, to cases of hardship.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—It would apply to members here, too?

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—I think it will. Then in the Bill there is the question of parking and the onus of proof being on the owner. I do not propose to amplify that now because these clauses can be discussed in Committee. I should like, however, to refer to the Adelaide City Council and its proposed development of the west park lands. Proposals have been submitted for the provision of a new oval. I have the greatest regard for the City Council and its desire to improve the park lands in the interests of the people. Honourable members may have noticed recently a large developmental scheme pursued by the City Council in various sections of our park lands which will ensure the use of the park lands as they were originally intended to be used. As pointed out by the Minister as regards clause 18, this proposal:—

> . . . comprises 65 acres and is described in subsection (1) of the proposed new section 855a. The new section will empower the council to do three things in relation to the area concerned, or any part of it. The council will be empowered in the first place to grant leases to any club, organization or association for a term of up to 25 years upon terms and conditions, including the grant of powers to the lessees as set out in subsection (2). These powers would relate to the erection and removal of buildings, the exclusion of animals and vehicles and the prohibition of the admission of persons during any period when any organized sports were in progress and the charging of fees for admission. Any lease before being executed would require the approval of the Governor or be laid before Parliament. The new section will, in the second place, empower the council itself to exclude animals or prohibit the admission of persons to the area during any period when organized sport is in progress and to charge admission fees.

I do not oppose the fostering of sport. Before discussing that in detail, I should like to explain the Labor Party's policy in connection with Crown lands. On land development it states:—

> No further alienation of Crown lands and no further leasing or sale of park lands which may deprive the public of free access at all times.

The Crown lands are vested in Parliament or the Executive by legislation on our Statute Book. Parliament in turn has granted powers to the Adelaide City Council for the administration, conduct and control of the park lands, subject to Parliament's sanction. By various amendments, certain powers have been given to the City Council. I may mention that in 1957 it was suggested that the park lands could be used for parking purposes. It was agreed then

that the Minister, Sir Arthur Rymill, and myself, in view of the amendment I had submitted that the park lands should not be used for the purpose of erecting petrol stations, should meet in conference. We did so and brought down a composite amendment accepted by this House still giving the City Council powers to make a charge. The council still has power under the Local Government Act to make charges for the parking of cars behind the Adelaide Oval or near the Wayville Showgrounds, and to charge people who desire to lay tennis courts or erect buildings on the park lands.

I suggest to the city council today that the area of proposed development is seldom used and some distance from those people ordinarily using the park lands: it is near the railway line. Instead of leasing it for a period of years, the council itself should control any oval that may be constructed in that area. The council now has power to charge sporting bodies for the use of certain buildings in certain areas, but has no power to charge admission fees after these areas have been proclaimed by the council, other than in respect of the items I have mentioned. We are living in an age of progress. As Sir Donald Bradman said last night at a dinner given to the Port Adelaide Football Club, Australian rules football is virtually an Australian game, but we are getting people from the older European countries who come here with their own national games, and there is no provision for them to participate in their own sports, except at Adelaide Oval.

This clause of the Bill should be reviewed carefully because no member desires to see the rights of the people taken from them or the park lands being handed over to another authority outside Parliamentary control for the purpose of gain other than to the council. I suggest to the Minister that any project undertaken by the Adelaide City Council should remain under its sole control. This matter will be discussed in Committee when my colleagues will have something to say. I hope I have clarified Labor's stand on the park lands, and that we shall be able to preserve the originally intended use of the park lands and thus fulfil the desires and wishes of that great town planner of another age.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY (Southern)—I am happy about most provisions in this Bill and think we can go through the debate fairly quickly. In regard to clause 3, which relates to the municipality of Renmark, this power does not seem to differ very much from the practice in the case of other districts setting up as municipalities. It takes in not only the town area, but some outlying areas. I should have thought Renmark Corporation could take in those areas without this provision being in the Act, but I raise no objection to that.

The amendments dealing with a poll of ratepayers have clarified the position; they are all to the good. As far as I understand, local government bodies are happy to have these powers because it saves them a lot of trouble. The Minister has considered it desirable to allow local government authorities not to impose penalties for late payments of rates. I agree with that. Generally speaking, the councils have relied on that particular provision as a safeguard for themselves, so that they do not have to make a decision.

With regard to clause 16, it is desirable to have the signs standardized. The more we can standardize them the better. Normally, if there is a very wide range of signs it is as well to have a look at them before going through the traffic. Proposed new section 373 (*b*) raises the question of owner-onus. I understand it means that if a person denies that his vehicle has been left in a particular place the onus of proof is on the Crown or the local government authority, who must take the normal procedure of providing evidence and laying charges, and the onus will not be on the owner of the vehicle. Clause 7 provides for the construction and establishment of areas for the parking of vehicles, and I wholeheartedly support this amendment. Clause 8 deals with councils' powers for conducting a poll in respect of a proposal to borrow, and provides that a poll shall be deemed to be carried unless a majority of the votes cast at the poll are against the question and unless the number of votes against it is ten per cent or more of those entitled to vote. It seems a bad thing that rate payers should not be prepared to give more than twenty per cent of votes, and I am not too sure that it is desirable to go on reducing the percentage. Indeed, I think that if we increased it to say 50 per cent or 60 per cent it would get rate payers to take a greater interest in local government affairs, which would be better for all concerned.

Clause 13 regulates the control and use of motor boats and water skis, and this provision is urgently required. Anyone who goes to a beach on a hot day will appreciate the necessity for the control of motor boats and water skis in places where people are bathing, and

unless something is done very soon I feel sure that there will be a serious accident. I have pleasure in supporting this provision.

I support the powers proposed for the Adelaide City Council respecting portion of the west park lands, although this is somewhat out of my own realm. It is not much good having large areas of undeveloped park lands if people are not using them. The greater their capacity for use the better it will be for the public generally, and if it is necessary to have buildings—and obviously it is—the council should be enabled to provide them. The Minister said that they would be mostly for young people engaged in sport and they did not have the finance to provide all the facilities required. I do not know if I can quite support that outlook. I think young people should be prepared to pay a little out of their pockets if they want their sports, instead of spending their money in some other directions. I shall not oppose the clause for that particular reason because I believe that it is in the interests of all concerned that councils should finance buildings and let them to sporting clubs or to let grounds on the condition that clubs erect buildings and allow them to charge an entrance fee. Our park lands are particularly for the sport and recreation of the public and to give them an opportunity of getting away from their homes and engage in healthy recreation, and consequently I support any move in that direction. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL (Central No. 2)—This is, as Local Government Bills generally are, essentially a Committee Bill, but I would like, nevertheless, to say a few words during the second reading debate on the principles involved. Very rightly, the Minister brought in a Local Government Act Amendment Bill early in the session at the request of members so that we should have more time to consider it. I suppose that as he complied with the wishes of members on that occasion it is our penalty that we should get a second Bill, for it seems that no session would be complete without an amendment to the Local Government Act. This second Bill deals with a variety of matters, but I propose to mention merely those that I know something about, leaving it to others to deal with the clauses relating to Renmark, on which we have at least two experts here. Clause 5 relates to the delaying of payment of rates, and it is giving me some difficulty. I can see that it would be a help and possibly a boon to pensioners and such people, but it is drawn in very wide terms and, as I jocularly interjected to Mr. Bardolph, it could apply to almost anyone who paid rates. Whether it is good that it should be so wide, or even that we should have such a clause at all, is still exercising my mind, for as I see it though it can be of benefit to a number of people it will not be a very easy thing for councils to administer; indeed, whether it can be successfully administered or not remains to be seen because it seems to me at least to be a somewhat novel piece of legislation.

The next clause, as does a later one, refers to what is popularly called owner-onus. That, of course, is the negation of the ordinary principle of British Justice whereby a person is deemed innocent until proved guilty. But one cannot be a purist about these things in these modern times, with all the developments that are going on in a world such as we have today; one has to take a practical point of view, and this is an occasion where it is essential to do so because if such things as parking laws cannot be adequately policed everyone is inconvenienced. The effect of a law such as this—although it is contrary to established principles of justice—is really for the common weal, because without it the rights of individuals would not be as well looked after. In parking offences it is absolutely essential for the police to have some such provision as this because it is quite impossible to prove a case otherwise. Without this owner-onus provision it has to be proved that a man was seen to leave his car in a certain spot, and that alone is quite impossible; it might also be necessary to prove that he took the car away again, which would be equally impossible.

Further, powers are given to councils to construct areas for the parking of vehicles, and there is a provision relevant to the control of motor boats and water skis, to which Mr. Densley has already referred. There is also a provision with reference to the conduct of polls in respect of proposed loans. This provides that a poll shall be deemed to be carried unless 10 per cent of those entitled to vote oppose the proposal. It seems to me that this is a very salutary provision because it is very easy to whip up people in local government circles to vote for things on which they do not altogether know the facts, but it is not easy to get 10 per cent. Unless that percentage can be obtained surely it is an indication that there is no real opposition to

the matter in hand. Finally, there is the question of controlling park lands referred to in clause 18. The park lands, as Mr. Bardolph pointed out, are dedicated to the public and controlled by the City Council, and the council has the duty of administering the park lands in a way to encourage sport and recreation of the public. There is one difficulty that always confronts the City Council in that administration. I think that members of that council as well as of this Chamber will agree that it is not desirable, in general, that there should be buildings on the park lands. However, if we are to have sport it is essential to have changing rooms, and, if it is to be a major sports ground like I hope this will be one day, grandstands and so on are necessary. I do not know that any of us relishes the idea of these buildings, but if we do not agree to it we cannot utilize the park lands properly for the purposes for which they are dedicated.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—The same objection was raised in Melbourne with regard to the M.C.C. grounds.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL—That is so and, of course, the Adelaide Oval is on park lands. This is an important principle. I do not like buildings on park lands, but they cannot be developed without them. The new Adelaide Bowling Club ground, off Dequetteville Terrace, was looked upon by some with a certain amount of despair, but my feeling is that it enhances rather than spoils the scene. One of the most beautiful places in the world is Cinnamon Gardens in Colombo, and the houses there certainly add to the scene. I think the Adelaide Bowling Club buildings show that we can have buildings for proper purposes without detracting from the beauty of the park lands. At one stage the City Council permitted changing sheds and other buildings to go up only if they were of a temporary nature, such as galvanized iron. That idea wore itself out because galvanized iron buildings become permanent. If one did waste away another was put in its place so a permanent-temporary, unsightly structure was built instead of a decent looking permanent building. This power to the City Council enables the erection of buildings, changing sheds, grandstands, etc. It will be some time before that part of the development is carried out, but, while I do not like the idea of too many buildings on the park lands, the city must have them and I think this is a proper use of the park lands even to the greatest purist on the park lands, because we have people who take these things to extremes. Our approach to these matters must be practical and sensible, and I feel it is sensible to support these particular clauses. I give general support to the Bill.

The Hon. N. L. JUDE (Minister of Local Government)—I thank honourable members for the consideration they have given to this matter. As they have indicated, the subjects are fairly specific and I think it would be much more advantageous to discuss the clauses in detail in Committee. I refer now to two points that arose out of the debate, particularly one brought up by the Honourable Mr. Bardolph. I draw his attention to the fact that the clause relating to the park lands does permit the City Council to do what he suggests and it also permits the council under the terms of the lease to permit another approved sporting body to make a charge.

The other point I make is that honourable members will find on their files a further amendment, that is a by-law making clause, for another specific purpose referring to child minding by councils. I will deal with that when the amendment is submitted.

The PRESIDENT—One or two members have asked me for a ruling as to whether clauses 6 and 18 do not bring this Bill into the category of a hybrid Bill. A hybrid Bill is one that gives special concessions to special people, but not to everybody. Having looked into the matter fully, and having received advice from everybody from whom I could, I am satisfied it is not a hybrid Bill and it will therefore go into Committee in the way of an ordinary Bill. Any member may move that any Bill shall go before a Select Committee, but in this case I rule that it is not a hybrid Bill.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 passed.

Clause 3—"Amendment of principal Act."

The Hon. N. L. JUDE—The Hon. Mr. Story indicated to me that he wished to produce certain matters regarding this clause and in view of that I ask the Committee to report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

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

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 19. Page 1725.)

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL (Central No. 2)—I have previously expressed my opposition to this legislation and once again I

shall oppose the Bill for the extension of the Landlord and Tenant (Control of Rents) Act. I said last year, "The Act we are asked to extend is now about 20 years removed from reality." I will have to amend that and say it is now about 21 years removed from reality. We are living in the year 1959, and yet 1938 or 1939 rents are provided for in this legislation plus a paltry 40 per cent addition. Some people say that the landlords are receiving 40 per cent (two-fifths) more than they did pre-war, but I say that is definitely not the case. I did a small mathematical calculation a few moments ago and worked out that landlords are receiving only seven-fifteenths of their previous pre-war return in the way of rentals. The basis on which I worked that out is that money is now about one-third of its pre-war value, so I multiplied seven-fifths by one-third and arrived at the staggering figure of seven-fifteenths! That is what landlords are receiving, which is slightly less than one-half of the pre-war figure. I ask how can any honourable member conscientiously support a Bill that pegs landlords to that?

Parliament has selected a small portion of the community and says to them, "For the purpose of trying to keep the C series index down you will be the victims and you are going to keep the C series index down for everyone." That is grossly unfair and I cannot see how we can properly support this measure. I congratulate the speaker who preceded me on this Bill, the Honourable Mr. Potter, on the excellent speech he made last week. Tripped by the Standing Orders at first, he valiantly rose to his feet again and delivered himself of a very excellent address showing that he is not only a resourceful man but also that he has a very good grip of his subject, and I would commend to the Government the points that he made. I do hope he will proceed with the amendments he foreshadowed.

I have referred to the pegging and the fixation of rents under this Act, and I would like to refer to the other aspect of the Act, that is the pegging of the tenants in their tenancies. That aspect has been improved during my membership of Parliament, but I think it still operates in an unfair manner and it is very one-sided, and again I cannot conscientiously support it. The Minister in his second reading speech said, "The demand for rental accommodation is still very greatly in excess of the supply." That is a typical situation in prosperous times. I believe one could safely say that in prosperous times the demand for rental houses is always in excess of those available and probably always has been, and if the Government is waiting until the number of rental houses exceeds the number of people wanting them before it repeals this legislation then it will have to wait for the next depression, because that is the only way that position will come about.

The other matter in the Minister's speech I shall refer to has already been commented on by Mr. Potter, but I would like to add my comment. Mr. Potter said he did not think the Government was as naive as this particular statement suggested. I endorse that and say it shows a degree of ingenuousness with which I do not credit the Government. The Minister's statement was:—

> It was expected by some that the fact that new premises were free from control would bring about the building of houses for letting. In point of fact, however, very few houses have been built since 1953 for this purpose, apart from those provided by the Housing Trust.

The idea that the releasing of new buildings from control was going to encourage the building of places for letting surely could not seriously be held, and surely if it were members of this House could not be regarded as silly enough to have to swallow that one. What has happened to landlords of rented houses is that they have been put through the torture chamber and have had thumb screws and everything else put on them, and they have then been booted out of the door. This statement I have quoted means that the person who has done that torturing expects them to return for more. Landlords who own homes controlled by this legislation will continue to have a bad time and the old adage, "Once bitten twice shy," surely applies today. I think that this type of legislation has served its period of usefulness. It is very much in the same category as the Prices Act. It was brought in for a war-time purpose and it has survived and survived and here we are something like 15 years after the war in a period when I do not think things could possibly be more beneficially normal than they are at the moment. We have been living through years of the greatest prosperity this country has ever experienced and yet for the purpose of fixing rents on pre-war houses we go back to pre-war values, which are hopelessly outmoded on present conditions. Pre-war money is not the same thing at all as present-day money. It is an utterly different currency, though expressed in the same

terms. It is completely different currency of about one-third the value and yet we are still struggling along with reference to conditions that could well be forgotten. We are asked to continue this legislation for another year and if we do that this year when are we going to get rid of it? I think the answer is never, until some political earthquake happens.

This type of legislation was introduced in England during the first war and it survived in that country until the second war. That same control of rents legislation went on and on and rents were still being fixed during the second war, but even England has got rid of it. However, it seems that we cannot get rid of ours even though it is of much more recent origin. I merely say once again that I have spoken in each of four years now on this Act. There is nothing new that one can say. If members are interested in a more detailed argument from me they can read it in the *Hansard* reports of the last three years. I merely indicate now that I propose to vote against the Bill once again.

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

VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 19. Page 1725.)

The Hon. G. O'H. GILES (Southern)—The relative amendments are purely a matter of form. Clause 3 alters the time of notice by providing for a period of one month. This actually is the direct result of court action taken by several farmers in an area close to where I live. Their appeal to the Supreme Court was upheld, it being held that the time allowed under the Act was insufficient to enable a person to eradicate vermin. This amendment conforms to the opinion expressed by the Supreme Court.

Clause 4 defines "physical features" more effectively than before. Originally it was intended to cover topographical features, such as river beds, stony outcrops, and the type of country where it would be difficult to control rabbits. It was taken to refer to the size of an area where it would be difficult to control vermin within the meaning of the section. The clause makes the original intention quite clear. Sometimes one hears reference to the decommercialization of the rabbit, which relates to the prohibition of the sale of the rabbit commercially. This applies in New Zealand and is considered to have had a big impact in helping to exterminate rabbits there. The system works effectively in a country like New Zealand where farming practices are intensive, but in a country like South Australia it would be unworkable.

Members with knowledge of the country around say, Innamincka, know that the hills there virtually move with rabbits, and that applies also to country north of Goyder's line of rainfall in South Australia. I imagine that the application of the decommercialization of rabbits in that area would achieve nothing. The only way rabbits are held in control in such areas is by trappers being allowed to operate. In the more intensively farmed areas no doubt the decommercialization of the rabbit could have an effect, although I do not think that in South Australia generally there is a sound basis for that argument. Some of the troubles in administering the Vermin Act are directly due to the fact that it is done through district councils. Trouble sometimes arises as a result of personal relationships with a councillor when an owner fails to destroy vermin on his land. This results in difficulties in policing the Act. I have had much correspondence from the Inman Valley Rabbit Eradication Committee, which has acted independently of the local council that is supposed to administer the Act in that district. This committee operates over quite a big area and is doing a good job on a voluntary basis, which rather spoils the possibility of making a serious impact upon the problem. In a recent letter it said that it felt that regional control under Government supervision offered possibilities, and it also stated that a State advisory committee would be effective.

The present trouble is due to lack of finance to sponsor such a scheme. There are two long-term alternatives. First is the appointment of a State supervisor to amalgamate, and work with, councils in regions throughout the State. In the Adelaide Hills is a type of country that offers very good protection for rabbits. The soil is light and there is plenty of scrub and protection along the roads; whereas adjoining council areas consist of flat and harder textured country, such as wheat belt country. By and large, that country is not very dangerous from the point of view of increases in the rabbit population, being too bereft of cover. Some council areas include that type of country as well as land that extends into the Adelaide Hills, and there one gets a general laxity in the operation of the Act in particular pockets. I know in one instance where the rabbit population got out of control because the Act was not enforced, to the detriment of neighbouring councils.

As a long-term project, I suggest that a State supervisor should be appointed to co-ordinate the action of councils in their efforts to control vermin and administer the Act; and secondly, and better still, the administration of the Act should be removed from councils, because of the human element, and given to an impartial authority set up in Adelaide. As an example, I have in mind the control of keds in sheep, which is with the Chief Inspector of Stock in Adelaide, and there is no entanglement of personal relationships. Because of the terrific impact of myxomatosis, there is a tendency to laxity on the part of some people who say that rabbits are no problem in South Australia and therefore not worth worrying about. I disagree with that entirely, though I believe that myxomatosis has made a big impact upon the agricultural picture. Dealing with this subject, Dr. F. Fenner had this to say:—

If the rabbit pest is to be effectively controlled myxomatosis must now be accepted as a natural and somewhat erratic ally to the methods of direct control which will be described in the next papers, rather than as the sheet-anchor of the rabbit control programme.

The basic problem is one of finance. Perhaps it would be difficult for the State to find finance to deal with such a problem, but the same argument does not apply to the Commonwealth Government which, after all, derives much of its revenue from people living in the country, where the revenue can be greatly affected according to the high or low proportion of rabbits in the area. Therefore, Commonwealth Government action in this direction could pay dividends. I support the Bill.

The Hon. R. R. WILSON (Northern)—I also support the Bill. I travel extensively through our northern districts and very rarely do I see a rabbit these days. Although myxomatosis has been most effective in their destruction, I am not complacent about the position. This legislation would not have been introduced unless there was a real threat from this source. The Bill extends the time for which notice must be given to landowners for the destruction of vermin on their properties. I think this is an advantage, because a fortnight is often not long enough to enable an owner to deal with rabbits in certain places. Clause 4 clarifies the position regarding physical features. This was a weakness in the previous legislation in that it provided an escape. The term "physical features" was meant to include such places as hilly country with ravines which were inaccessible for the use of tractors and so on. Some people with large properties are always trying to defeat the Act by taking advantage of the position. Myxomatosis has been of wonderful value to the State. It is claimed that we are carrying 1,000,000 more sheep since its introduction; but it is also said that rabbits are becoming immune to its effects. I cannot visualize the C.S.I.R.O. allowing this position to remain and believe it will meet the situation. I was interested to hear the Hon. Mr. Giles refer to the decommercialization of rabbits in New Zealand, which has had a marvellous effect upon the menace. Some of the mountains there would present greater difficulties than areas in South Australia. In New Zealand no-one is allowed even to sell a rabbit, and the result is that it is practically free of the pest.

We are all greatly indebted to scientists, particularly those associated with the C.S.I.R.O., for introducing myxomatosis, because if rabbits had not been checked there would be very little to harvest this year. They are a real menace when feed is scarce. The Bill has everything to commend it and as I feel that it is necessary I have much pleasure in supporting it.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY (Southern)—There is not much left to say in support of this Bill. The local government authorities have always had the power, in the event of the non-destruction of vermin by landholders, to go in and destroy the vermin and charge them for doing so. That has from time to time proved ineffective as the rabbits have not been finally destroyed. In some cases, the authorities have gone on to a man's land and taken action but the rabbits have returned in large numbers. With regard to clause 3 I agree with the insertion of a period of one month. A person should have reasonable notice and it is a good idea to fix a period by statute rather than leave it to the inspectors to do so. In 1957 a Bill was passed in connection with the destruction of burrows. Section 3 (*a*) said:—

(1*b*) The owner or occupier of any land who does not during the simultaneous vermin destruction months in any year fill in or destroy by any other means all rabbit burrows upon the said land and upon the half-width of all roads adjoining the same shall be liable to a penalty for a first offence of not less than £5 nor more than £10; and for a second offence of not less than £15 nor more than £30, and for any subsequent offence of not less than £25 nor more than £50: Provided that in any proceedings under this section it shall be a defence for the defendant to show that owing to the physical features of the land or road,

as the case may be, it is not practical to comply with the requirements of this subsection.

Obviously, difficulties have arisen about interpreting the words "physical features" in that amendment. To clarify it now will do nothing but good. Myxomatosis has been mentioned by other speakers. While it has in suitable weather conditions been effective, it has been backed up by a poison known as 1080, which has acted where myxomatosis has failed to act. It is a good idea to take every possible opportunity to ensure that rabbits are kept down. I pay a tribute to the work of the C.S.I.R.O. It introduced myxomatosis, and later made a survey of poisons and had 1080 put on the market for the purpose of killing those rabbits no longer affected by myxomatosis. I support the Bill.

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

RENMARK IRRIGATION TRUST ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

(Second reading debate adjourned on November 19. Page 1729.)

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 to 16 passed.

Clause 17—"Provision for grant of loans to trust."

The Hon. C. R. STORY—When I spoke on the second reading I mentioned that I should like clarification of clause 17 (5), which reads:—

> The purposes of this section are the undertaking of such works in connection with a comprehensive drainage scheme for the district or the general improvement thereof or the rehabilitation of the irrigation works of the trust as shall from time to time be approved by the Minister of Lands.

As the Renmark Irrigation Trust will have to provide out of its own funds £25,000 each year to qualify for assistance from the Government, can any assurance be given by the Minister about the ordinary maintenance work necessary in an irrigation area, such as the mending and patching of channels and things of that nature? I pointed out during the second reading debate and point out again that in my opinion it is futile to spend large sums of money on an expensive comprehensive drainage scheme, on putting in new channels, if the old channels are not kept in good repair. If not attended to, they will leak water, which will find its way into the soil and do much damage. Can the Minister give any assurance whether the normal maintenance work involved in an irrigation area is covered in that annual expenditure?

The Hon. C. D. ROWE (Attorney-General)—I cannot give the honourable member a firm assurance on this point but am prepared to say that the Minister of Lands, in whose care this Bill has been placed, has always been pleased to consider these matters from a practical point of view. I am sure he will be happy to do so on the aspect raised by the honourable member.

Clause passed.

Remaining clauses (18 to 20), preamble and title passed.

Bill reported without amendment and Committee's report adopted.

SUCCESSION DUTIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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

POLICE PENSIONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

(Second reading debate adjourned on November 17. Page 1612.)

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

ADJOURNMENT.

At 4.58 p.m. the Council adjourned until Wednesday, November 25, at 2.15 p.m.