

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, April 12, 1960.

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

QUESTIONS.**SEARCH FOR OIL.**

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—According to press reports two experts from the French Petroleum Institute have arrived in South Australia and will carry out surveys for oil. Will the Minister of Mines give any information he has concerning their visit?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—The two French experts arrived this morning on their way to Alice Springs, where they are to make a survey of certain areas, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Bureau. They will return to South Australia some time next month when we hope to take advantage of their opinions and any information they can give us, with the assistance of certain seismic information. We are very anxious to take advantage of any techniques which they may have developed to assist us in our search for oil.

ADVERTISING OF MILK.

The Hon. G. O'H. GILES—Does the Government intend to bring down legislation to empower the Milk Board to advertise milk with a view to increasing sales?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—I have no information on this matter but will refer the question to the Minister concerned.

COLLECTION OF FINES IN OTHER STATES.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—A report from Brisbane indicates that State Governments will be asked to amend their legislation to allow the collection of court fines by police officers in each State on behalf of other States. What are the Government's intentions in this matter?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—I think the question arises from matters discussed by the Police Commissioners in conference. At present the States have to collect their own fines from persons who have gone to other States, and this involves police officers going to other States periodically for that purpose. I think what is referred to in the report from Queensland is that each State should carry legislation which would enable police officers of one State to collect fines imposed in another.

REGISTRATION FEES FOR ALSATIAN DOGS.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY—I ask leave to make a brief statement prior to asking a question.

Leave granted.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY—Some months ago I brought up the question of registration of Alsatian dogs. It will be remembered that we did not increase the registration fees for them when we increased the fees for other dogs. The reply I received then was that it was a matter for local government authorities. Since then there have been two cases—one within the last two or three months and the other yesterday—of Alsatian dogs savaging small children. The attack reported yesterday necessitated some 50 stitches in the child's head and the calling in of a passing motorist to beat the dog off. In view of these incidents I think we have to accept the fact that these dogs are dangerous, and perhaps we should do something on the Parliamentary level to curtail Alsatian dogs running about freely. Will the Minister take the matter up with a view to having further control over these dogs?

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—I shall be quite happy to refer the matter for investigation to see whether some further control should be imposed.

CADELL PRISON FARM.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Has the Government considered giving members of Parliament an opportunity to inspect the new Cadell Prison Farm established for the purpose of rehabilitating prisoners, as it seems to be an excellent proposition?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—I have not yet referred anything to Cabinet officially, but I am investigating the possibilities of finding a suitable time for a visiting day, or some such function at which members of Parliament—and perhaps others—would have the opportunity to see what has been done there in regard to rehabilitation of prisoners.

FUNDS FOR RENMARK IRRIGATION TRUST.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph for the Hon. S. C. BEVAN (on notice)—

1. What sums of money have been made available by the State Government to the Renmark Irrigation Trust in accordance with the Renmark Irrigation Trust Act Amendment Act, 1959?

2. Is it the intention of the Government to make a cash grant available to the Renmark Irrigation Trust immediately to enable the drainage work to proceed?

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—The Government will carry into effect the decision of Parliament as contained in the Renmark Irrigation Trust Act Amendment Act, 1959. This will be done as soon as broad details of the works planned are available for consideration and approval of the Minister pursuant to the Act.

HALLETT COVE RAILWAY.

The PRESIDENT laid on the table the final report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, together with minutes of evidence, on the Railway from Hallett Cove to Section 588, Hundred of Noarlunga.

ADDRESS IN REPLY.

Adjourned debate on motion for adoption.

(Continued from April 7. Page 87.)

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH (Central No. 1)—I support the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply. I want to associate myself with the kindly remarks made by previous speakers about the ex-Governor and Lady George for the remarkable manner in which they applied themselves to their high office; and also with the expressions of loyalty to the British Crown. I have often expressed this opinion in this Chamber, that the British system of government has stood the test of time and in no other part of the world have we witnessed any system that could compare with our continuance of Parliamentary government with at its fountain-head the British Monarchy. Consequently, that is the standard that every member of the British Commonwealth of Nations attempts to achieve in its responsible Government.

I regret the passing of Mr. George Hambour. Whilst not a member of our Party, the fact remains that he applied himself assiduously to the duties demanded of him by his electorate and his Party and became one of the most popular and kindly members of Parliament. I join with other honourable members in expressing feelings of regret and condolence with members of his family.

I want to say now that this House has always been looked upon as having two major attributes—dignity and wisdom. All members down through the corridor of the years have comported themselves within the confines of

those cardinal principles but, unfortunately, the seconder of the Address in Reply, Mr. Potter, somewhat besmirched the reputation of wisdom that is expected of members of this House when he made an implied criticism of the methods adopted by the Federal Arbitration Commission. I quite agree, as every honourable member does, that he has every right to offer advantageous criticism on any decision.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—You mean, in view of what has happened today?

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—I am coming to that. The honourable member knows where the Opposition stands in that regard: we believe in conciliation and arbitration, and we accept the decisions of the umpire. But Mr. Potter's dissertation the other afternoon—and he has every right to express his opinion—could and would be taken as an attack upon a successful system of conciliation and arbitration that has never been excelled in any other part of the world. It is not so many years ago, during the period that I was president of the Trades and Labor Council and chairman of the Manpower Advisory Committee in this State during the last war, that a similar policy of vilification was indulged in as part of the policy of the Communist Party, the object and main purpose being, as every honourable member here knows, to attempt to create public disquiet and ridicule of an established institution for the purpose of its ultimate destruction. I am not suggesting that Mr. Potter subscribes to that doctrine, but I do suggest that his remarks can be taken by those who embrace that philosophy and used for the purpose of advancing the claims of those who are opposed to our British way of life.

The position is this. The judges of the Arbitration Court are in the same position as the judges of the Supreme Court: they have no opportunity of coming to a Parliament to express their views in contradiction of something that may have been said about them. It is a very old axiom that courtesy and grace demand that members of the judiciary are relieved of any public criticism, and more particularly so in a Parliament where we have privilege, as to whether they are capable of carrying out the duties imposed upon them. I say this with no rancour in my mind or heart, but I think Mr. Potter allied himself with those people I have referred to in criticizing a noble institution, a creation of Parliament many years ago, and the outcome of the desires and wishes of the people of this State and we have a duly elected Parliament

and not a junta, as is found in the totalitarian countries of the world today. I say to Mr. Potter: Either you believe in arbitration or you do not. You cannot have arbitration piecemeal. If you subscribe to arbitration, then you have to accept the decisions that may be made by the court. I quite agree that some employers and trade unions disagree with them but, if you believe in the principle of arbitration, then you have to recognize that you cannot have it piecemeal or half and half.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—Does not your Party ever criticize decisions?

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—Yes, but we do not use the forum of Parliament to imply that the judges are not capable of carrying out their duties, to criticize the capacity of the judges. We have every right—and I concede to Mr. Potter this afternoon that he has every right—to criticize the decisions of the Arbitration Court, but I remind him that those decisions are arrived at after the plaintiff and the defendant, or the applicant union and the employers' federation, present their facts and figures before the judge or Conciliation Commissioner for the purpose of enabling him to give a decision.

I want to point out that Mr. Potter attempted to couple up the basic wage with the margins, but they are distinct payments. It may be illuminating for honourable members to know that the late Charles Cameron Kingston had something to say about, and made some very good contributions to, the establishment of the Arbitration Court. I refer to the *Modern Economic History* (which I suggest Mr. Potter should read) by Professor Heath, who, as honourable members know, was associated with our university here some years ago. In the early establishment of arbitration, this is what the late Mr. (as he then was) Kingston said:—

In South Australia it was laid down in 1910 that, whilst fair and reasonable wages should be fixed, boards must take into consideration rates fixed for industry in Victoria so as not to handicap local industries by subjecting them to the competition of lower paid labour elsewhere.

I think that statement contains the kernel of the whole Federal arbitration system. When Mr. Potter says that the Federal Arbitration Court awards circumvent the activities or sovereign powers of States or State Parliaments, I put it to him frankly this afternoon: Does he desire this State to become a slave State with low wages in comparison with other States? Does he desire that Victoria and New

South Wales should be placed in a similar category or does he desire the maintenance of the Federal system of arbitration? His Party says it does. The Federal Arbitration Court was established by the federation of the States and it is not necessary for me to remind some of the captains of industry in this Chamber that its formation was actively brought about by the shearers' and seamen's unions. As each State developed its own secondary enterprises, it was found that a similar class of employee worked in another State and the wage for such employees had to be made uniform so that there would be no unfair competition between the States. Once that principle was established it became the basis upon which we all accepted the decisions and the ramifications of the present arbitration set-up.

In 1924 the Bruce-Page Government, which was one of the same political complexion as that the Hon. Mr. Potter represents, tried to abolish the Arbitration Court and attempted to get back to the law of the jungle. There were some very heavy hearts after the next election because Mr. Bruce lost Dandenong, which was a blue-riband seat for the Liberal Party. That indicated that a great many people in Victoria and in other places desired no change in the system that had been in force over the years. The people took the first opportunity to relegate into political obscurity those politicians who tried to abolish the court. The arbitration system will not become a mosaic piece of work, nor will it become a jig-saw puzzle. It is one solid system, and the desires of industry as a whole are considered before the court makes any decision.

The Hon. Mr. Potter referred to trade union secretaries and he said that they could sit in their offices and write a letter to another State, and that in view of their fear of coming up for an election within 12 months or five years they would probably create interstate disputes. I gave Mr. Potter more credit than to make a statement like that.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—Do not sound so worried about it.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—I want to place the facts before members in this Chamber. There is no trade union secretary in Australia today, nor has there been prior to today, who desired an industrial dispute on his hands. Industrial disputes are the result of ferments and the desires of the people the trade union secretary represents. Mr. Potter is in error when he says that trade union secretaries are elected every 12 months or five years. The maximum period for which trade

union secretaries are elected is three years. I refer now to the activities of trade unions during the war. The political section of the labor movement is represented by the Australian Labor Party and the industrial section is represented by the trade union movement. Both of these forces have come together for the purpose of doing good for the whole of Australia on the industrial side. They have tried to do good for the artisan—the man producing the goods—and to add to the wealth of the nation, and they have attempted to see that just wages, conditions and laws are passed to protect the people. That statement reminds me of the advent of the trade union movement in Great Britain.

In the early 18th century, with the advent of Watt's steam engine—this led to the Industrial Revolution—there were no laws governing working hours or conditions, and the result was that there was much disquiet. In about 1850 the advent of trade unionism was feared, and restrictive laws were passed. As a result of these laws the Tolpuddle martyrs came to Australia. One of the descendants of these people today holds a very responsible position in the Commonwealth Public Service. Towards the end of the 18th century trade unionism made itself manifest in Australia. Its advent was hastened by the gold-rush and by actions relating to seamen and shearers. That is a sketchy background of the history of the trade union movement. Mr. Potter said that if the decisions of the arbitration court were permitted to continue that would sound the death knell of representative State government. I have always subscribed to the sovereignty of the States and I have made no bones about my views on that particular aspect of government. However, it was a government of the same political Party as that to which the Hon. Mr. Potter belongs that tied this State to the Loan Council. Today we find a government of the same political background occupying the Treasury benches in Canberra, and it is lending back to the States a surplus of taxation through the Loan Council by way of loans for which the people are required to pay interest. If Mr. Potter desires to correct these things he should move within the confines of his own Party and do whatever he thinks necessary to correct such a position. If he does that he will have the support of the Opposition.

The Hon. F. J. Potter—We can do what we like with the money when we get it, anyhow.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—I do not know that we can. I remind the honourable

member that there was a Commonwealth housing agreement which was brought in by a Labor Government and which was altered by the present State Government, which refused to ratify it. Another type of scheme was evolved by the Menzies Government, and that scheme restricted the manner in which the money was to be spent. Mr. Potter should know that. We have been asked how we can judge prosperity. We have progressed a long way since the establishment of federation in Australia, and South Australia has progressed a long way since we have had representative government. South Australia has become a most prosperous State, because everyone desired that the State remain on an even keel. The Labor movement has played a prominent part in that prosperity, and so have the workers in industry, and they have every right, and I think Mr. Potter will agree with this, to have conceded to them some share of the prosperity that has been brought about by their activities and by the activities of the captains of industry in the extension of their particular industries. For Mr. Potter's information, I mention that a share of the prosperity in industry has been brought about by the workers' desire to have industrial peace. That gainsays what he says regarding trade union secretaries desiring to create interstate disputes. Last year the Australian nation lost only one-sixth as many working days because of strikes as it did in the same period three years earlier. The men worked harder in the last five years and productivity increased by more than 5 per cent annually. If honourable members read Mr. Potter's speech, they will see that his statistics are out of date, when he says the increase has been only 1 per cent.

If all these calamities are about to take place in South Australia and Australia, as Mr. Potter has said, why is it there is so much capital pouring into Australia from both America and Great Britain? It does not seem feasible that investors would invest their money in a country which has high wages and the possibilities of recurring strikes. They would tremble to invest their money here, if that were the case. The British investment in Australia is still the largest of any overseas country. Giving the amounts in dollars, British investment in Australia amounts to 1.7 billion as against 480 million by America. The United States investment is now overtaking British investment and is expected to reach one billion dollars by the end of the year. That is the greatest compliment any nation could pay,

namely, by investing their resources in a partially developed country like Australia. Australians themselves are investing 25 per cent of the national income in production. Today Australia produces not only aeroplanes, ships and diesel locomotives, but such modern technological products as guided missiles, transistor radios, and radio-active isotopes, all of which were previously imported and which it was said the Australian artisan could not manufacture. The know-how was brought here by overseas people, and those in executive control of industry played their part, and I compliment them.

With the co-operation of employees, such industries as General Motors-Holdens are possible. This company is making an all-Australian car and truck, manufacturing 115,000 vehicles a year. That does not indicate that a dismal time is ahead or that the Australian workman is getting more out of industry than industry can afford. I shall not recapitulate the profits made by this company, because under our existing laws legitimate industry is entitled to make profits. The Broken Hill Proprietary Company established a new blast furnace at Port Kembla, and it is the third biggest steel producer in the British Commonwealth, with an annual output of 3,000,000 tons. During the war the Labor Government utilized the services of this company—not only its machinery, but its executive. Sir Essington Lewis and other capable people were seconded by the Commonwealth Government to gear the industries of Australia for war output. It was a Labor Government which assisted the establishment of a blast furnace at Whyalla. Whilst it could have made huge profits during the war by selling its steel, it was prepared to sell it at £15 to £20 a ton lower than the market price for imported steel. I have a recollection of the then Minister for the Navy, Mr. Makin, complimenting the company on its attitude in this regard. When you get people trying to decry what has been done by Labor, I say it has played an integral part in our economic advancement, as other sections of the community have done.

Barely 10 years ago Australia's electricity production was 9 million kilowatt hours, whereas today it is 21 million. Our factory production has trebled since 1948. Mining operations began in Australia in 1851 and now we have the Rio Tinto uranium field in Queensland which has a reserve of 90,000,000 tons. All these things are an answer to Mr. Potters' dismal picture of Arbitration Court decisions. In Queensland we have at Cape York the

largest bauxite field in the world with a deposit of more than 400,000,000 tons. The shares of the British tobacco firm of Rothman's since it was established in Australia about five years ago have increased in value by 32 per cent, and I pay it a compliment. According to the press, I understand that it has provided £125,000 as a grant to Australian Universities for scholarships, including bursaries for overseas study. This is as a contribution to the scientific development of the personnel teaching at our universities. Among other things Mr. Potter said that State Governments were faced with the demand for more and more services, and in his opinion the Arbitration Commission had not clearly understood how to make the proper measurements in assessing whether or not there had been increases in productivity. I have shown by the Statistician's figures that our production has increased three times since 1948. Mr. Potter also said that the productivity of Australia had almost certainly not increased at a greater rate than 1 per cent. It seems extraordinary that Mr. Potter, with his training as a barrister, did not attempt to verify this figure.

The Hon. F. J. Potter—I said real productivity.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—That is just a legal term. There are so many gates in the legal field that once these people are yarded into one corner another gate opens for them to get through. He gave a list—which members generously allowed him to have incorporated in *Hansard* without reading it—covering Federal awards in a large number of industries. In effect, he said that Government employees involved in work of a similar character to that of private industry should not be paid the same rate of pay.

The Hon. F. J. Potter—I did not say that.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—The honourable member said that they should not have access to the Arbitration Court for the purpose of determining their pay and conditions where they were doing the same class of work as is done in private enterprise. I do not think that would be very popular if the honourable member went out in Central District No. 2 and advocated it.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—You ought to be grateful to him. He has kept you going for half an hour.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—I admit that he provided me with some food for thought and I burnt the midnight oil to garner facts for the purpose of showing Mr. Potter exactly

where he stood regarding the judiciary, and to correct him where he made some erroneous statements regarding employees. The programme outlined by the Playford Government is a very nebulous one. This might be termed a legal session because the whole of His Excellency's Speech indicated that we shall have only amendments of various Acts before us. I say that the Government's programme is colourless and nebulous because there was not one reference in His Excellency's Speech to what the Government proposed to do to halt inflation, or with regard to land settlement. The Hon. Mr. Giles suggested a scheme whereby the Government could buy improved or partially improved properties and place men on them.

The Hon. G. O'H. Giles—No, I said help to finance them.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—It amounts to the same thing. Such a scheme was enunciated by the Labor Government of Tasmania. All things that make for the progress and development of the States have emanated from Labor's policy.

The Hon. E. H. Edmonds—This State has been doing that for years.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—Laws have been placed on our Statute Book with the aid of the Labor Party, and I do not need to mention certain measures on which true blue Liberals voted against the Government but came forward to take the bow when ultimately there was some kudos to be gained. Mr. Giles also referred to a bounty of 2s. 2d. a pound paid in Great Britain on certain agricultural products. The honourable member is very short in political experience and he should read of the activities of the Chifley and Curtin Governments, particularly with regard to the dairy industry. When that industry was passing through a parlous period the Commonwealth Labor Government set up a commission with a view to placing the industry upon an economic basis. On the findings of that commission the Labor Government acted for the benefit of the industry. It did likewise with regard to wheat and wool and other primary products, bringing success to the industries in a time of strife and travail. The Labor movement, through its Governments, has always come to the aid of rural industries in an attempt to see that they got better prices for their products overseas than they were getting hitherto. I could take members' minds back to the wheat agreement that was signed by a Labor Government. When the Menzies Gov-

ernment in 1956 made a new agreement the wheatgrowers lost not only their potential markets but a large amount which they would not have lost had a Labor Government negotiated the agreement.

I have made my few sketchy remarks in all good feeling, and in the hope that I have placed Mr. Potter particularly on the right track with regard to the Arbitration Court, and I know that, having had his mistakes pointed out, he will not commit the same offence again regarding employees.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY (Southern)—Firstly, I desire to associate myself with the loyal sentiments expressed by others regarding Her Majesty the Queen and other members of the Royal Family. I, too, would like to pay a tribute to Sir Robert and Lady George for the very splendid work they did whilst in South Australia. We have had a number of very good Governors, and we can say that Sir Robert and Lady George more than upheld the standard we have enjoyed for so many years. They travelled throughout the country areas and possibly knew the State better than most South Australians. They endeared themselves to the people by their very kindly dispositions and interest in the affairs of the country. Also, I would like to pay a tribute to the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Mellis Napier. I think he has done a very good job for South Australia. Not only has he been Chief Justice—a task that he has carried out very well indeed—but he has been Lieutenant-Governor on many occasions and has filled that office extremely well. Also, he is Chancellor of the University, and generally he has lived a very full life on behalf of South Australia. I take this opportunity of conveying to him our appreciation of his efforts.

The death of the member for Light, Mr. George Hambour, has aroused in all of us a desire to pay a tribute to the work he did in the short period during which he was a member of Parliament. He was a kindly and friendly personality. He had, I think, a very keen perception, and took a very active and personal interest in all matters pertaining to family life. His work in Parliament was outstandingly good.

I think most people—at any rate all people living in Adelaide and a very great number of those in country areas—appreciated very much the Festival of Arts which has just concluded, and I offer my congratulations to the Board of Governors and the officers under whose control the festival was conducted. We had

some very fine programmes and I think most tastes were catered for. It was, I am sure, a very great uplift for art. It was pleasing to find that the promoters encouraged local talent; they called for a local play, and one was written and produced by local artists. I think that is a tribute to the capacity of South Australian artists, and I am very pleased indeed to learn that it has been decided to have another festival in 1962. The one just concluded provided great enjoyment for a great many people, and there are few undertakings that have provided so much pleasure to a great majority of the residents of this State.

Quite a number of remarks have been passed regarding the Theatre Royal, and it has been discussed here on previous occasions. Consequently, it was very interesting to hear some of the remarks of the visiting artists regarding it, and I hope it may be possible to maintain it as a theatre for a long time to come. Another note was struck by some of the visitors, and that was the provision of a national theatre. It seems to me that if we are to have these festivals, and are going to utilize their attractions as a draw card for South Australia, we as a Parliament must be prepared to put some backing into them to show that we really believe in and appreciate the good that can come out of them. I suggest to the Government that we have a national theatre, and I feel confident that if the Government was prepared to finance it on a subsidy basis and take over the management and control the public would support it, and that very much of the profit that we have heard members talking about in certain quarters in the last few days would find its way towards a building fund. I am sure it is not beyond the people of South Australia, if they set their minds to it, to find the necessary money. Having found the money, from time to time they would be prepared to pay towards the maintenance of the theatre. We can visualize what a very great attraction it would be to have a national theatre and a Festival of Arts and the necessary buildings in which to hold these functions.

I congratulate the Government on the planning and leadership shown during recent years. I know members are well aware of it, but sometimes we hear criticism of what the Government is doing. However, the manner in which the requirements of a rapidly increasing population and great industrial expansion have been met leaves little to be questioned. It does not hurt when we feel that we should

express our views in that regard. The Government has done well in maintaining a sound economy. Even though we have had a drought, the economy has not been more than perhaps badly shaken. The Government has done well to meet the needs of the great increase in population in the matter of education, hospitalization, housing, water, electricity, land and mineral development, and improvement of roads, all of which I think are greater in extent than was thought possible by people even just a few years ago. I congratulate the Government on what it has done. I do not want to make a speech that is nothing but congratulations but, while I am in the mood, I want to congratulate the City Council and members of our local government bodies. There has been an improvement in the widening of streets in Adelaide, and a great improvement in the development of our river and parklands area, and the making of lakes, some of the works still being in progress. It has been a fine gesture on the part of the City Council to provide the money for that purpose, for the work will make Adelaide a better city to live in and attract people to it from all over the world. Many local government bodies—I am not confining these remarks merely to the City Council—are doing very good work, for which I express my appreciation. The West Beach recreation reserve is fast turning from a horrible place to look at into a place of considerable beauty.

Perhaps one of the greatest problems that we have, and that has been with us more particularly this past year, is the maintenance of water supplies. The fulfilment of the requirements of further development and the maintenance of an increasing population lie in the provision of adequate water. Last year's drought has high-lighted that fact perhaps more than anything else could. The people of this country—and this probably applies to most countries—who used a few gallons of water each a day a few years ago are probably now using 200 to 300 gallons a day each, which makes a great demand on our water storages. The increasing population is adding to that demand. The foresight of the Government in regard to water has been admirable. We have witnessed the building of the pipeline from the Murray River and the extension of our reservoirs. The Premier is now taking an active interest in the organization of further water supplies by endeavouring to arrange, by conferences with other States, for further storage on the Murray. We appreciate what is being done, and I hope it will be attended with success.

Some people have complained about the shortage of water this year. On the other hand, many people in various parts of the State have had to rely entirely upon the water that they got for household purposes by means of their own initiative and resources. They have caught the water off their house or shed roofs and stored it for use during the dry periods. For many years that has been the general policy in South Australia until reticulated supplies have become available from Government or local authority schemes. When anybody catches the water off his roof and stores it, naturally he is economical with its use, for he knows he cannot enjoy all the amenities in his garden that he could if he had taps provided by the Government. The Government can be congratulated on its foresight in this regard. Parliament will at all times be happy to support any water scheme that the Government may suggest for various parts of the State, in the full knowledge that water is really the life blood of our country.

The water supply position was alarming in such a year as the last, remembering what was said in the paper recently, that when 2,000,000,000 gallons of water was released from storages in the eastern States to run down the River Murray, only a trickle was reaching Mildura. That shows how serious the position could be with a series of dry years in place of the good ones experienced recently.

South Australia for many years utilized for storage reservoirs that are both cheap and efficient. It is still searching for facilities and opportunities to increase those storages. While it is stated authoritatively that there are only two or three more places that would be likely to prove of benefit for storing water within the metropolitan area, and the Government is working on those and making the best of the facilities available, the fact remains that all storages in the form of reservoirs are of little value without rain. Consequently, we have to be prepared to look to other sources of water supply. Everybody is using more and more water and we hope that the Government will quickly take appropriate action in the future.

Reference has been made to the desalting of salt water. This could result in a scheme almost without limit provided it could be done effectively at a cost that could be afforded. The Leader of the Labor Party in this House has mentioned almost every year that I have been here that there is no commodity to compare with water for cheapness. If water costs two or three times as much as it does today,

we shall still think it is a very cheap commodity. In fact, it may make us a little more careful in its use, with consequent saving in that direction. The Government is apparently watching world-wide developments in the desalting of water, but action in that respect would be more effective than just watching. It is desirable to set up a research branch to deal particularly and only with this problem of the desalting of water. We are sure that the problem will ultimately be satisfactorily solved. I believe that now is the time to start doing something about it in this State. A department of that description could do research into the perfecting of machines for the desalting of water, and perhaps reduce the problem to a point where such progress could be of real value to South Australia.

Another source of water that I have mentioned before and should be mentioned again in this drought year is the water being drained into the sea in the South East. The Eight Mile Creek drain alone turns into the sea between 45,000,000 and 50,000,000 gallons a day. That water is of the same quality as the Blue Lake Water. Not only is Eight Mile Creek pouring water into the sea; many other outlets are doing likewise, and the quantity of water that is being lost to South Australia by running into the sea is very great. Much of it we could retain for use under a scheme of irrigation and watering of the areas north of the South-East wet district. It is not beyond the possibilities of agricultural practice that this water could be used for the watering of stock even if not for irrigation purposes. There is a great need of that in some of our areas in the Upper South-East. The development of much of our country is limited only by the availability of water. I should like to quote now from a report made by Dr. Ward in 1941. It illustrates the position as far as the departmental officers were able to examine and prove it at that time. Speaking of the Mount Gambier Blue Lake, he writes:—

It seems probable that, when a detailed survey has been made, it will be found that the lower slopes of the walls are flattened by slumping of material from the walls, and that the total water content of the basin will be found to be of the order of 8,000 million gallons—a quantity that is much greater than that stored in the Mount Bold reservoir when full.

This immense amount of water is, however, merely the temporary storage in a natural basin to which accessions are being made continuously and from which there is a continuous natural underground flow seawards under the influence of gravity.

Mention has been made above of the strong springs from which water issues and flows into the sea. In addition to these visible outpourings of underground water there can be no doubt but that there is a constant escape of much of the water traversing the south-eastern region to the ocean by way of concealed outlets. Were this not the case the greater part of the region would be submerged.

If we take into account the minimum observed and measured flow from the Ewen Ponds area, namely 70 million gallons a day, we find that this quantity means the escape to the ocean of no less than 25,550 million gallons per annum from this area alone. Thus the amount of water stored in the Blue Lake at any one time is less than a third of the quantity being discharged annually into the sea from the Ewen Ponds outlets and a much smaller fraction of the total outflow from all the vents near the coast and the concealed outlets beneath the sea.

I feel that we would be wise to do something about conserving and pumping that water to some of those areas that can use it properly and not merely run it into the sea.

The Government has shown considerable interest in the provision of a water scheme for Millicent. The Public Works Committee a few years ago was asked to inquire into the possibilities of such a scheme and report to the Government on it. The taking of evidence at Millicent—I am sure Mr. Condon will correct me if I am wrong about this—revealed that there was considerable apathy amongst some of the people within the district and township of Millicent, caused mainly by the fact that they had provided their own equipment, etc. The people felt that if a Government scheme were instituted in Millicent they would have to pay normal water charges whether they needed the water or not. It was only when Millicent showed a phenomenal development, as much of the South-East has shown, that the people were again told of the urgency of a proper water scheme for Millicent. A further inquiry has been held by the Public Works Committee and I hope that as a result of that inquiry a water supply scheme for Millicent will soon be in operation. Industry in the district has expanded considerably and the district's population has increased greatly. The Housing Trust has built a number of houses and to ensure that the people in the houses do not run out of water the trust has provided small schemes to enable the people to have a reticulated supply in some of the Housing Trust areas. However, the position today demands something more than that. The questions of health and general public needs are now involved. I hope that the latest inquiry may result in the town having the advantages of a

Government water supply scheme because I think it must be unique for a South Australian town with a population of nearly 4,000 people to be without a Government scheme.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—I think the Public Works Committee recommended that scheme some time ago.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY—The town has not got it.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—That is the Government's responsibility.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY—There are some problems associated with the matter. The Public Works Committee in the first place recommended that it be not approved but it has since inquired into the question again. I hope that as a result of this latest inquiry Millicent may have the benefit of a Government water supply. I am sure that such a scheme is necessary and it would be profitable. I do not, however, know whether water is in a sufficient volume in that area for the Government to undertake such a scheme, but I am sure that if it is necessary the Government will provide the water as soon as possible.

Mention was made in the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech of a water supply for Keith. I know something about Keith for I have lived there for about 50 years. I know the requirements of the district and the way in which it has grown and developed, and I also know how important a water scheme is for the whole of the district and more particularly for that area north and west of Keith where it is not easy to find good underground water. I am glad to see that reference in the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech and I hope it will result in a good water supply for this area before long. The route has been surveyed but the estimated cost involves more money than I would expect to supply water to Keith and areas adjacent. This area, which comes mainly under the local government authorities of Tatiara and Coonalpyn Downs, offers the greatest possibilities for further land development remaining in South Australia. A water supply in the area is essential before very much development and productivity can be expected from some of the area. I have referred to this question before and I believe that some of the water in the South-East may be sufficient for the scheme, or alternatively water could be brought from the River Murray or diverted north from the surplus South-Eastern waters.

This State has experienced the driest year in its history. There may have been isolated areas where that has not obtained because some

areas may have had a little more rain than they experienced in 1914, but generally speaking, last year was the driest on record. However, the State's economy stood the test extremely well. Normally, drought conditions similar to those experienced last year would have been accompanied by huge stock losses, bankruptcies and general depression effects, but certain circumstances have helped to lessen the shock for South Australia. The expansion of industries and industrial output has had a considerable effect and has resulted in an increase in our population. There is a contented work force and little unemployment in South Australia, and all of these forces have a bearing on the matter. In addition, better farming practices have been adopted, and although in some districts the improved farming practices may have been responsible for water shortages in the metropolitan reservoirs because farmers have tried to keep their ground covered by contour ploughing and conserving water in their own area rather than allowing the water to run off, the farmers have endeavoured to grow new pastures and have tried to provide more feed. That has helped the State to maintain its reserves of hay and dry grass and to carry on over the bad period. Advantage has also been taken of irrigation facilities in a number of centres.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—Reverting to the question of a Millicent water supply, the Public Works Committee made a recommendation on March 19, 1959, so it is the Government's responsibility.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY—I have accepted that it is the Government's responsibility and it was the Government's responsibility to refer it to the Public Works Committee. I hope that ultimately we may be able to have some water supply scheme for that district. One of the most important factors why we have not felt the shock of the dry season as much as previously is our improved transport system. A good system of road transport has grown up in this State. Road transport was first opposed by most sections of the community, but it is now accepted and the way in which it has ameliorated the position in South Australia has been most noticeable. Road transport and railway co-operation were responsible for moving many hundreds of thousands of sheep that would otherwise have perished. Progress made in all these branches has enabled this State to meet the driest year in its history.

Little has been said in this debate about costs. Mr. Potter raised the question with

some hostility. Commonwealth revenue is buoyant, but State revenue is in the doldrums. Increased wages and the tying of State grants to levels existing prior to the recent increases in wages must have an effect on the State's finances. I desire to speak on the question as it affects primary producers. A speaker at Keith yesterday said, "We do not want to tie our standards to a drought year; we have to tie them to what is happening from year to year." I agree with that statement. Many primary producers today claim that the money that they have invested in primary production is returning no more than 1 per cent. That reveals a position very different from that shown in many other industries in this State. In normal times the amount of return would be in excess of 1 per cent. I know that very many people paid extremely high prices for land based on prices ruling during the war, and that may be the reason they are receiving such a small return. Added costs of production on everything in South Australia are having a much greater effect on primary industry and associated industries than they are on the rest of the community. I was interested to note what the farm output was. We have had comments on increasing industrial output today. Unfortunately, today there are fewer people in primary industry than there were a few years ago. Industrial population has increased about tenfold, and the figures are more illuminating for that very reason. Farm productivity in 1951-52 was £962,000,000 and in 1958-59 the figure was £1,227,000,000. That sounds as though primary producers have made much money in that period, but on the other hand costs of production have increased by £258,000,000, so absorbing any improvement there should have been. There have been further great increases since that time in land industries, which have provided 80 per cent of the export income and 90 per cent of food and fibres for the local population. So, it will be seen what a tremendous impact it would have on the people of South Australia if primary producers were to become bankrupt. Farm income in 1950-51 represented 24 per cent of the national income, in 1952-53 it was 15.8 per cent and in 1958-59 it was only 8.1 per cent. Those figures show that the primary producing industries are not getting their fair share of the very big increase in the income from the production of goods to which they are entitled. This is a matter to which the public should give some thought.

There is a general acceptance of the fact that primary producers are always growling.

Perhaps they are always looking for rain which frequently they do not get, but on the other side of the ledger when they are providing a great proportion of the export income and the requirements of the State, and receiving only 8.1 per cent of the national income, the lowest of any group, it must be admitted that they are not having the very good time they are supposed to be having. In the period mentioned there has been record production and we have exported greater quantities of primary products than ever before under generally favourable price conditions. However, the extent of the increase in local costs has denied primary producers a return commensurate with the capital and labour invested. Although not wishing to present a hard luck story for farmers, despite the fact that they have had particularly good returns in recent years, we must not lose sight of the fact that we must protect the farming industries from the increasing costs resulting from increases in wages and the increasing profits made by industrial organizations.

There are a number of fauna and flora reserves in South Australia and I am sure that everyone would like to see their perpetuation. Consequently, we are in agreement with the setting up of these reserves, but the responsibility does not stop when the Government sets aside an area and places it under the control of the Fauna and Flora Board. In two ways these reserves can become a great menace to the surrounding agricultural areas. Firstly, they are breeding grounds for all types of vermin. I do not associate these with desirable fauna, which we are anxious to maintain; but nevertheless these areas can become breeding grounds for undesirable pests. We are also aware of the serious bush fire hazard created through the establishment of huge areas of reserves, but nothing is done about it. If the Government is to set aside these areas, some obligations must rest fairly on it or the board in control, and they should see that they are adequately fenced, do not become a breeding ground for pests, and are protected against bush fires. By the time a fire has spread through a few hundred thousand acres that has not been burned or looked after for many years, it becomes a horrible menace to surrounding pastoralists and graziers. If the Government is to set aside these areas for the pleasure of the people, it must accept the responsibility of the accompanying hazards so created. Unless we pay attention to these problems, the longer the present position continues the worse it will become.

I believe that we must look upon our primary producing interests as being most important in the welfare of the State. If we are to carry a big population we must industrialize, and the Government has done much in this direction, not only in providing guarantees to new industries, but in giving them much technical and financial information, and also details as to public requirements. Through the Housing Trust the Government has arranged for the building of factories to be rented to industrial concerns. We must not forget to keep costs down in primary industries, so that the whole country may benefit. Even our secondary industries will be without world markets unless the prices for their goods are commensurate with those in other parts of the world. If costs in South Australia are not kept a little lower than those in the other States, we shall not be able to export to the other States much of our industrial production. I commend the Government for what it has done, and have much pleasure in supporting the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply.

The Hon. R. R. WILSON secured the adjournment of the debate.

HOSPITAL CHARGES.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition) moved—

That the Standing Orders be so far suspended as to enable him to move:—That the regulations made under the Hospitals Act, 1934-1959, on January 14, 1960, and laid on the table of this Council on March 31, 1960, be disallowed.

Motion carried.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I move—

That the regulations made under the Hospitals Act, 1934-59, on January 14, 1960, and laid on the table of this Council on March 31, 1960, be disallowed.

I know it is unusual for Standing Orders to be suspended during the Address in Reply debate to deal with such a motion as this. The Hospitals Act was amended last year to provide that fees should be fixed by regulation and subject to disallowance by either House. Members should have an opportunity to scrutinize such regulations and consider whether the fees to be imposed are fair and reasonable. When I gave notice of this motion very little information was available, and I am now seeking to have the position clarified. No person is in a better position to judge the position than the Minister of Health. I assure the Government that no attack is being made on the Hospitals Department, which I commend

for its excellent services to the community. I have the highest regard for this organization, and any of my criticism is not directed against that department but at the ineptitude of the Government in not being able to maintain the position without increasing fees. Members of the Labor Party have been approached by the Pensioners' Association, trades unions, and individuals complaining that they have received no redress, although they have explained their position. If that is correct, then an alteration is necessary and the regulations should be re-examined by the Government, a more realistic schedule of fees provided, and consideration given to pensioners and persons on the lower incomes. Christianity demands that the sick and injured should be cared for. We on this side believe that a correct step towards better hospitalization would be to see that pensioners and workers with limited means are treated in Government hospitals free of charge.

The regulation should be disallowed and others introduced providing that people receiving below a certain income should be entitled to free hospital treatment. If there are free beds in Government hospitals, the boards in charge of subsidized hospitals should follow suit and provide free accommodation. Hospital charges are a burden on every wage earner, who must increase his contributions to benefit funds in order to purchase security for his family. Medical treatment and hospitalization cannot be separated, particularly as in most cases a medical man attends a patient who is sent to hospital.

In New South Wales the charge for a public ward is £12 a week, whereas in South Australia it is £21. No charge is made in Queensland, and both these States are non-claimant States. It is a burden for a person who receives the basic wage or a little over to pay £21 a week. This is the proper place to ventilate this question and no-one is in a better position to explain it than the Minister of Health. Members will admit that to ask such a person to pay £21 a week—and at the same time maintain a home with, perhaps, four, five or six children—is very harsh. I hope that if the Government cannot agree to the disallowance of the regulations it will at least clarify the position so that we may know exactly where we stand. The hospitals concerned are, of course, the public hospitals, namely, Royal Adelaide, Queen Elizabeth, Port Pirie, Port Augusta, Port Lincoln, Wallaroo, Barmera and Mount Gambier. The rates for general cases are £3 a day, and for cases under the Workmen's Compensation Act £3 15s. a day. The

out-patients' attendance fee is 5s. and the casualty attendance fee is 15s. Those that come under the Workmen's Compensation Act may be catered for because the insurance companies are responsible for the payment. I ask the Minister to explain the position so that we may know that, if the Government is not prepared to withdraw the regulations and draft others, it will consider all the facts put forward.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH (Central No. 1)—I second the motion and join with the Leader of the Opposition in his commendation of the noble work the officers of the Hospitals Department are doing. As he said, this is not a question of carping criticism directed against those in control of our hospitals. This motion is for the purpose of having laid down some formula whereby the health of the community can be protected on the most economical scale. There is an old maxim that "You cannot buy health, but it costs a lot of money to get it back." I should like to see set up some authority—whether it be a sub-committee of the Hospitals Board, or an outside authority created by the Government—so that the charges could be determined before the patient went under surgical or medical treatment. A number of cases have been brought before me of people who were fearful of the costs they would incur. No doubt they had heard of the charges being made and were afraid to have medical attention. General practitioners send people to the hospitals and when they come out they are mulcted in very high costs for the period they have been in hospital. The Leader of the Opposition said it was the responsibility of the Government to look after the sick in our community. All these institutions that are adjuncts to our way of life—hospitals, railways and so forth—cannot be expected to balance their budgets. The health of the community is of paramount importance. We pass legislation for the control of hospitals and the registration of medical practitioners, and it is their responsibility to carry out the practice of their professions.

Consequently, in seconding the motion I submit that it is for the specific purpose of having something definite and not an arbitrary control. The regulations may have been drafted by the Treasury in order to get a few more coppers to meet the expenses of the States; this motion is not directed against the Minister of Health, but is simply for the purpose of having some basis whereby those in indigent circumstances and those in the lower wage

groups shall not be muled in high costs for the preservation of their health.

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN (Minister of Health)—I welcome the opportunity of making some comment on the motion, and I accept the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition and his Deputy that it in no way reflects on officers of the department; however, it is difficult to understand, in the light of the facts, how a motion of this nature does not reflect on officers of the department. The department, through Government policy, is giving every consideration to ensure that nobody, through these charges, is called upon to suffer any hardship. This motion follows on propaganda from a certain direction which I have read, not recently, not a few months ago, but much longer than that, in which there has been nothing but carping criticism, used for political purposes, of hospitalization in this State.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—Not by anybody here, surely?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—No, but unfortunately I have been taking all this criticism for a long time, and now the opportunity offers I intend to deal with this matter in its fullest aspect. This criticism savours a very great deal of nothing but political propaganda. I refer to some remarks in another place, and I do not intend to repeat any matter already recorded in *Hansard*. I noted that it was said that nation after nation has desired that hospital treatment should be free. The word "free" is very general in its application and I would be interested to learn which nations desire it. As members know, I was privileged, a couple of years ago, to be able to study hospital conditions in other parts of the world. I visited the Scandinavian countries that are supposed to provide models of social service, and what did I find? There was no suggestion of free hospitals. The responsibility was shared between local government, the people, and the central government, and each contributed for capital expenditure about one-third of the cost. Hospital treatment was provided for which social services paid, and that was met by a levy on wages—in effect, a wages tax. If that means "free," all right, but I think it is a rather loose application of the word because I have been unable to find anywhere in the world any difference in human nature; in all countries nobody is prepared to do anything for nothing; the wherewithal has to come from somewhere, and it is simply a question of how the distribution of costs should take place. It can be agreed in

general that every country endeavours to give what it can to ensure that the less privileged shall not suffer any disabilities in health matters compared with those who can afford to pay for treatment, and that is exactly the position in our own State.

I said that there was some politics associated with this motion, and I think this further remark suggests it. I quote, "During the latter part of the Chifley Labor regime we had free hospital treatment in Australia." Did we? I know something about conditions at that time, and when I use the name of Ben Chifley I speak reverently in regard to somebody for whom I have the greatest respect. I know what his ambitions were, namely, that those who were not in a position to pay should be relieved of the responsibility of paying for hospital treatment. How was that attempted? All States were questioned as to the amount of money they collected through their public hospitals on the assessment of patients' ability to pay as they entered hospital. That is exactly the position as it is in New South Wales today, and on which I shall have something further to say directly. As a result of this investigation it was ascertained that 6s. a day would cover the greatest amount of collections in any one State; the figure for South Australia was 4s. 1d. Of this 6s. a day received by the Government 4s. 1d. was paid into revenue, and the balance of 1s. 11d. went to a fund to be used for capital expenditure purposes. Later, on representation from all States, that 1s. 11d. was done away with, and the whole amount was accepted for maintenance purposes—in other words, it went into revenue.

Later again, because of rising costs as compared with the period when the figures were collated, and because of the then inflationary trend a case was presented on behalf of the States for a greater amount. So, in 1948 the same Chifley Government increased the amount to 8s. a day, and that has persisted ever since. Other alterations, such as insurance and the Commonwealth subsidy on insurance, have been made to assist the people further. I know quite well, because of my personal association with Mr. Chifley, that he was of the opinion that this assistance would not lead people into public hospitals. For that amount we should still have people patronizing private hospitals as heretofore. He was not in favour of people who did not require assistance having treatment provided free; it was purely for those who were not in a position to pay hospital fees.

The Hon. Mr. Condon mentioned what was happening in New South Wales, that we were charging a fee of £3 a day and New South Wales was charging only £12 a week. The correct figure is £12 12s. a week; that is the charge in New South Wales. But I point out that that is £12 12s. to people who have been assessed before being given a public bed, and that other cases are sent to an intermediate bed for which no concession is made. In other words they are received on an assessment, as was done in South Australia a few years ago, and anybody who cannot qualify for a public bed in New South Wales has to pay higher rates in an intermediate bed. The same gentleman to whom I referred earlier quoted figures relating to hospital beds and the number of nurses. He said, "I have quoted figures on this subject on previous occasions and have carefully had them brought up to date." They are the figures relating to hospital beds, and he quoted the Commonwealth Statistician. In the short time available, I have tried to ascertain on what those figures were based because I feel strongly that they were not on a proper comparative basis. I think I have been able to ascertain the figures that were used after having an inquiry made of the Commonwealth Statistician.

I find little disparity in the figures. I do not know just how Mr. Dunstan corrected the Commonwealth Statistician's figures, but I am near enough to it, I think, to be able to find out the sort of figure that he is working on and the sort of comparison that he has made. He claimed that South Australia had 232 persons per bed in public and subsidized hospitals. It is possible he worked on figures for 1956-57 (published in the 1959 Year Book), so that with a population at June 30, 1957, of 873,123, that would mean that he worked on approximately 3,764 beds, whereas the figure given in that Year Book for 65 public hospitals in South Australia (which obviously includes Government and subsidized hospitals) was 3,825 beds—a difference of about 100 only. That would account for some adjustment, although I do not know the formula that made the statistician wrong. However, this figure does not include beds in community hospitals or private (non-profit) hospitals, which have received considerable sums of money from the State Government in grants for capital purposes, including the provision of accommodation for additional beds; nor does it take into account such other institutions as the Home for Incurables, the Crippled Children's Home, etc., all of which receive considerable assistance from the State Government.

With regard to trained nursing staff, Mr. Dunstan claimed that in South Australia there are 401 people to every trained nurse. That 401 divided into a population of 873,123, as at June 30, 1957, gives a theoretical number of trained nurses of 2,077, and this is very close to the figure of 2,126 nursing staff (not necessarily trained) published in the 1959 Year Book for 1956-57 for only the 65 public hospitals in South Australia. So that all the figures seem to be related to only a percentage, and not the whole, of our hospitalization in South Australia. The actual number of nurses registered in South Australia in 1957 (vide *Statesman's Pocket Year Book*) is given as 5,122 (and 5,475 for 1958), quite apart from any registered midwives, mental nurses, etc. This figure of 5,122, when taken in conjunction with the population of 873,123, gives a figure of 170 persons per registered trained nurse—very different from the figure of 401. These figures are authentic and have not been juggled by me. I do not pretend to be able to put figures together better than the Commonwealth Statistician puts them. Although figures are not readily available in South Australia as to the number of registered trained nurses in the other States, it would appear that the figures quoted by Mr. Dunstan for the other States could also have been calculated on the basis of the number of nursing staff in public hospitals. It is pointed out, however, that even when the figures for population and registered trained nurses are considered, the resultant relationship is rather meaningless, as many of the trained nursing staff who are still registered do not engage in active nursing, while on the other hand the figures for registered trained nurses do not give any indication of the numbers of trainee nurses, nurse aides, nurse attendants, etc., engaged in active nursing. At present there are in South Australia approximately 1,600 general trainee nurses, of whom approximately 250 graduate each year.

I think those figures indicate that the figures used by Mr. Dunstan have been entirely misleading and do not present a true reflection of the facts. Therefore, there can be no suggestion that the hospitalization in South Australia is in any way deficient compared with the hospitalization in other States. In fact, in our country hospitals the bed occupancy is some 51 per cent of the beds provided. That shows how deficient are the beds provided for country centres! I know of nobody who is without a bed in any case where urgency exists. I do not know of anybody who has been turned away from hospital treatment. We have more beds

in our hospitals than staff available. Most of our hospitals are operating with a deficiency in staff, so there can be no suggestion that the beds provided have in any way been insufficient.

As regards the payment of fees, I have already mentioned New South Wales; that those £12 12s. a week patients are assessed before they can qualify for a £12 12s. bed, while others are taken in intermediate beds, when no concessions are made. As regards Queensland, it is for that State to decide how it shall charge fees. I understand that there they have some means by which they get money in to assist them in the provision of so-called free hospitalization. The main reason why that continues is that an election undertaking was given. Just how long they can remain outside what New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania do is a matter for conjecture; it is not for me to prophesy the future.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—Have they got a lottery there?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—Yes, but I think I would sooner have the position as it is here. As regards this hardship that falls on people, I will give just one or two examples of how concessions are made in determining whether people shall pay the amount charged or get relief. In this regard, every assistance and encouragement is given to people unable to pay the fees. There are notices in the hospitals and stickers on the accounts stating that, if people are unable to meet the account, they may apply to the inquiry department of the hospital for a remission. In the case of sick patients who are fit to be seen, the staff has even gone out to places like Magill to interview them, so that charges may not be levied against them. Every possible consideration has been given. The assessment is governed by the amount of one's earnings, the rent payable (which is allowed up to £3 a week), his cash position and the value of any motor car, against which are offset the number of dependants and any other reasonable expenses he may have. All this when taken into consideration may result in a reduction of the account; in fact, in some cases, where appropriate, it may result in its complete writing off. That is the position as far as assessments are concerned.

Let us consider the case of pensioners who receive £4 15s. a week. If they were charged on the basis of 10s. a day that would amount to £3 10s. a week, leaving £1 5s. for spending or private use by the pensioner. Allowances

are made for rent or the maintenance of a room that may be involved, and any further adjustments necessary are made. If the circumstances warrant it, the whole of the account may be remitted and no charge is made. I shall now refer to certain types of cases that are factual, and my comments should indicate to members that it is not possible to make a flat charge that would be equitable to everyone. Special consideration is given to special cases. The first case I have is of a man and his wife. He is a repatriation case and together they draw £13 2s. 9d. in cash as a pension. They have £375 in the bank and own a freehold house. In a case of that type if the patient is kept in the hospital for a week only I submit there is a capacity to pay. Most of the cases would be assessed, and if a case involved a long period in hospital it would be assessed on a three-month basis and then it would be reviewed if it appeared that a long term in hospital would be involved. A fresh assessment would be made on the capacity of the person to pay.

In the case of ordinary pensioners—a man and his wife each receiving a pension of £4 15s. or a total of £9 10s. a week—they are allowed to earn sufficient money to bring the total income up to £16. The same pensioners can also have £400 in the bank and they can also own a motor car. Again, the amount assessed is based on whether it is a long term or a short term case. That determines the type of reduction to be made.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—What about the person who has no motor car, no money in the bank and no home of his own?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—I am coming to that. I wish to give the honourable member information that is as broad as I am able to produce. I come now to the case of a person without any income who may be a pensioner or a non-pensioner. Some people who do not receive a pension are worse off than are pensioners, and there are many people of this type who would receive assistance from Commonwealth benefits. They are the people who come under what are known as special accounts. A person may be 90 years of age and too old for normal insurance. A person of that type would be placed under a special account on the Commonwealth and by making a contribution of 9d. a week that person would get in all 12 guineas a week to pay something towards hospital treatment. Because of the insurance which is now available and the Commonwealth benefits, we today have a position that Mr.

Chifley could not foresee because those conditions did not then exist. We have had a crowding of Government hospitals by people in a position to pay and a lessening of the patronage of other hospitals capable of giving good treatment to people who could afford to pay for it.

The system we have has been decided on as being the fairest and most effective way of keeping a proper balance in the type of patient who is using the Government hospital or subsidized hospital where special consideration is given to those who are unable to pay. Taking all these things into consideration I think it can be said that the Government's policy in regard to payment for hospital treatment, particularly in view of the standard of the hospitals being provided today and the type of

treatment that is given, is extremely generous. Patients are given every consideration and if they cannot pay they are asked to have an interview with the department's officers. Notices to this effect are posted in hospital wards for the information of patients and visitors alike, and I believe it is up to the visitors to give some advice instead of offering this carping criticism that is not in the best interests of the patients. In view of all that has been done to guard against any injustice to those who are patients in our hospitals I oppose the motion and suggest that the regulations stand as they are.

Motion negatived.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 4.30 p.m. the Council adjourned until Wednesday, April 13, at 2.15 p.m.