

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, June 21, 1961.

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

QUESTIONS.**SITTINGS OF PARLIAMENT.**

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH: Can the Chief Secretary say how long the Government proposes that Parliament shall sit this year?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN: We shall resume on July 25 as indicated, and finish when the honourable member has given expression to his views on all the various matters that will be introduced.

BLANCHETOWN BRIDGE.

The Hon. C. R. STORY: Can the Minister of Roads say when work is likely to commence on the Blanchetown bridge, what type of construction will be used, and what is the estimated date of completion?

The Hon. N. L. JUDE: In view of the detailed nature of the question, although I could give partial answers now, I prefer that the honourable member put the question on notice.

PORT STANVAC ROAD CROSSING.

The Hon. G. O'H. GILES: I ask leave to make a statement prior to asking a question.

Leave granted.

The Hon. G. O'H. GILES: A little while ago I indicated to the Minister of Roads personally that in connection with the Port Stanvac road crossing, with the series of islands that have just been completed, there were complaints about the alignment of the islands controlling traffic. Has he a further reply to the question about a constriction in width, where the widened portion of the bitumen meets the old road, or narrow section? This results in many vehicles leaving the sealed portion of the road at this junction.

The Hon. N. L. JUDE: The honourable member was good enough to inform me of his question on this matter. As a matter of fact, I had already run into the problem myself and I made a further inspection. The engineers report that the problems were investigated because of a number of complaints, but things appear to be operating

fairly satisfactorily now since the painting of the right-hand turns which did not exist previously. The tendency to run into the nose, so to speak, of the opposite island is due in the main to the absence of lights, and now reflectorized lights have been placed at the island to deal with the traffic. Approaches have been made to the district council of Noarlunga to provide lighting at what could become a very important intersection.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL: Were the islands designed by the newly constituted Road Traffic Board or the Highways Department?

The Hon. N. L. JUDE: They were designed by the traffic department of the Highways Department and referred to the Road Traffic Board for approval.

MOUNT GAMBIER RAILWAY CROSSING.

The Hon. A. L. HOOKINGS: It was reported in the press that a fatality had occurred yesterday at a railway crossing near Mount Gambier which is familiar to me. It is where the Prince's Highway crosses the main railway line running from Mount Gambier to Naracoorte and then on to Adelaide. It is a dangerous crossing. Can the Minister of Railways say whether the Government intends to give early reconsideration to the need to provide flashing light warning signals at the crossing where the fatality occurred on June 20?

The Hon. N. L. JUDE: I am naturally as concerned as the honourable member at the fatalities that occur at railway crossings. I would be loth to comment on this particular crossing until I have had an official report on the accident. I understand from hearsay that a large timber truck was involved and that it was virtually driven into the side of the engine. If that sort of thing happens I am sure members will agree with me that even with flashing lights or anything else we cannot do much about it. Apparently, and I say that with great care, the truck with a trailer attached drove into the side of the engine. It is a human element which is hard to guard against. Following on the accident I am sure that the Railways Commissioner will review the position. However, we cannot put flashing lights at the many hundreds of crossings throughout the State so there must be priority. I will take up the matter with the Commissioner.

WINE INDUSTRY.

The Hon. C. R. STORY: I ask leave to make a statement prior to asking a question.

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. R. STORY: The wine industry is most appreciative of the efforts made last year by the Prices Commissioner in adjudicating on behalf of all sections of the industry in connection with the fixation of grape prices. Can the Chief Secretary say whether, in the interests of the industry, the Government is prepared to make the services of that officer available again this year?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN: I am aware of what happened last year and I understand that it was appreciated by all parties. I will refer the honourable member's question to the Premier and let him know the decision.

LAKE BUTLER.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY: In view of a recent accident can the Minister representing the Minister of Works say when a start is likely to be made on the work on the channel connecting Lake Butler with the sea at Robe?

The Hon. N. L. JUDE—I undertake to get a reply from the Minister of Works and let the honourable member have it.

ROAD TRAFFIC SIGNALS.

The Hon. G. O'H. GILES: In the closing stages of last session I asked the Minister of Roads a question about an indication being given by drivers of vehicles altering direction from one stream of traffic to another. I travel 70 miles each day from my home to Parliament House and believe I can talk with some authority on this matter. I constantly experience trouble because drivers do not usually indicate an alteration of their course from one traffic stream to another. Bad drivers do not know what is behind them, but good drivers do, and therefore the position is not so bad in the case of good drivers, but I regard this matter seriously. I give full credit to the Government and to the Minister for our good modern roads, which channel traffic into streams during peak hours, but if drivers are stupid enough to change their course from one stream to another under those conditions a dangerous situation is created.

I ask the Minister of Roads again whether he will refer this matter to the Road Traffic Committee for the purpose of deciding whether in view of the density of traffic a

hand signal or a flashing light should be legalized to indicate a change of course?

The Hon. N. L. JUDE: The honourable member has couched his question in rather a peculiar and unsatisfactory manner. He has asked whether the Government thinks it desirable to have a signal to indicate a change of direction, but of course we have that signal. It is the signal of extending the hand to the right, which obviously indicates a change of direction. I do not wish to be difficult with the honourable member because I know what he means. He wants to know whether we should have further signals to indicate a slight change of course and I know that such signals are used in other countries of the world. One is commonly referred to as patting the dog. However, so many motorists give different interpretations of them that Parliament found it was undesirable to have more than two set hand signals. Until the House in its discretion brings in an amendment it is unlikely that the committee will reconsider the matter.

SPEED LIMIT THROUGH ELIZABETH.

The Hon. C. R. STORY: Constituents in my district are pleased with the double lane highway that has been constructed on the Main North Road and I believe that that highway, particularly in the Elizabeth area, is either completed or nearly completed. Can the Minister of Roads tell me whether the Government is considering lifting the speed limit of 35 miles an hour in the Elizabeth area? That limit was imposed during the construction period. When will it be reviewed?

The Hon. N. L. JUDE: I believe that the answer to the honourable member's question is found in the Road Traffic Board Act passed last session. That Act provides that the board may vary and determine speed limits for certain stretches of road throughout the State. Naturally, it would confer with the Commissioner of Police, who is the chairman of the board, and police information would always be available to the board on the matter. As regards Elizabeth, the speed limit was not imposed during the course of construction, but merely came into being because Elizabeth was a township and the law stipulates that the speed through towns shall not exceed 35 miles an hour. The matter was discussed recently and the Road Traffic Board will review the position at Elizabeth as soon as the intersections and the access roads on either side of the highway are completed.

SUPPLY BILL (No. 1).

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

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill takes the usual form of a Supply Bill and is comparable with the Bill that was introduced last year for the same amount of £18,000,000 to carry on the services of the State until such time as the Budget is presented. The amount should carry us on towards the end of October when it is hoped that we shall be in a position to deal with the Appropriation Bill; if not, further supply will be required. However, that is not anticipated at the moment.

The only other clause in the Bill to which I shall refer is the usual clause which makes provision to meet payment of any increases in salaries or wages which may be authorized by any court or tribunal. I submit the Bill to honourable members assuring them that it is only a Bill to carry on the functions of the State within the limits of the expenditure of last year.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH (Acting Leader of the Opposition): I support the second reading of this Bill and indicate to the Government that the Opposition does not desire to retard its speedy passage. The passing of this Bill will provide funds, not for this month, but from July 1, to meet Government expenditure for essential services and salaries to some time in October. The Opposition agrees with that. I do not think it would be remiss of me to briefly refer—as this Bill deals with salaries and wage payments under court awards—to the disturbing situation that has arisen not only in South Australia but in other parts of the Commonwealth with regard to the work force. The creeping paralysis of unemployment we are experiencing will not only affect the rest of Australia but must also vitally affect South Australia.

The Chief Secretary yesterday said that South Australia was in a somewhat singular position compared with other States as regards unemployment, but a review of the statistics provided by the Commonwealth Department of Labour and National Service indicates that South Australia is suffering from the pangs of unemployment equally as much as other States of the Commonwealth. Unemployment in each State in terms of the percentage of the estimated work force is as follows: New South Wales 2.5, Victoria 2.1,

Queensland 3.5, South Australia 2.2, Western Australia 2.1 and Tasmania 2.3. Those figures indicate that South Australia is not suffering as acutely as some of the other States, but this State must be caught up eventually in the vortex of unemployment which is progressing elsewhere in the Commonwealth. It is refreshing to read the criticism levelled by the Associated Chambers of Manufactures, which could in no way be said to support Labor policy. The acting director of that organization (Mr. Cottle) was reported in the *Advertiser* yesterday to have said that the continued increase in unemployment was disturbing. He also said:

The cost of temporarily solving our external balance of payments problems is internal unemployment of almost 103,000 persons and there is no sign of a reversal of this position. After further criticism he continued:

However, the true story of economic conditions might well be significantly worse than that which could be expected from an examination of official statistics.

That indicates, as members of my Party and the trade union movement generally have contended, that the official figures are not a true reflection of the total number of unemployed persons throughout the Commonwealth and that would apply equally to this State. In his statement Mr. Cottle continued:

Added to unemployment, the dismissals of married women and the reduction in hours of work and the overall fall in demand within Australia may have been well beyond the expectations of the Government. Unfortunately, there are no statistics which tell this story.

The time is appropriate to draw the Government's attention to the disturbing economic elements at present affecting Australia. As Mr. Cottle said, the Commonwealth Government is responsible for attempting to meet our overseas balance of payments with an internal economy that is detrimental to the progress and advancement of Australia. The last loan raised by Australia from the International Monetary Fund included certain conditions laid down by that fund as to what should be the internal policy pursued by the Commonwealth Government. As honourable members know, Australia has contributed to this fund about £26,000,000 in gold and £154,000,000 in Australian currency, and we have certain rights to accommodation from that fund to the extent of £211,000,000. The purport of the fund is that the money should be used by its members in appropriate circumstances and for appropriate purposes. It enables them to have short-term loans and to buy the currency of countries from which they import goods.

Up to the present time Australia has borrowed from that fund £142,000,000. It will be remembered that in the early stages after the ratification of that agreement I, in this House, my colleagues in the House of Assembly and those in the Commonwealth Parliament, drew attention to the danger of Australia linking up with international financiers, who in the final analysis determined the policy that should be pursued by Australia. Our misgivings then have been fortified by the recent agreement entered into by the Commonwealth Government, and this is what it says as to the conditions under which loans from the International Monetary Fund can be granted to Australia:

Avoidance of a cash deficit in the 1961-62 Budget; maintenance of a firm control over bank liquidity; no general lowering of interest rates; promotion of cost and price stability; no reimposition of restrictions on overseas trade or payments on current account except in the case of a very serious balance of payments emergency.

I submit that the Commonwealth Government has tied the hands of the States in this matter, with great disregard for their advancement. Australia has been tied to the chariot wheels of international finance. It may be all very well for the South Australian Government in its smug and complacent way to say that we are not affected as keenly as the other States as regards unemployment and the paralysis of business.

I say that honourable members who are interested in large industries and other economic factors well know that even with the lifting of the credit squeeze by the Commonwealth Government and an increase in the liquidity of lending institutions, it will take some years before Australia will return to the atmosphere of confidence that the people of this country were enjoying, due to the maladministration and the wrong advice given by the economic advisers and pursued by the

Commonwealth Government. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY (Southern): As the Minister has said, the amount provided for is necessary for the continuance of the essential services of Government departments. The Government is entitled to some measure of gratitude for the way it has handled the question of unemployment. South Australia is particularly affected, because our industries have not been established so long as those in the eastern States. The financial restrictions fell particularly heavily on the motor industry and its ancillaries, which are South Australia's chief industries. Everyone is aware of the reduced returns received from our primary products, such as wool, wheat, and barley, and of the danger of a return to the awful position with which we were faced in the 1930's. I do not think that the public will agree with the Hon. Mr. Bardolph that it will take many years for us to get out of the position in which we are at present involved. I assure him that if we have faith in the Government, that will not be the case.

The South Australian Government has taken the very wise precaution of encouraging the building of houses. In Victoria the house building programme fell to an alarming extent, whereas in South Australia the reduction was very much less and therefore we can agree that the Government is doing a very good job in maintaining employment in this State. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Bill read a second time and taken through its remaining stages.

SESSIONAL COMMITTEES.

The House of Assembly notified its appointment of Sessional Committees.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 2.54 p.m. the Council adjourned until Tuesday, July 25, at 2.15 p.m.