LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday, July 28, 1966.

The PRESIDENT (Hon. L. H. Densley) took the Chair at 2.15 p.m. and read prayers.

QUESTIONS

CONTAINERIZATION.

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES: Can the Chief Secretary, representing the Premier, say whether the Government is planning to make necessary alterations to port installations so that they will be suitable to receive and ship overseas containerized cargoes when this form of exporting our products becomes operative?

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: I think this question should have been directed to the Minister representing the Minister of Marine. However, I shall see that it is referred to the appropriate Minister and obtain a reply.

HOSPITAL FEES.

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: Has the Chief Secretary a reply to the question I asked recently regarding theatre fees at the Mount Gambier Hospital?

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: As promised, I have obtained a detailed report as follows:

Operating theatre fees in Government hospitals in South Australia were increased on April 1, 1966, after comparisons had been made with similar fees charged in public hospitals in other States and in private hospitals in South Australia. At the same time, variations were made in the definitions of major and minor operations as a result of new schedules of medical benefits in respect of various classes of operations issued by the Commonwealth under the National Health Act on June 1, 1964. There has always been a differentiation in the charge for theatre fees between public ward patients and those occupying private or intermediate wards in metropolitan hospitals. The public ward rate was fixed at a lower figure because the class of patient treated in these wards is usually from the lower wage-earning bracket, and because of the aspect of teaching, which is applied only to patients in public wards of the metropolitan hospitals. Prior to April 1, 1966, the rates for theatre fees in country Government hospitals for all classes of patients were the same as the public ward rates in metropolitan hospitals. However, in view of the generally improved modern facilities now available in most country Government hospitals and the rates charged in other country and private hospitals, it was considered that the rates for private and intermediate patients in country hospitals should be lifted to the level of those fixed for these classes of patient in metropolitan hospitals. These fees are largely recoverable from medical funds in the case of insured patients. The theatre fees for public ward patients in country Government hospitals were fixed at a lower figure than those for the same class of patient in metropolitan hospitals, because in the country the patient is rendered a separate account by the attending doctor, which is not the case in the metropolitan hospitals. The present scale of theatre fees applying in Government hospitals in this State as from April 1, 1966, is as follows:

(1) Private and Intermediate patients:
All metropolitan and country hospitals:
Major operations, $16.
Minor operations, $8.

(2) Public ward patients (no patient charged for more than one use of theatre):
Metropolitan hospitals:
Major operations, $8.
Minor operations, $4.
Country hospitals:
Major operations, $6.50.
Minor operations, $3.50.

A major operation is one where the Commonwealth benefit for such operation is $10 or over. A minor operation is one where the Commonwealth benefit for such operation is under $10.

PESTICIDES.

The Hon. H. K. KEMP: I ask leave to make a statement prior to asking a question of the Minister of Health.

Leave granted.

The Hon. H. K. KEMP: I believe the Department of Health has been closely watching residues of pesticides in food materials. Another side to this question of the wide-scale use of agricultural chemicals is the effect upon wild life. There have been many instances of very important damage to fish, for instance, and insectivorous birds have in some instances disappeared following the unwise use of some of these materials.

Much sentimental nonsense has been spoken on this subject, and grave and unnecessary restrictions have in some cases been placed on the community. However, there is still a need to watch for unexpected damage to our natural resources, and it is important that watching for such damage be allotted as a clear responsibility to one of our authorities that has a responsibility in matters relating to wild life and natural resources. The authority that I think is the most fitted is the Professor of Zoology and his staff, who are already working widely in the fauna field and have ready access to many bodies with deep interest in these subjects. Will the Minister of Health have a study made of the practicability of the Zoology Department of the university undertaking responsibility in this matter, the need for it, the cost, and the difficulties involved?

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: The question is rather involved. I could say that it involved a matter of policy, but I do not want to take that way out. I shall be happy to discuss it with the officers of the Department of Health to see what the question really means when we see it in print. At this stage I make no promise other than that I will discuss the question with experts and let the honourable member have a reply as soon as practicable.

MOUNT BARKER ROAD.

The Hon. Sir NORMAN JUDE: Has the Minister of Roads a further reply to my question about the peculiarities on the Mount Barker Road below Stirling?

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN: Yes. The amount of road reserve available for widening the Mount Barker Road between Stirling and Aldgate prevented a carriageway of greater width than 32ft. being constructed. This width is less than that required to allow for the safe movement of traffic in three lanes. The department investigated many designs for this particular length of road including a four-lane divided design, a four-lane undivided design, and various configurations involving hill ascending and descending lanes. To lane line this section of road in three lanes with one lane for exclusive use of slow-moving vehicles would induce considerable danger for vehicles using the centre lane, due to the limitations in visibility on the bends and crests of the road. The nature of the road configuration at either end of the widened section also creates a problem and a hazard to overtaking manoeuvres. In the interest of safety it was decided to build the carriageway as basically a two-lane 22ft. wide road, with an additional area to serve as sealed shoulder. This design would allow the slow moving vehicles to keep well to the left-hand side of the road and would permit the faster vehicles to overtake in relative safety against the opposing traffic flows. If the shoulder area had not been sealed, vehicles would be deterred from using the shoulder area for travel.

The Hon. Sir NORMAN JUDE: Following that answer, will the Minister take up with the Road Traffic Board the matter of indicating to the public by correct signs the desirability of using this shoulder to permit easier passing?

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN: Yes; I will take up the matter.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE: Hon. C. C. D. OCTOMAN.

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN (Leader of the Opposition) moved:

That one month's leave of absence be granted to the Hon. C. C. D. Octoman on account of sickness.

The Hon. A. J. SHARD (Chief Secretary): May I take the opportunity of seconding the motion and expressing the wish (I know I am speaking on behalf of my colleagues and, I think, for all members of the Council) that, if any honourable member sees the Hon. Mr. Octoman, he will please convey to him our wishes for a speedy recovery and our hope that we shall see him back in his seat in the Council in the very near future.

Motion carried.

NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. A. J. SHARD (Minister of Health) obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Nurses Registration Act, 1920-1966. Read a first time.

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this Bill is to amend the Nurses Registration Act, 1920-1966, to make it clear that all registered psychiatric and mental deficiency nurses shall have a right to vote at elections for a nomination of a member of the board whether they are members of the Royal Australian Nursing Federation or not. In the amending legislation which was passed during the last session it was provided in the amendment to section 5 of the principal Act that:

Five shall be nominated by the Royal Australian Nursing Federation (S.A. Branch)—

(*a*) one of whom shall be a registered psychiatric nurse or registered mental deficiency nurse elected by members who are registered psychiatric nurses or registered mental deficiency nurses, as the case may require; and

(*b*) . . .

This means that only registered psychiatric and mental deficiency nurses who are members of the federation shall have the right to vote at an election. This was never the intention. It was intended that all registered psychiatric and mental deficiency nurses should have the right to vote. The effect of the provision as it stands is that only 17 registered psychiatric and mental deficiency nurses are entitled to vote out of a total of over 300 such registered nurses.

The present proposed amendment without in any way increasing the number of members to

the nurses board splits up the existing paragraph dealing with nominations by the federation into two separate paragraphs as provided in clause 3 of the Bill. The amendment has the effect of ensuring that all registered psychiatric and mental deficiency nurses shall have the right to vote for the nomination of one of their number to the board in an election conducted under regulations made in pursuance of section 44 of the Act. A consequential amendment is made to section 44 of the principal Act and this appears in clause 4 of the Bill. I commend this Bill for the consideration of honourable members. I merely add that the Bill states in straightforward language the terms of an agreement reached in this Chamber last year. However, an examination of the legislation by Crown law officers last year revealed that the wording would have confined it to members of the Royal Australian Nursing Federation whereas it was the intention of the Council that all registered psychiatric and mental deficiency nursing staff should be eligible to vote in the election of one of their members.

The Hon. Sir Lyell McEwin: I take it that it refers to trained nurses and not trainee nurses?

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: Yes, all trained nurses. In all, there would be about 330 nurses concerned, of whom about 17 belong to the federation and the rest belong to another union. As I have said, the amendment is necessary because of the verbiage used which restricted nomination to a member of the Royal Australian Nursing Federation when it should have been available to all the nursing staff mentioned.

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN secured the adjournment of the debate.

UNDERGROUND WATERS PRESERVATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from July 27. Page 690.)

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES (Northern): In rising to speak to the Bill, I am conscious that the population of Adelaide has increased by about 86 per cent in the last 20 years and that the consumption of reticulated water alone in that period has increased by about 210 per cent. With such a population explosion and the increased use of water in gardens and in other ways necessary for the functioning of the affairs of a city, there must have been a correspondingly large increase in the quantity of water drawn from underground sources in order that vegetables and other food lines so essential to a city could be supplied.

Not only do I realize the aspect of feeding a city, but I point out that the use of underground waters for agriculture, where they are suitable, has also increased to a significant extent because of the diversity of agriculture and the various ways and means by which the farmer can now apply his knowledge to increasing the productivity of his land. I understand from reports made by the Mines Department that the water level of bores in the Gawler Plains area has fallen to an alarming level. The summer minimum level in 1965 showed a fall of more than 60ft. compared with the corresponding reading in 1955. A similar comparison of winter maximum levels shows a drop of 25ft. in the same period.

The Hon. Sir Lyell McEwin: Would the seasons have affected that in any way?

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES: It is a fair assumption that they would have but, without any proof to the contrary, I would imagine that the large draw-off for irrigation and market gardening would have contributed greatly. I also understand that the summer water level in this area now is well below sea level and that there is a distinct danger of the whole basin being contaminated by salt water coming into this fresh water zone. It is obvious to all that, if this occurs, there could be a major drop in productivity so far as many people in a large area are concerned.

The same problem is shown in many artesian basin areas. On Brindina Station, in the artesian area north of Wilmington, a bore 260ft. deep put down in 1949 stopped flowing completely (that is, flowing over the top) in 1955. Another bore produced 6,500 gallons of water an hour at the bore head in 1955 and is still in use; it is now producing 3,500 gallons an hour. These bores are all capped and water is drawn off only when it is needed. Near this property, but not on it, there are four known bores that are uncapped and some of them have been flowing over in the last 12 or 15 years at the rate of about 3,000 gallons an hour.

So, a person on one station is prepared to cap his artesian water so that it is taken only when it is needed, while in a similar basin adjoining him water is going to waste and there is no control at all. Another problem that occurs in this region is that, in order to get to the fresh water level, it is necessary to bore through a salt water stream, and I understand that the bore casings of

some of these neglected bores that are flowing over have not been examined for many years. I also understand that many residents in the area fear the possibility of contamination, with the salt water either contaminating the artesian zone or causing deterioration of the quality of the water in the area.

The Hon. R. C. DeGaris: Is this matter under the control of the Minister of Lands?

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES: I understand that the Minister of Lands has control of artesian waters on pastoral leases, but this is not pastoral lease country; it is freehold. I do not know of any control at present in the particular cases I have mentioned. I also understand that there is much artesian water in other areas of the State. The South-East is one such area and part of the metropolitan area of Adelaide is another. There is no control of the water where it flows out that ensures that water is not wasted. The problem is real and urgent. The problem of the availability of underground water for the coming generation must be attended to now. Section 12 (2) of the 1959 Act provides:

A permit for sinking a well shall specify the place where the well is to be sunk and shall not confer any right to sink a well in any other place unless the Minister by endorsement on the permit varies the terms of the permit for that purpose.

In view of the recent subdivisions in many parts of the State, particularly in the Gawler basin area, where we have a farmlet type of subdivision, the question arises whether it will be necessary for a survey to be given to the Mines Department to show where the owner wishes the bore to be sunk. If that will be necessary, it will impose an additional hardship on the landholder and will increase his costs. Clause 7 of the Bill provides:

Section 9 of the principal Act is repealed and the following section is enacted and inserted in lieu thereof:—

9. (1) The Minister may refuse an application for a permit or revoke a permit if he has reasonable cause to believe that the work or the use of the well for which the permit is sought would:—

(*a*) be likely to cause contamination or deterioration of any underground water; or

(*b*) be likely to cause inequitable distribution of any underground water; or

(*c*) be likely to cause undue loss or wastage of underground water; or

(*d*) be likely to deplete unduly the supplies of underground water.

I ask whether the Mines Department will have sufficient proof to advise the Minister without causing undue hardship to the landholders concerned. Surely, it would be fairer at this stage for the Minister to be advised by an advisory committee, such as that provided for in section 9 of the principal Act, as well as by his department.

In clause 10 there is a printing error: the words "underground water" are used twice. Clause 11 provides that every artesian well shall be capped or equipped with valves so that the flow of water can be regulated or stopped, and I agree entirely with this thinking. The wastage of artesian water in the pastoral areas as well as in the inside sections of the country has been neglected for far too long. I have been told that, after the Mines Department put a choke in an artesian bore in the Far North to restrict the flow but not completely shut it off, no sooner had the officers left the station area than the management took out the choke and allowed terrific quantities of artesian water to flow out into drains and be swallowed up in due course by the sands. Deleting the provision for an advisory committee is wrong.

I appreciate the ideas of this Government in relation to the powers of Ministers. However, as there is always an element of doubt about the sincerity of a man who wants a bore or well in the first instance and the possibility that the Minister will not want it in the second instance, an advisory committee would be of assistance. Clause 14 provides that a member of the Licensed Well Drillers Association will become a member of the appeal board. If there is to be no advisory committee, I cannot see why a landholder should not be a member of the appeal board, in the same way as the principal Act provided for having a landholder on the advisory committee. I shall reserve any further comments I have to the Committee stage. I support the second reading.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS (Midland): I think all members will agree that the conservation of our available water supplies in this country, and particularly in this State, is completely vital to our existence. Not only our underground water but our surface water must be conserved in every practical way and used for our industrial development, the production of food and the expansion of our State. In this Bill we are particularly concerned with the preservation of our underground water which, as the Hon. Sir Lyell McEwin has said, is of paramount importance to us in various parts of the State from the Far West Coast to the South-East. The Hon. Mr. Kemp mentioned various parts of the State which are in his district, and spoke particularly about the problems that exist there, and the Hon. Mr. Geddes

referred in some detail to what I used to know as the Adelaide Plains water basin. I have heard it referred to by other names, but perhaps I am out of date. However, he referred to this area, and particularly to the Virginia area.

The Hon. C. R. Story: If it dries up any more it will become part of that basin.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: That is the point, and it is one of the principal reasons for the introduction of the Bill. If I dwell on the problems around the Gawler and Virginia area in particular, it will be because I believe this is one of the most important areas for supplying vegetables to this State and it is one of the reasons why this Bill has been introduced.

The Hon. Sir Lyell McEwin: Don't you think we should have been told that?

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: I think so. In company with the Hon. Mr. Hart and the Hon. Mr. Story and guided by Mr. Ron Baker, the Deputy Chairman of the District Council of Munno Para, I had the privilege not long ago of inspecting parts of the Virginia area and of seeing at first hand some of the problems that exist there. As the Hon. Mr. Geddes has emphasized, the water basin there is falling.

I think the Minister is seeking to secure a distribution that will not be inequitable and, even though I do not agree with everything he intends to do by this Bill, I commend him for his intention. The Bill seeks to amend an Act that has so far not been proclaimed, and I believe it behoves us to look carefully at the amendments contained in the Bill, which is, I think, an honest attempt by the Minister to solve some of the problems that have arisen from the completely unrestricted use of underground water in some parts of the State. These problems have been highlighted in dry seasons.

I do not intend to go through the Bill in great detail, as that has already been done by the Hon. Mr. Hart and other members, but I want to mention a few points. I have consulted with some of the people who are vitally interested in this matter because their whole livelihood depends on it. I agree with the Hon. Mr. Geddes that the abolition of the advisory committee provided for in the principal Act is a step in the wrong direction, and I ask the Minister to reconsider this. If this is proceeded with the Minister will be advised by the Mines Department, and no doubt the Government intends the Minister to take much of the responsibility. I have great respect for the department and the Minister, but I believe the procedure envisaged in this Bill may well leave the people who gain their whole living from this water without an advocate on an advisory committee and without any ready access to the Minister. I believe this representation is essential to the successful administration of legislation of this kind. I believe the advisory committee should be retained, that the water users should be represented on it, and that it should be of substantially the same composition as set out in section 21 (1) of the principal Act.

I note that the Minister intends to increase the number of the appeal board from three to four and that a member of the Licensed Well Drillers Association will be the extra member. I hope the Minister will consider having a member of the industry that is most vitally concerned (the market gardening industry) as a member of the board. This would mean a board of five members, including one member with practical experience from the consumer's angle.

Along with the Hon. Mr. Hart and the Hon. Mr. Kemp, I should like to see the term "qualified engineer" spelt out in a little more detail if an engineer is more necessary on this appeal board than, say, a geologist or even a primary producer. I ask the Minister to reconsider the personnel of this board. I would go along in general terms with clause 11—

The Hon. S. C. Bevan: There are now hydraulic engineers in the department.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: If you liked to add the word "hydraulic", it would spell it out even better.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan: They are already in the Mines Department.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: That is very good. If a suitable hydraulic engineer could be used, it would spell it out more satisfactorily. As I was about to say, I would go along in general terms with clause 11 of the amending Bill with reference to artesian bores, and most of my remarks this afternoon will be directed to sub-artesian supplies. I would go along with the Minister's ideas about artesian bores. I am as concerned as he is and as other honourable members are when large quantities of water are allowed to go to waste. I would go along with this in so far as it is practicable, having reference to the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition, because, as I have said, no-one wishes to see artesian water wasted. I will go along with the Minister so far

as this does not duplicate the powers already enjoyed by the Minister of Lands, who has control of water on pastoral leases.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan: His control is very limited, and that is one of the problems.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: This will take care of that.

The Hon. C. R. Story: Does that mean there will be two fingers in the pie?

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: It could be. I imagine the Minister of Lands will have control of pastoral leases, and this will take up the slack where there is no control by the Minister of Lands. I support this in so far as it does not duplicate or contradict the powers already enjoyed by that Minister.

Returning to the Adelaide Plains, I refer to the use of effluent as a means of conserving and husbanding our water resources, and particularly the over-use to which this water basin is put in dry seasons. I am aware that problems are associated with the use of effluent and its distribution. I know that the salt content is likely to vary from a minimum of 70 or 80 grains to a maximum of 130 grains a gallon. I know that, if the salt content reaches 130 grains a gallon, the water will probably be useful only for irrigating lucerne. Therefore, it should not be used on its own, except for irrigating lucerne or allied legumes; and it would not be desirable to use it for spray irrigation of vegetables. However, there are likely to be such large quantities of effluent that we must overcome the problems associated with its use. I had the opportunity with my colleagues from the Midland District of inspecting the large channel that takes the effluent for several miles in the general direction of Virginia before it goes out to sea. If I remember aright, the channel is considerably larger than any channels I have ever seen in the Upper Murray area that carry water for the purpose of flood irrigation.

I was interested to note, following a reply to a question I asked recently of the Minister representing the Minister of Works, that effluent could be taken off or channelled from the main outlet channel at section 142, hundred of Port Adelaide. This section is almost due west of Virginia and not very far from it. It is fairly close to the main irrigation area of extensive market gardens supplying Adelaide. When we consider the hundreds of miles of irrigation channels in the Murray River area, the amount of channelling needed to be done in the Virginia area is relatively small. It would enable, by alternate irrigations with effluent and with underground water (thereby reducing the salt content, in most cases, to a level of tolerance that would be reasonable for most vegetables) a saving of up to 50 per cent of underground water to be made.

The Hon. L. R. Hart: Do you think the scheme suggested in the report of the committee of inquiry is a little top-heavy with costs?

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: Whatever the merits of that scheme, the existing needs should be the first to be considered. The amount of vegetables being supplied to Adelaide and the increasing amount that will continue to be supplied to a fast growing city underlines the action needed to be taken. I am aware that there is a report advocating, I think it is, 5,000 or 5,200 acres (to which my honourable friend has just referred) for irrigation by effluent, but surely the existing needs are or should be the first consideration.

People who have seen, as my colleagues and I have, the parlous state of the underground water supplies in this area during the summer months (and the Hon. Mr. Geddes highlighted this just now when he referred to the serious drop in the water table), the amount of money invested there (largely by bank finance), and the need for an increasing supply of vegetables in the city, will also realize the urgent need to do something positive in this area. The alternative would seem to me to be the much more costly supply of Murray River water in large quantities but, to my mind, the cost of that would be exorbitant and uneconomic. To shift the whole irrigation area to the Murray, which has been suggested, after having allowed it to grow to such proportions close to the city, would be completely impracticable and beyond the resources of the State. The amount of money invested in this one small area, which is at present using so much underground water, is surprisingly high. I have one or two figures here briefly to underline this.

In this particular area there are 6,500 glasshouses out of a total of 10,000 in the State. The estimated production from glasshouses is 675,500 cases of tomatoes, and the estimated value is about $2,000,000. I could quote other figures of very large areas and large productions of other vegetables. There is also in this area at present nearly 600 acres of lucerne and, as I stated earlier, this could be almost wholly irrigated by effluent. The position of many market gardeners there, working with borrowed money, is such that any collapse in the industry would be little short of catastrophic. The position is serious. I do not apologize for channelling most of my speech on this Bill to this particular area. From the

foregoing, it can be seen that the use of effluent could be a life-saver for these people and for this water basin. I think it only fair to comment that in my view and in my discussions with the Minister the dangerous situation in this district has had considerable influence on the introduction of the Bill.

As I said earlier, I do not agree with all the provisions that the Minister has brought forward in this legislation, but I commend him for the consideration he has given this problem. My colleague, the Hon. Mr. Hart, had something to say on the matter of land tax in this area, and this comment would also apply in other areas of the State. Honourable members will be aware that values of land close to Adelaide have been pushed very much higher by the availability of good underground water, and land tax assessments have been raised accordingly. If the use of water is to be restricted, and if there is going to be some doubt whether a person will be able to put down a bore on property being sold in the area, these values will fall considerably. This being so (and I would not criticize any such action if it were necessary, as I know we have to live within our resources)—

The Hon. C. R. Story: The only real reason for people being there is water.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: Yes, that is so, and the only real reason for the high prices existing at present is attributable to the availability of good water.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan: If they haven't got it, the land is useless.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: That is so, and I am not arguing that point with the Minister. However, if the use of water is to be restricted, and a person is in doubt whether he can put down a bore, these values will fall considerably. In this case I believe the Government should instruct the Land Tax Department to review the assessments in these areas or, failing that, take such action as is necessary to enable the department to do this.

Having dwelt on the Virginia area, I compliment the Deputy Chairman of the district council of that area, Mr. Ron Baker, on the way he has helped market gardeners, many of whom are New Australians, and looked after them in the advancement of that industry. Mr. Baker has set an example of an established Australian helping New Australians, and that is commendable. Furthermore, Mr. Baker has gone out of his way to make available to my colleagues and to me all information possible regarding the problems of this area and the means by which he believes the area could become stabilized and successful.

I support the proclamation of the 1959 Act and, in general terms, I support the provisions of this amending Bill. I hope the Minister will examine the suggestions I have made. I reserve the right to examine the Bill again in Committee, but, generally speaking, I support it.

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS secured the adjournment of the debate.

HOUSING AGREEMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from July 27. Page 683.)

The Hon. C. M. HILL (Central No. 2): The history of the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreements since the Second World War goes back to 1945 when the Commonwealth and State agreement was implemented. At that time, the Commonwealth made its position clear as to its constitutional powers in the field of housing. It had no power in peace-time to control the production, allocation and distribution of materials; it had no power to decide who should first have a house; it had no power to enforce correct placing of houses within towns; and it had no power over regional or town planning.

However, in proposing to advance money to the States for housing purposes it did endeavour to establish a certain pattern. The then Commonwealth Minister, the Hon. Mr. Dedman, said in the Commonwealth Parliament (and he was talking of the Commonwealth):

It can set down principles. These things we propose to do and this Bill provides a plan for housing and re-housing families of the lower income group.

South Australia did not begin to operate under that agreement until July, 1953. The Bill before us now, to be known as the Housing Agreement Act, 1966, authorizes the Treasurer to approve an agreement (to be known as the 1966 agreement) drawn up with the Commonwealth, and that agreement comprises the Housing Agreement Act, 1956, as amended by the Housing Agreement Act, 1961, and now further amended.

The 1956 Bill, which followed the 1945 Bill to which I have referred, stated in its schedule the purpose for which the money was to be loaned, and I quote:

. . . for the purpose of the erection of dwellings and of the provision of finance for home builders.

In general terms, I favour the measure before us at the present time, but I propose to seek a

number of assurances from the Minister and I trust that he will give those assurances in due course in his speech in reply to this debate. I reserve my final decision until the Committee stages when I may have more to say on this particular matter.

The Bill before us is a short one, and I deal with clauses 4 and 5 therein. Clause 4, as I understand it, permits the State to make provision for, and deduct expenses in the administration of, the Home Builders Account. That is the account into which money passes from the State, and that money has been loaned by the Commonwealth. It then passes from the account to the lending institutions, such as the State Bank and building societies.

On the other side of that account, the money loaned is repaid from the State Bank and lending institutions, such as building societies, and ultimately finds its way back to the Commonwealth, because the original grant must be repaid by the State.

While referring to clause 4 I would like to know the Treasurer's intentions regarding the amount of money that he proposes to withdraw from this account. Although the clause states that he may make this provision, it does not say that he intends to; it gives him the right to do that for the purpose of the administration of the account.

I find in the Auditor-General's Report of the accounts of the State for the year ended 1965 (and we have not a more recent one) an interesting situation concerning this Home Builders Fund. The two accounts set out in the Auditor-General's Report are the cash account concerning the Home Builders Fund and also the general position of the fund. In the cash account, there is a Treasury administration figure for the year under review, the year ended June, 30, 1965, of $57,452.

So, it appears that the power being sought by clause 4 goes further than that and that it must deal with further costs incurred by the State (and they are the words used) in regard to the administration of this matter. Yet, the Auditor-General has reported that there was a surplus of $845,850 in the account. It is not there in money but simply, as one may say, as a credit on the books. Of course, it can quickly be got there in money if fewer funds are advanced to the State Bank, the Co-operative Building Society or the Hindmarsh Loan, Land, Building and Investment Society in the following year.

I do not want to be unfair, but I am wondering whether there will be any attempt to take further expenses into State revenue from this fund, because it would appear that, by the insertion of clause 4, the right is being sought to do just that. The Treasury seems to draw some administrative costs each year, which is only fair and reasonable, but despite that withdrawal there is still a surplus in the general account. The reason why the surplus is there is that the State, after obtaining the money, lends it to some of these institutions and charges a higher rate of interest than it has to pay to the Commonwealth. It advances to the Housing Trust at the same rate of interest as the State pays but for loans through the Home Builders Fund a slightly increased rate is charged and, naturally, a credit occurs because of that.

Another reason why the accumulation of principal occurs is that, whereas the State repays principal and interest to the Commonwealth over a 53-year term, these institutions are asked to pay back to the fund over a 31-year term. The Auditor-General's Report shows that at the end of the 1965 financial year there was about $846,000 in credit, and I should think that further credit would have occurred since that time. It is not unreasonable to suggest that there may be about $1,000,000 in the fund at present.

As I have said, I ask the Minister to say whether it is proposed to transfer some of this money from the Home Builders Account to State revenue, because if that happens the young people of this State, who are now in dire need of the maximum amount of money for housing purposes, will suffer. As I see it, that is the only place from which this money can come. That all results from the inclusion of clause 4 in this short Bill.

Clause 5 reflects some optimism, to say the least, because it provides that from time to time an amount not exceeding $500,000 can be transferred to this account from other sources simply to guarantee a regular flow of loans, as compared with the situation where transfers might have been made in a few large amounts, which might have caused unfortunate consequences for the State Bank and the institutions. However, I do not know where the State is likely to be able to find $500,000 at present.

The Schedule to the Bill is the draft of the actual agreement, with amendments to the 1956 and 1961 Acts. I wholeheartedly support the widening of the provisions regarding financial assistance to those men who have

served in the forces in South Vietnam, Malaysia or any other special areas. It is proper that legislation should be kept up to date in this rapidly changing world in order to give benefits of this kind to those who have served their country in these new theatres of conflict.

Clause 7 of the agreement has been deleted. This dealt with blocks of flats that could have been built, provided they did not exceed three storeys and provided they were within an inner metropolitan area. The States claimed that this clause was restrictive, and I should like to know whether the South Australian Government supported that claim. If it did, the Government may have ideas of asking the Housing Trust to build flats of more than three storeys, or multi-storey blocks as they would then be called, in suburbs in the near or far metropolitan areas. Indeed, I have had suspicions for a considerable time that this Government is considering such plans. I cite the Minister's own words when he gave his second reading explanation yesterday:

During the conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers of Housing, at which the agreement was negotiated, the attention of the Commonwealth Minister, Senator the Honourable Dame Annabelle Rankin, was drawn to the necessity of additional Commonwealth funds being made available for inner suburban redevelopment.

Who will be occupying these multi-storey buildings that the Government envisages in its re-development proposal? The occupants will be young South Australian families with children. These children will be living four, five, six or up to 12 storeys from the ground and in their leisure time they will be playing in communal playgrounds that will be packed between blocks of flats, and I hope that we shall never see that state of affairs in metropolitan Adelaide.

Flats, or apartments as they are sometimes called, provide superior accommodation for couples without children, business people, and married people whose children have grown up and left home. However, I hope that this Government will never favour the establishment of multi-storey flats for young families with children. In single-unit houses in the outer suburbs, in clean fresh air, with private yards for children to play in, the family as a unit can flourish and prosper.

Clause 9 of the Schedule deals with adequate housing finance being available in rural areas, and I agree with the Minister that the State Bank ensures that no disability is experienced by people in country towns as compared with those in the metropolitan area. In past years I have found that country people do not have to wait very long for home finance through the State Bank, and this is very pleasing. The effect of money being available quickly for the country may be that the problem of decentralization can be somewhat overcome. Therefore, this is an important factor in the general interests of the State.

I refer to the amount of money which is loaned by the Commonwealth to South Australia under these housing agreements and also to the percentage of this money, as defined in clause 4 of the Schedule, which must be allotted to the financing of house purchase. In the *Advertiser* of Saturday, June 18, the allocations to the States were announced, and South Australia was allotted $20,750,000 for 1966-67. In 1965-66 we received a total of $21,057,000, there being an original grant of $19,000,000, and a supplementary grant of $2,057,000 in March, 1966. In 1964-65 we received $20,500,000.

Clause 6 provides that not less than 30 per cent of the total grant shall be allocated for the provision of finance for house builders which, of course, includes house buyers. Of the 1964-65 grant, $10,000,000 went to the Housing Trust and $10,500,000 went to the Home Builders Fund and then to the State Bank and building societies. This would appear to be well over 30 per cent, although some financing is carried out by the Housing Trust. At this stage I renew a plea I made weeks ago, that more finance is still required.

Putting it another way, a greater percentage of the present total Commonwealth grant is required to finance house purchase so that the unfortunate temporary finance position, with people paying very high interest rates for periods of 18 months or more while they await their long-term bank loans, can be rectified. I have noticed that this matter has given the Treasurer great concern. He has been dealing with house buyers, principally in the Para Hills area, who are paying these high temporary finance interest rates. I suggest that the only way to alleviate the burden on migrants and other young people is to channel more of this Commonwealth money for a period of, say, a year or two into the Home Builders Fund. In the *News* of June 29 under the heading "Homes building speed up in South Australia", appeared the following report:

The South Australian Premier, Mr. Walsh, said today Housing Trust buildings would be

speeded up this year. He said more money was available for homes in the next financial year. Mr. Walsh said he could not speak for private builders, but as Minister in charge of the Housing Trust he could say South Australian building would "do a little better than in the last financial year." He said more finance would be available, largely because of the strong case he had put before the Housing Ministers' conference earlier this year.

It seems to me that we received less money from the Commonwealth in the year to which the Treasurer was referring in that article than in the previous year. In fact, I think we received $307,000 less, so I am concerned whether there is any proposal for the money allocated this year to be altered so that the Housing Trust will get a greater percentage than it has received in previous years, which may well be the case in view of the Treasurer's comments. I should like to know the proposed split-up of the money that has been granted under this Bill. I am sure the authorities know this sum, and I should like to know what percentage will go into the Home Builders Fund and what percentage will go to the Housing Trust this year.

I refer finally to the grants for house building to be made under this Bill to the Housing Trust, and I should like to have the Minister's assurance that this money is being used in the manner in which it is intended that it shall be used. That is clearly defined in clause 11 of the agreement.

Clause 12 deals with the reasons for which the money should not be used. The general principle is outlined each time the measure comes up for ratification. Earlier I mentioned Mr. Dedman's comment in 1945 that the plan was for housing families of the lower income group. On May 10, 1966, in the Commonwealth Parliament the Hon. Mr. Bury, Minister for Labour and National Service, continued the same view when he said:

The Housing Agreement is designed primarily to assist families, including aged persons of low and moderate means, to obtain adequate housing at a reasonable price.

The Commonwealth Government provides the money and sets the pattern, and we as a State accept the responsibility of standing by the agreement and using the money as it was intended and agreed that it should be used. I therefore seek the Minister's assurance that the Housing Trust is using this money primarily for families of low or moderate means.

Clause 11 stipulates the development expenses, such as road-making costs, which can be paid from these funds. I seek the Minister's assurance that such expenditure as the cost of providing land for educational purposes, for example, is not coming from such funds, as this would mean, apart from being a probable breach of contract, that low-interest money intended for housing was being used in place of normal Loan funds, to the great disadvantage of young families seeking cheap houses in this State. Of course, that would be quite improper.

Clause 12 refers to the purposes for which the money cannot be used, and the first purpose is for shops. I again ask the Minister whether he can say whether any of this money has been or is being used by the Housing Trust for shop construction. Clause 12 (*b*) provides that, so long as an agreement exists, this money can be utilized for purposes of development, such as providing sewerage, water, electricity and other services. So, if the Commonwealth and State Ministers agree, this is in order, but I am particularly concerned about this because I know that developers are paying to the Engineering and Water Supply Department for the laying of water and sewerage mains in new estates and that when the houses are connected to those services some of the money is refunded. However, it is not all refunded, so the developer pays for some of the works, and these would normally be Loan works.

It would seem to me that the Housing Trust would also have to pay this, because it establishes new estates and builds new towns where previously water and sewer mains did not exist. It appears that this is in order if an agreement exists, and I ask the Minister whether he can assure me that some agreement is in existence that we can perhaps see. Perhaps he can tell us in what form it exists. I should like to peruse it and possibly have it tabled.

Subject to receiving assurances I have sought, I support the Bill, but I may, depending on those assurances, express further views in Committee. I particularly want to see all the funds lent to the State for housing purposes, less reasonable minimum administration charges, used for the purposes for which the grants are made and for no other purposes.

I should like to see a practical and sympathetic solution to the financial problems of those many thousands of house purchasers in the metropolitan area (by which I mean the fairly wide new housing area that we are now calling the metropolitan area) who have accepted temporary finance and have been forced to accept it as the only means of obtaining houses.

Overall, the ratification of this Housing Agreement will result in alleviating housing

and financial problems of both newly arrived migrants and a great number of South Australian families whose means are only moderate and who are in need of financial assistance with which to buy new houses.

The Hon. C. R. STORY secured the adjournment of the debate.

DRIED FRUITS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

At 3.38 p.m. the Council adjourned until Tuesday, August 2, at 2.15 p.m.