

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday, June 26, 1968

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

### QUESTIONS

#### GAUGE STANDARDIZATION

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: I seek leave to make a statement with a view to asking a question of the Minister of Transport.

Leave granted.

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: I was interested to read in the press last weekend that the Silverton Tramway Company had expressed the view that the *ex gratia* payment offered to it by the Commonwealth Government and the Governments of New South Wales and South Australia in respect of railway gauge standardization was totally inadequate. The article also referred to a statement by the Minister of Transport that he could see no reason for delay in the immediate commencement of the work involved on the new railway route between Cockburn and Broken Hill. I had something to do with standardization during the time I was Minister of Transport, and I know the difficulties we had over that period in bringing some sort of agreement to fruition. I well remember telling this Council how long it took to get representatives of the Commonwealth Government and the New South Wales Government to the table to discuss an agreement. Subsequently a conditional agreement was reached with the other Governments in respect of the new route for the line, and a statement was issued by the three Ministers concerned some time last year.

Up to the time the previous Government went out of office in this State I had been pressing the Commonwealth Government to produce in writing a draft agreement for the three Governments concerned to look at, but I was not able up to then to get it to produce this draft agreement. The conditional agreement by the South Australian Government was concerned with the very profitable return freight from Adelaide to Broken Hill, and the Commonwealth Government had agreed that every effort would be made to retain that return freight for the South Australian Railways.

As the Silverton companies have expressed the view that the *ex gratia* payment offered to them is entirely inadequate; as the Silverton representatives previously expressed the view that they would take court action to see that

they got what they desired; as this Parliament is rising today for nearly four weeks and the Commonwealth Parliament is now out of session and will be out of session until August; and as the previous standardization agreement of 1949 does not specifically cover the situation of South Australia constructing and operating a line in New South Wales, thus necessitating legislation before this work can be legally carried out, can the Minister say on what grounds he bases his statement that there will be no delay in commencing this new line?

The Hon. C. M. HILL: As the honourable member has indicated by the nature of his explanation, the question involves a very complex matter. I recently attended a conference in Sydney on this matter with the Commonwealth Minister (Mr. Sinclair) and the New South Wales Minister of Transport (Mr. Morris), and at that conference we reached an agreement which is still a verbal agreement. This is to be followed by an agreement in writing which is not yet signed. When that agreement is signed, as the honourable member knows, it must be ratified in this Parliament and also in the other two Parliaments concerned.

At the present time the South Australian Railways Department has obtained permission (I think that is the best way to put it) to go into New South Wales and begin our work. Normally, of course, this would not be done until the ratification I have mentioned had taken place. However, in view of the very urgent necessity from the point of view of the three Governments for this work to proceed, this question of a gentlemen's agreement between the States authorizing us to do work within New South Wales was discussed and this arrangement was agreed upon.

In fact, we are in New South Wales now. The Pinnacles route, which is the route the new line will take from Cockburn to Broken Hill and for which the South Australian Railways is the constructing authority, has been pegged out now; the actual general pegging of the route by surveyors, I understand, has now been completed. Therefore, when I say that work has started I mean that this kind of work preparatory to the actual laying or construction of the line has commenced.

We are doing this survey work there simply because all the circumstances involved make it highly desirable in the interests of the three Governments that in fact this work should commence.

As the honourable member knows, this route is entirely different from the northern

Silverton route. To stress the need for arrangements like this to be concluded, there is the fact that we hope that the new line from Cockburn to Broken Hill will be completed by December of next year. The honourable member knows that the \$45,000,000 that will be expended to complete the Port Pirie to Cockburn line will be capital outlayed and, in fact, not used until such time as we can use that new line, and that line is to be completed by December of this year.

Indeed, the South Australian Railways could complete it earlier if there was a need for it but we shall have that amount of capital outlayed of which 30 per cent has to be met by this State, and of course we have the track of the old line to maintain during that period prior to the completion of this last 35 miles of the line between Cockburn and Broken Hill. That, of course, as the honourable member may know, is the last section of the whole standard-gauge line from Perth to Sydney, because it is expected that the Perth-Kalgoorlie section will be completed in approximately the middle of 1969.

So it was essential, from everyone's point of view, to get on with the job, and we have reached that mutual arrangement. Therefore, as I said there and still say, we have started work on site. It is in the nature of planning and survey work, pegging out and so forth. No doubt, estimates are being taken out for fill and for culvert and bridge work, because tenders for this work have to be called from private enterprise, but it is all work to be done on site, and that is what we are doing now. I hope that that explanation satisfies the honourable member.

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: I notice that the Minister stated that the South Australian Railways could finish the project earlier if need be.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: That is the Port Pirie to Cockburn part.

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: Is the surveying of this route being done by the survey party that was put in there during the term of the previous Government?

The Hon. C. M. HILL: Some survey work was done on this line during the term of the previous Government. I understand that that survey work was more to map out the line—indeed, marking it on maps for purposes of negotiation and discussion. The honourable member will remember that, in all, four proposed routes were planned and discussed over a long period of time, and that has taken place during the early negotiation period, but

I was told (and I am speaking from memory now) by the Railways Commissioner only about a month ago that his men had gone further into the new route agreed upon, and I believe, as I explained, that the planning and survey work on that line is being carried out at this very moment.

#### PASSENGER TRAIN SERVICES

The Hon. L. R. HART: I seek leave to make a short statement prior to asking a question of the Minister of Transport.

Leave granted.

The Hon. L. R. HART: On Tuesday, May 14, a public meeting was held in the Wallaroo Town Hall to protest against the possible curtailment of the Moonta to Adelaide passenger train services. The Legislative Council members for Midland were not invited to that meeting. However, I understand that during the meeting the member for Wallaroo urged the people attending it to write to the Legislative Council members for Midland protesting against the proposed curtailment. I have not received any letters, nor, I understand, have my colleagues. However, to show that the members for Midland are interested in this matter I ask the Minister whether any decisions have been taken on the curtailment of this passenger service and, if so, have any arrangements been made for a suitable bus service in lieu thereof?

The Hon. C. M. HILL: Before dealing specifically with the honourable member's question, let me say a few words on the whole aspect of rationalization of the South Australian Railways.

We are faced with the situation that the Railways Department, after debt charges, loses approximately \$10,000,000 a year. This fluctuates according to seasonal conditions and, because of last year's drought, the loss for the current financial year will probably be in the vicinity of \$12,000,000.

There are a number of passenger services where patronage is extremely low and other lines where the average loadings on freight trains do not represent any more than about two or, at the most, three loads for medium size road transport vehicles. It is reasonable to pursue a policy of permitting the Railways Commissioner to relinquish a number of quite clearly uneconomical railway services in this State. The Commissioner conducted a very detailed survey of railway operations, with the knowledge of the previous Government, and submitted his report dated January 4, 1968, to the previous Government. Press statements made by the previous Premier clearly

indicated that his Government recognized the need to take some action to cancel some uneconomic services, and the steps that this Government is taking are certainly ones of which he had prior knowledge.

As I have stated on a number of occasions, affected areas will not be left without a transport service, and the whole programme will be co-ordinated, with the introduction of road services where appropriate. Inquiries conducted to this stage clearly indicate that road services will not operate to the detriment of these areas, from the point of view of either cost or convenience, and this applies very particularly to the Wallaroo, Moonta and Kadina areas.

Dealing specifically with the question in respect of rail services to Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta, let me say that there is every intention that freight train services will continue. The average loading on the passenger trains between Adelaide, Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta is 15 passengers. Bearing in mind the high capital cost of railway equipment, it must be quite obvious to honourable members that this service must operate at a very high loss, and there is complete justification for cancelling the passenger service and substituting road services which can operate at a lesser overall cost.

Let me stress at this stage that, in respect of this whole rationalization programme, no railway employees will be retrenched. Admittedly, as some vacancies occur they will not be filled, and some transfers will be involved. The latter, however, will be done only after full consideration of the welfare of railway employees concerned.

With regard to a road service between Adelaide, Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta, I emphasize that the Government's inquiries have indicated that the charges for passenger fares and the carriage of parcels by road transport will be lower than those now charged on the South Australian Railways. I cannot indicate what the level of these charges will be, as this will be known only when the Transport Control Board calls for licence applications, but I make this statement of lower charges with complete confidence. I am sure that the change will aid the development of tourism in the area and will provide completely satisfactory services.

The other railway line affected in the Kadina, Wallaroo, and Moonta area is the passenger service from Moonta to Brinkworth. This averages one passenger per train and surely the need to cancel this service speaks

for itself. The savings in respect of the two proposals affecting this area total \$100,000. Savings of this magnitude cannot be overlooked, particularly when an alternative regular service at a lesser cost will be available.

The Hon. D. H. L. BANFIELD: Following the reply to the question asked by the Hon. Mr. Hart, can the Minister of Transport say for how long it has been necessary for members representing a district to have to wait for an invitation to attend a public meeting called to consider a matter that may detrimentally affect their district?

The Hon. C. M. HILL: If a meeting is a public meeting, it is always courteous for those arranging the meeting to invite all their Parliamentary representatives to it.

The Hon. D. H. L. BANFIELD: Following the evasive answer of the Minister of Transport (in fact, he did not really answer the question I asked him) can he say for how long it has been the policy for honourable members to have to wait for an invitation to attend a public meeting that has been called to discuss a matter relating to their own district? The Minister told me that it was a matter of courtesy for an invitation to be extended, but that was not my question. My question was: was the meeting a public meeting and was it necessary for a member to have to wait for an invitation so that he could attend and look after the district he represented?

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I am confused concerning what the honourable member means. I did not know a public meeting was organized there, and I do not know whether the honourable member insinuates that I had anything to do with calling the meeting.

The Hon. D. H. L. Banfield: No. The Minister was conspicuous by his absence, and that applies to others.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I was not invited to the public meeting.

The Hon. D. H. L. Banfield: But the Minister could—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Honourable members must not conduct a debate during Question Time.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I am confused concerning the whole intent of the honourable member's question. If I am invited to a public meeting, I do not refuse the invitation. I have not refused an invitation to any public meeting on this question. I realize a public meeting was held that was attended by people interested in this question. I now assume that these people asked me to see them as

a delegation. I replied that I would be only too pleased to see them.

I can well recall that the local member for the district endeavoured to make an appointment, and I fitted him into the usual pattern of my forward programme. However, he ran off to the Premier and expressed concern that he could not see me sooner, so I altered my whole diary to fit in the local member and the delegation, because I assumed the local member was acting in good faith and that he thought the matter was very important.

So, I went that far and I do not know what the honourable member wants me to do beyond that. I saw the delegation and gave it all the time it needed to put its case. I listened intently and with great interest, as I have done on all occasions in connection with this whole question. As far as I know, all the explanations have been given to the local interests who have expressed concern, and I hope that the statements I have made today on the subject will further assist these local people to appreciate the problem from the Government's viewpoint.

I believe that, in the long term, after the matter has been given further consideration in the area, there will not be the same objection to the whole proposal that there was initially. If the local member concerned wants further discussions on this matter, I shall be quite happy to see him, but he may consider going along to his own Leader in another place and asking him what he thinks about this question, because that Leader may refer him to a press report dated February 16, 1968, which states that the Premier, Mr. Dunstan, made certain statements concerning the railways to a meeting of 200 people at the town hall in Whyalla, and amongst those statements were these two sentences:

The Government had firmly declared that it would make the railway system efficient. It would not hesitate to undertake necessary economies where the need for those was clear and urgent.

If that does not satisfy the honourable member, I suggest he may like to call in the Deputy Leader (Mr. Corcoran) for good measure, because in the *News* of May 8, the Deputy Leader is reported as follows:

It is rather ridiculous to run uneconomic passenger services when people are just not using them.

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: I ask leave to make a short statement prior to asking a question of the Minister of Transport.

Leave granted.

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: Replying to my colleague's question, the Minister mentioned that the Leader in another place had said (at that time he was Premier) he was going to cancel some services. I am glad that the Minister made it clear that the then Premier had said he would see that the railway services became efficient and that possibly there would be a need for some economies. Various means are available for effecting economies in the Railways Department without cutting out existing services, but I agree it would be necessary to examine those services carefully. The Minister of Transport has said that when in Government we received a report from the South Australian Railways Commissioner. In that respect, we did receive certain reports from the Commissioner concerning many matters; I did not always agree with the Commissioner in his comments or in his policy in certain cases. I have no doubt that the Minister of Railways before me likewise did not always agree with the Railways Commissioner.

The PRESIDENT: Is the honourable member explaining his question?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: Yes, I am coming to the point. We did not carry out what the Railways Commissioner had asked us to do in this case because we were studying the problem thoroughly. It was shortly after this report was received that the present Government assumed office and the present Minister of Transport was appointed. He made a statement some few days after his appointment that he was going to take the action that is the subject of this question of railway passenger services.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill: I think this is an answer and not a question.

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: My question is: when the Minister stated that he was going to cut out certain of these services he said (and these were the words of the Railways Commissioner in his report) that in some circumstances co-ordinated services would be cut and other services, something sponsored by the department, would be provided. In other instances nothing would be done.

Because the South Australian Railways Department is a common carrier and must carry goods to certain areas irrespective of whether it is an economic load or not, and because road services are not common carriers in this respect and only need take loads to certain areas when a full load is available (and this is what they do under the system of private enterprise), how will the Minister of

Transport make sure that in some of the areas where he proposes to cut out these services the people will have an adequate service if he does not make provision himself for such service?

The Hon. C. M. HILL: First, I wish to comment upon the preamble to the question. The previous Government did have this report, but it did not introduce the recommendations because it did not have the political courage to do so. It was put off because there was an election around the corner, even though there has been a great deal of talk about this report and other reports. However, some of the talk about these reports has not been true.

I want to amplify that statement by again referring to a statement of the Hon. Mr. Dunstan as reported in the *Advertiser* of June 8. He was reported as having seconded a resolution put forward by the State Convention of the Australian Labor Party condemning the Government's proposal to curtail certain South Australian rail routes. The Leader was further reported as having made the following remarks:

The Government got hold of a recommendation by the Railways Commissioner which recommended certain expansion but these reports were rejected by the Royal Commission. That statement is not in accordance with facts because neither of the Railways Commissioner's reports mentioned was rejected by the Royal Commission on State Transport Services. The Commissioner's report on certain curtailments of rail services is supported by the recommendation 20 of the Royal Commission's report which reads in part as follows:

A complete review should be made of railway services, particularly some branch lines, to eliminate those which are uneconomic and where alternative services can be provided, or to restrict them to a seasonal basis where justified. Some country rail passenger services should be replaced by road transport.

The Commission's report on expansion referred to a programme of track re-laying on Eyre Peninsula. Cabinet (that is, the present Cabinet) has approved of the proposal. This report was not rejected by the Royal Commission. Specific mention was made regarding the condition of the permanent way on Eyre Peninsula on page 36 of its report. The relevant paragraph reads as follows:

The Commission found that the condition of the permanent way on Eyre Peninsula was such that train loads and speeds were unduly limited. With the increased tonnages of grain produced in that area, road transport of grain will be encouraged if the railways are not able to efficiently handle the traffic offering. An accelerated programme of track re-laying and improvement appeared warranted.

So there have been many statements made concerning the railways programme which have been incorrect, and in that specific case untrue. I turn now to the question that the honourable member asked concerning alternative road passenger services, which we have said—

The Hon. A. F. Kneebone: And parcel services.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: That is right, and they will be part of the road passenger services where buses are permitted to carry parcels up to 50 lb. in weight and where a licence has been issued to the operator by the Transport Control Board. We have given an undertaking that, after full inquiry on this question by the Transport Control Board, if there is a need for a passenger service then that passenger service will be provided as an alternative to the closed rail passenger service.

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: I direct a question to the Minister on the same subject and seek permission to make a brief statement prior to asking that question.

Leave granted.

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: My question refers to the employees engaged in the industry. In an earlier reply the Minister said that there would be no retrenchments and that where transfers were necessary some employees would be transferred by common agreement, and that is acceptable to all concerned. My question is: what does the Minister propose to do for the people who for some reason do not want to be transferred because their roots are well established in certain towns? What will happen to that type of employee? Has the Minister a programme for such people? This might be called the "kernel" of the problem.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I share the concern of the Leader on this point because that also is the "kernel" of my concern on the whole matter.

The Hon. A. J. Shard: It is a big problem for them.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I know that, and I am fully aware of the problem that will occur. I have been greatly concerned with the whole question of employment. As the Leader has stated, we have given undertakings that there will be no retrenchments as a result of this, but a point still outstanding is that there will be some families who have bought homes and who have children who have grown up and attended schools in those towns. A genuine human factor exists that must be considered as far as it concerns the transfer of these people to, for instance, another town or

railway centre. It was put to me by one of the trade union members that he thought all these people would have to come back to the city, but this is not so. It does not mean that they will have to go back to the city, for they may be offered work in the railways in another town or another centre.

I realize, too, that at one time some years back people did not object to this kind of transfer as much as they do now. At one time people moved quite freely and rather enjoyed the life of spending a few years in one town or centre and then moving to another. However, in the more affluent times in which we now live and enjoy our way of life there could be a few instances of dissatisfaction.

These people will be given special consideration by the railways. For example, people who because of a cancellation of a passenger service will have to go elsewhere will be considered as separate people. Amongst those people, of course, will be some who will not mind shifting, some who are renting accommodation and some who are single men who will not be affected so much as will the family man.

I quite agree with the Leader that there still will be some who will not want to change from their present town and the house they have bought and the family life they are enjoying. All I can say at this stage is that we have this problem in the forefront of our minds, and we are going to treat them as special cases. We hope that when the changes are made these people will not be dissatisfied, as some of them consider now that they will be.

If the matter is discussed and special consideration is given to their wants, needs and circumstances, I think the South Australian Railways can get around this problem so that it will not be a serious one, as we envisage at the moment it might be.

The Hon. C. D. ROWE: I should like to try my luck and ask your permission, Mr. President, with the indulgence of the Council, to make a statement prior to asking a question of the Minister of Transport.

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. D. ROWE: Many questions have been asked this afternoon about the proposed closing down of certain passenger train services, but the anxiety present in many people's minds is about the procedure to be followed before action is taken to close them. In replying this afternoon, the Minister said that the procedure would be that, if a pro-

posal for closure was made, it would be referred by him to the Transport Control Board, which would then either make an order for the closing of certain passenger train services or presumably make a recommendation to the Minister. If the people in the areas concerned knew exactly the procedure to be followed before firm action was taken, it would resolve any indecision in the matter. Can the Minister tell us exactly what procedure is adopted before any action is taken?

The Hon. C. M. HILL: The first procedure, now that the Government has decided on the matter as announced, where the closing of the passenger services is involved is for the matter to be referred to the Transport Control Board, which licenses road passenger services on licensed routes throughout the country areas. I have already had discussions with the board about this matter and it is now making its arrangements to begin its respective inquiries.

These inquiries entail the board's going into the country areas involved, taking evidence and then bringing down its findings. The board calls tenders for passenger services on the specified routes, so that everyone can be assured that a proper service, as far as fares and the kind of service offered are concerned, can be provided.

I understand that the board brings its recommendations to me. Of the exact detail of the procedure after the Transport Control Board concludes its inquiries I am not absolutely sure, but I think it brings its findings back to me and then either I or the Government will make a decision from that point on whether or not to proceed.

#### UNDERGROUND WATER SUPPLIES

The Hon. H. K. KEMP: Can the Minister of Mines say what progress has been made in the investigations into underground water supplies in the Langhorne Creek district, and can he say when a report will be made? Also, can a similar study be made of the very important water-bearing beds in the upper and lower South-East, particularly in the Geranium and Pinnaroo areas?

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: I realize the great interest the honourable member has always shown in the availability of underground water supplies. Three bores have already been sunk south-east of Langhorne Creek to a depth of between 400ft. and 480ft., and they will be pump-tested in July, I think. One bore, the first in the area, has been sunk east of Langhorne Creek to a depth of 150ft. at present. Preliminary results confirm that

further testing of the underground supplies in this area is necessary. The results so far suggest that a substantial aquifer is present in the Langhorne Creek area below the depth of existing bores. A report which will take into consideration the evidence now being collected should be made shortly on the question of availability of underground supplies in this area.

The honourable member also referred to a study of the important water-bearing beds in the upper and lower South-East, particularly in the Geranium and Pinnaroo areas. I realize the importance of further studies of the availability of underground water supplies throughout South Australia. As the programme expands, this area will also be fully tested and a report prepared. If the honourable member requires more information on the programme in the Geranium and Pinnaroo areas, I shall obtain it for him.

#### CHOWILLA DAM

The Hon. H. K. KEMP: First, can the Minister of Agriculture tell the Council whether it is practicable for the South Australian Government to take action in the High Court of Australia to enforce the legislation on the Statute Books of the Commonwealth and the States of New South Wales and Victoria regarding the underlying agreement which provides for the construction of Chowilla dam? Secondly, can the Minister at this stage determine how much of the good water coming down to us now from undammed tributaries of the Murray River will be wasted through lack of the Chowilla dam? Will it be of the order of the 3,700,000 acre feet of good water which has been stated as having run to waste last year before the pumping season began?

The Hon. C. R. STORY: This question, of course, is really one for the Minister of Works in another place. However, I will give the honourable member what information I can on the subject, and then if he desires further information I will get it for him. The first part of the question is a legal matter, and I do not presume to put myself in the category of one who can reply adequately to it. However, I will ascertain the position from the Attorney-General on that score.

The South Australian Commissioner (Mr. Beaney) went to the April meeting of the River Murray Commission with the clear direction that he should not support any resolution to cancel or indefinitely defer the construction of the Chowilla dam. This was

given in confident expectation that the issue would not be forced to finality at that meeting. It was realized that the Upper River alternative site had not been investigated to a stage where a reliable estimate could be made of the cost of the alternative, and it was understood that further work would have to be done to justify the most enthusiastic supporter of such a project in any attempt to substitute it for Chowilla on a short-term or a long-term basis. Prior to the April meeting an interim report had been received—

The Hon. A. J. Shard: I understand there may have been two meetings. So that there will not be any confusion, can you give us the date of that meeting?

The Hon. C. R. STORY: I can get the Leader the actual date. There were two meetings in April.

The Hon. A. J. Shard: Which one are you referring to?

The Hon. C. R. STORY: Both of them; I have got only to the first one. Prior to the April meeting an interim report had been received from the consultants to the commission suggesting that Chowilla did not provide adequate salinity control. At the meeting the South Australian Commissioner challenged the data on which this report had been produced and received authority from the commission to make further inquiries from the consultants. This was subsequently done, and the consultants agreed to re-examine the whole basis of their interim report. To date, this has not been completed.

It was realized prior to the first April meeting that any attempt to put the matter to arbitration at that stage would invite any arbitrator appointed to put the whole matter back to further inquiry into the whole range of benefits sought from Chowilla and to require documentation of proposals made for an alternative. The present situation is that the commission has requested the Snowy Mountains Authority to investigate the physical practicability and the cost of an alternative at Dartmouth on the Mitta River.

That is the position at the present time. The Hon. Mr. Kemp was good enough to send particulars of his further question to me. Regarding his question whether the wastage would be up to 3,700,000 acre feet as happened last year, the position is that the flow in the Mitta River into Hume dam in 1967 was 310,000 acre feet. This did not fill the Hume storage in association with the flow out of the Murray. In the five years from 1963 to 1967 the Hume dam has spilt or discharged excess

water on two occasions. Surplus flow in 1964 was 3,065,000 acre feet, and in 1966 it amounted to 900,000 acre feet. Estimated over the 50 years of the study period and at what might be described as ultimate development by the States of tributary resources, the flow from Victorian rivers into the Murray River averaged 886,000 acre feet per annum. Of this, 768,000 acre feet was credited to Victoria for use as State water out of the Murray River. In the case of New South Wales, the total flow from tributaries was 210,000 acre feet, with 158,000 acre feet credited to that State. These figures have been provided after checking with the Canberra office of the commission. I will seek the additional information for the honourable member.

#### BAROSSA RAILWAYS

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: I seek leave to make a short statement with a view to asking a question of the Minister of Transport. Leave granted.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: I have been advised that at Nuriootpa on next Wednesday night, July 3, at 8 p.m. there will be a meeting with reference to the proposed cancellation of the rail services in the Barossa Valley. I want to say (I hope I am allowed to say this) that I have been invited to this meeting and that I intend to attend it. The members for Midland generally are active and will always attend meetings when they are invited and the meetings are made known, despite the indirect aspersions of the honourable member who earlier this afternoon bit off a little more than he could chew. The gentlemen who advised me of this meeting also gave me some figures (which, unfortunately, I have not got with me) with regard to the amount of patronage of the rail services in the Barossa Valley. It appears to me to be of such an order that the Minister could have another look at the situation as it affects the rail services in the Barossa Valley. Will the Minister have another look at this matter and, if he finds himself in the position of having to cancel the train services and replace them with road services, will he perhaps give this meeting some information about the road services to be provided?

The Hon. C. M. HILL: The local member in another place brought this matter to my notice yesterday and discussed it in some detail with me. In fact, he made all the points in that conversation that the honourable member has just made in his question.

In consequence of that discussion, I have already arranged for an officer to come down to Parliament House this afternoon and we shall have a further discussion on the matters raised. If the honourable member who has asked the question and any of his colleagues like to attend that discussion, I shall be happy to ask them to come along and we can discuss the matter this afternoon. I have also this morning endeavoured to arrange for an officer from the South Australian Railways and an officer from the Transport Control Board to attend that same meeting.

#### SOUTH-EAST ELECTRICITY

The Hon. H. K. KEMP: Can the Minister representing the Minister of Works say whether there is any possibility of speeding the reticulation of electricity in the districts centred on Naracoorte in the South-East? Is he aware of the deep concern in the district at the slow progress being made and the costs involved to residents in keeping obsolescent equipment in service and the loss from deferring such power-consuming projects as irrigation?

The Hon. C. R. STORY: I shall be happy to get a report for the honourable member.

#### LAND TAX

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: I seek leave to make a short statement prior to asking a question of the Chief Secretary.

Leave granted.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: My question refers to the high cost of land tax to some primary producers, in particular those in the inner areas of the State. I refer more particularly to people who, while they are not within built-up areas or in the areas at present provided for by the Act, are nevertheless in a burdensome situation. It was reported in the New South Wales *Country Life* that the New South Wales Government intended to phase out land tax over a period of about three years. Just what they will replace it with I do not know.

The Hon. A. J. Shard: Poker machines.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: I am talking about land tax, and that is what was reported to me. I am aware that we are not in a position to do this in South Australia, but can the Chief Secretary say whether the Government will look at two situations where land tax is exorbitant at present? One is the area to which I have already referred—that is, areas close to the city but not covered by the present legislation, areas valued highly because of their proximity to the city; the other is areas that have been



assessed on the assumption that there was unlimited underground water and that concentrated production was possible as a result. Of course, in many cases this underground water is now cut off since we have had to restrict it. Will the Chief Secretary look at these matters?

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: I am fully aware of the difficulties in connection with some land tax assessments to which the honourable member has referred. I have also seen the reports of the position in New South Wales where (I do not know whether or not it is an accomplished fact) some statement was made that it was hoped to be able to phase out land tax altogether. However, I shall have the matters raised by the honourable member investigated, and bring back a report to this Council.

#### PREMIER'S OVERSEA VISIT

The Hon. D. H. L. BANFIELD: I direct my question to the Minister of Transport. In view of his attitude on March 2, 1966, some 12 months after the previous Government had taken office and it had been announced that the then Premier was going overseas with another Minister to look into the supply and distribution of natural gas, the present Minister asked for an assurance that no further overseas trips by other Ministers would be contemplated. I point out that the present Premier, who has been in office for less than eight weeks, has announced that he will go overseas to investigate industrial development for this State, even though it is known that French industrialists will visit South Australia next month. Can the

Minister of Transport say what attitude he took in Cabinet concerning the coming overseas trip of the Premier?

The PRESIDENT: Under section 69 of Standing Orders, the time for questions has expired. I shall allow the Minister to reply to the question.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I was exceedingly pleased at the announcement of the Premier's coming overseas trip. I approved of the trip and I hope it will ultimately be of great advantage to South Australia.

#### ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS (Chief Secretary) brought up the following report of the committee appointed to prepare the draft Address in Reply to His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech:

1. We, the members of the Legislative Council, thank Your Excellency for the Speech with which you have been pleased to open Parliament.
2. We assure Your Excellency that we will give our best attention to all matters placed before us.
3. We earnestly join in Your Excellency's prayer for the Divine blessing on the proceedings of the session.

#### SESSIONAL COMMITTEES

The House of Assembly notified its appointment of Sessional Committees.

#### ADJOURNMENT

At 3.20 p.m. the Council adjourned until Tuesday, July 23, at 2.15 p.m.