

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday, September 19, 1968

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

ASSENT TO BILLS

His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, by message, intimated his assent to the following Bills:

Evidence (Affidavits) Act Amendment,
Motor Vehicles Act Amendment,
Road Maintenance (Contribution) Act
Amendment.

QUESTION**SITTINGS AND BUSINESS**

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: I noticed in this morning's newspaper that the Premier said yesterday that the other place would have a week's recess near the end of October. Can the Chief Secretary say whether I am correct in assuming that this Council, too, will have a week's recess at that time?

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: At the present time it is thought that there will be a week at the end of October when both Houses will rise. I can bring back a full report to the Council on this if the Leader desires it.

The Hon. A. J. Shard: I would like that.

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: At the present stage it is intended that both Houses will rise for a week at the end of October.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION: PUBLIC PURPOSES LOAN BILL

The Hon. L. R. HART: I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

Leave granted.

The Hon. L. R. HART: During my speech on the Public Purposes Loan Bill on Tuesday last there was a great deal of interjection by some honourable members, and at one stage of my speech I said that the Hon. Mr. Banfield, during his Address in Reply speech, had "dipped into the sewer". On reflection, I realize that this statement may have been distasteful to the honourable member.

The Hon. D. H. L. Banfield: It is only what you would think of.

The Hon. L. R. HART: Therefore, Mr. President, I ask that I be allowed to withdraw this remark and to apologize to the honourable member for making it at that time.

The Hon. D. H. L. Banfield: Apology not accepted.

The Hon. A. J. Shard: It's a pity your mate wasn't here; he might withdraw his, too.

PUBLIC PURPOSES LOAN BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 18. Page 1200.)

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES (Northern): My opening remarks on this Bill are a continuation of the comments made by the Hon. Mr. Dawkins yesterday when he made numerous references to the prosperity of the Northern District, and rightly so. It does not hurt the Council to remember that Northern is really the premier electoral district of the State.

The Hon. C. R. Story: I thought he was a Midland member.

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES: Yes, the honourable gentleman is a member of the District of Midland, but he was giving due regard for the assets of Northern and I consider that it would do no harm for me to continue with the message he was giving to all of us and for this Council to remember again what the Northern District contributes to the prosperity of the State. One need only mention the natural gas that has been found in the northern parts of the State. The iron ore deposits are situated in this area, and copper, zinc, coal and opals are all mined there, so obviously the Northern District has much to commend itself to all honourable members. The standardized railway line that will link this State with every other major State in the Commonwealth will traverse from east to west the whole of the Northern District.

The Flinders Ranges, of course, provide the greatest potential of all to tourism that this State can offer, especially this season, when the Flinders Ranges are in all their glory with flowers of every description. The fishing industry on the West Coast and in the gulfs of the State produces some of the finest whiting and tuna that can be found anywhere in Australia. Also, it must not be forgotten that Woomera, which is helping in the defence of the nation, is situated in that electoral district.

I preface my remarks on this Bill with this reminder of the importance of Northern and of the need for that electoral district to receive fair and just assistance from the Government when and where it is required. Yesterday, in reply to a question, the Minister of Agriculture admitted that the fishing industry was taking a far more important part in

the economy of the State and of the nation as a whole. He was replying to a question I had asked about preventing foreign fishing vessels from entering Australian ports. I notice from the Bill that only \$93,000 of a possible \$225,000 has been allocated to assist in improvements to ports around our coastline, which money will be spent at Cape Jaffa, Robe and South End. I do not quibble at the need for improvements to jetties and havens for dinghies and the like. Indeed, such work should be conducted in those areas. However, there is a crying need for money to be spent on fishing havens and slipways in other areas of the coast, particularly at Thevenard, which has been begging for many years for improvements to be effected to the slipway and fishing facilities. I have no doubt that money could be well spent at Streaky Bay, Port Lincoln and numerous other fishing ports along the coast should the Government see its way to be outward in its thinking and not to be insular, giving consideration to only one small segment of the coastline, especially when it has received money from the Commonwealth Aid Roads grants that it could spend in the areas I have mentioned.

The next point to which I wish to refer is the problem that the State and the nation is going to have with the general practitioner in country areas. We all know that there are many fine hospitals in our country areas. The Hospitals Department has planned as well as it could over the years for the maintenance of country services and, more especially, of services to the individual. However, at many hospitals the general practitioner is the cornerstone of the successful operation of the hospital. If the general practitioner should leave an area through sickness or if he should move his practice, the chances of that hospital continuing profitably fall within the first month, and the position becomes critical from then on. I have had personal experience of this with hospitals in my own area.

With the complexities that doctors have to face today, the general practitioner can become a clerk to the specialist in the city. The problem is one not of being able to diagnose complaints but of being able to treat them. Gone is the day of castor oil and aspro, for today the general practitioner is expected to be well acquainted with all the complexities of the modern drugs and of the way to treat patients for any ailments they may have. The only way in which this position can be altered is for groups of doctors to band together and

operate in groups. If that is done, some profit motive must be involved in order that the doctors can operate successfully; of course, that is only human nature. However, with many of our small hospitals this is not possible.

I therefore urge the Government seriously to consider conducting an inquiry to ascertain which key country towns have sufficient population within both the town itself and the surrounding hinterland to maintain a hospital and sufficient doctors who could specialize in the various sections of medicine for which they were trained. This would provide the modern technological type of service demanded by medicine today. Just as we have area schools that have done away so successfully with the one-teacher or two-teacher type of school and have been able to give children a far wider range of teaching and learning, so, similarly, we must have the area type of hospital; but this must be spelt out and the people must realize that this need is growing.

Let me make it clear now that I am in no way reflecting on the wonderful work that the small hospital committees and boards do, and have done for many years, for their particular hospitals in their respective communities, but (and I emphasize this) if their local doctor leaves, where is their future? If their local doctor tries to sell his practice, is there somebody prepared to buy it? It would appear from all the information I have received that the sale of general practitioner practices in the country is at a very low ebb. I suggest also to the Government that this inquiry embrace the future planning of these small hospitals, which could become geriatric centres on a regional basis and so release the area hospitals for the more important task of curing the chronically ill.

It would not be right to deal with a Public Purposes Loan Bill without reminding ourselves of the continuing need for increased maintenance of roads. In the last few weeks I have been lucky enough to travel in the country north of Hawker where, whether we like it or not, tourism is flourishing. I am told there were over 5,000 units at the Wilpena Chalet two weeks ago. (I say "5,000 units" because there is conflicting information on whether it was 5,000 caravans or 5,000 people; there have been conflicting reports on that.) At any rate many people have gone to the Flinders Ranges during the school holidays. I think the roads there at this point of time are in fairly good order and are a credit to

the department, but let it not be thought that the main roads should be maintained in good order while in the northern area (what is sometimes called the "pastoral area") there are many roads needing maintenance running through station properties.

Many station owners are only too happy (the Hon. Mr. Whyte asked a question only this week about this) to hire the excellent Highways Department equipment for the grading of air strips and of roads through their country—not necessarily for their personal use at all times. When we realize there were 5,000 units of people in the Wilpena area for many weeks of the school holidays, and also the increased number of people travelling in the Far North, these air strips take on a different significance. The air strip is not for the use of the landholder's own private aircraft all the time; it is for the use of those who fly aircraft and want to put them down for help in an emergency.

The problem of the sealing of the Eyre Highway from Ceduna to the Western Australian border is, I know, a hardy annual, but let it not be forgotten that this State loses prestige when it is known that Western Australia plans to seal the Eyre Highway as far as the border between Western Australia and South Australia, while we, because of problems that I am well aware of at this point of time, cannot go further than a little west of Penong. But, somehow, we have to get there. I have noted with interest the Minister's comments on an all-weather road from Alice Springs to Port Augusta. It is not only the M.A.T.S. Report that must be kept in mind. I see married into that study planning for the future of the metropolitan area and forward thinking in the planning for increased maintenance and reliability of roads in the northern areas.

The Hon. C. M. Hill: I agree with that.

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES: As regards road warning signs, I wish to draw a point to the personal attention of the Minister. Over the last three years (in fact, it must be over the last 18 months) new signs have been erected at railway crossings and on many bridges. These signs are pieces of iron measuring about 2ft. by 18in., and painted on them at an angle of 45° are black and white lines. At railway crossings, of course, the words "Railway Crossing" appear in large letters underneath them. These signs are also placed on approaches to bridges, obviously to warn the motorist that there are some solid concrete works ahead and that if he runs into them he will upset the rate of his insurance premiums.

I do not know whether it is a peculiarity of myself, although I have asked other people for their opinion, but it appears to me that the stripes on these boards tend to make the motorist move to the middle of the road. Just as the camouflage painted on ships in wartime tended to confuse the observer about the size of the ship and the direction in which it was going, so these signs tend to have this camouflaging and confusing effect on the motorist and confuse him into thinking that he has to move a little towards the middle of the road in order to miss the sign. I should like the Minister to ask the Road Safety Council to look at this problem—not to remove these signs completely but, possibly, to resite them. I name in particular the Roseworthy railway crossing, in respect of which so many questions have been asked in this Council in the last few weeks. There is a tendency for these signs, which are placed quite close to the bitumen, to make the motorist move in and at the same time they restrict his vision of the railway line itself. It is a small point but, from the point of view of overall safety, which we all need and desire, this suggestion may help.

The Hon. Mr. Gilfillan spoke well yesterday on this problem of reflectors on railway trucks. I bring to the notice of the Minister some of the words used in a reply to a question asked by the honourable member some weeks ago:

In addition, consideration is being given to painting waggon numbers with reflectorized or luminous paint. However, there is the legal liability of the Railways Commissioner to be considered in some cases—for example, where the effectiveness of reflectorized or luminous paint is reduced by dust accumulating on the sides of waggons. This is at present being thoroughly investigated.

If the Commissioner paints numbers on his railway trucks and those numbers are painted white, while the truck is painted grey, is there legal liability to the public for doing so? If he painted the same numbers with reflectorized paint instead of white paint, is his legal liability any greater? The question is then raised about dust that marks the sides of trucks. In this morning's *Advertiser* I read the following article:

Experiments with "cats-eye" reflectors marking traffic islands had shown that only the self-cleaning type was satisfactory and this was too expensive, the Attorney-General (Mr. Millhouse) told Mr. Giles (L.C.P.) in the Assembly. He said improvements in the reflectorized paint made "cats-eyes" obsolete.

If this report is correct and if reflectorized paint is good enough for traffic islands (on which would collect every bit of mud and dust

and litter possible) and if it is good enough to assist motorists, who often have a fairly restricted field of vision when approaching traffic islands, why can it not be used on railway trucks, regardless of the legal responsibility?

Incidentally, I raise the question: does the Commissioner of Highways have any legal responsibility when he puts reflectorized paint on traffic islands? If a motorist hits a traffic island, is the Commissioner liable? I do not know, but I cannot see why this argument is raised repeatedly by the Railways Department. I remember that when the first railcars were introduced in South Australia (when I was a small boy) they were nicknamed "Barwell Bulls", and I believe there was legal action as a result of this nickname. Maybe we can invent a new nickname: we could call the paint on railway trucks "Reflector Hill", which would then become a household name. It is the chassis of railway trucks, not the numbers, that need painting because the motorist, especially at night, sees the lowest part of the trucks. I suggest that the Minister should by-pass his department, buy a tin of paint and get stuck into it.

This State passed through difficult times a few years ago as a result of the shortage of schoolteachers, which was brought about by population growth, and every endeavour was made to recruit student teachers. At this time an extremely efficient bonding system was evolved whereby students were trained for two or three years on the understanding that they would be bonded to the State for three years after they had finished their courses. The Minister of Education recently announced that the policy in respect of travelling allowances and textbook allowances for student teachers was to be changed. I do not wish to argue for or against this policy change in respect of travelling allowances, but I certainly wish to raise the question of textbook allowances.

Some of these student teachers are to be pressured through a course in two years and they cannot leave the teaching service without repaying the full cost of their course. When a previous Government provided free books for schoolchildren there was a great cry. In view of this, for heaven's sake why can we not provide free books for the people who are training to teach the children? I understand that the minimum number of books that a student would need would cost \$97 and that the average cost of all the textbooks is about \$200. And the State Government magnanimously says, "We will allow you

\$25 and we will pay this to you in weekly or fortnightly instalments"! As a result, the student teacher who comes from a humble home and who has no capital is denied almost immediately the possibility of having the necessary money to buy his books.

If a lump sum was paid to a student at the beginning of each year, it would help him to cope, but to say, "You will be paid a fortnightly allowance for your books" is quite out of this world. There are about 30,000 books at the Wattle Park Teachers College library, which caters for 700 students. The student doing the primary course studies the following subjects: educational psychology, urban, cultural, geophysical and local geography, music, physical education, health, art, speech therapy, biology, science, history, English and mathematics I and II.

The books needed for all these subjects are not common-place books, because they must cover not only the students' intellectual and academic needs but also information on the methods needed to teach the self-same subjects to children. The library has limited seating and the books may be borrowed for a fortnight, but when a class of more than 300 students is told by the lecturer to study a certain book and there are only 20 or 30 copies of it on the library shelves, how can these students obtain the necessary information if they cannot afford to buy the books?

This Council has always closely considered the needs of those who are less privileged than others, so I stress that this question should be looked at in a fair light by the Government. There has so often been criticism of the type of teacher who graduates from teachers colleges, and often it has been levelled at the Education Department: it has been said that teachers appointed to country schools are less qualified than those appointed to primary schools in the metropolitan area. Will we revive this situation if we do not allow these students to receive the best possible training? I repeat that they are not allowed to break their bonds without repaying a large sum of money to the Government.

In conclusion, I wish to make some comments on the Mines Department. During show week I was privileged to be allowed to go with the Minister of Mines on a trip to the Far North of the State looking at mining proposals, propositions and complexes, and I learned much from that trip. I have not been unaware of the need for mineral exploration and development, and because of the wealth

potential that it generates I, like many others, have been wishing that we could find a Hamersley or a Mount Isa.

I have been well aware of the work the Mines Department has done over many years. It was pleasing to see in the Auditor-General's Report that over the last five-year period over \$2,000,000 a year has been spent by this department. It is extremely gratifying to see a Government department that really goes into research and really goes looking for things without counting the cost. The diamond drilling projects that have been carried out on known and unknown areas are terrific. These projects have been undertaken purely in the hope that there will be some return some time that the department can prove to private enterprise for private enterprise then to take up. Although we have not yet found our mother lode of ore, I hope that it will not be too long before this State can prosper, in the same way as some of our sister States are prospering, with a vast mineral complex that will give to the State a greater financial stability than it has had in the past.

I liken the development of Australia at this time to the times when Sir Thomas Playford was trying to get industry to come to South Australia. This was necessary to enable South Australia to keep up with the industries that were already developed and established or were being established in the Eastern States. There is still need for industry to be developed in South Australia as well as in Australia as a whole. But the stage has now come, with the advent of natural gas, of oil, and of greater mineral finds within Australia, for South Australia to be able to acquire this other sort of wealth for its own needs. I support the second reading.

The Hon. H. K. KEMP secured the adjournment of the debate.

HOMES ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 17. Page 1136.)

The Hon. L. R. HART (Midland): This Bill sets out to put into operation some of the promises made by the Liberal and Country League in its policy speech before the last election. The Homes Act dates back to 1941, when it was introduced to encourage the building and acquisition of dwellinghouses. In those days, two groups were mentioned in the Act.

With the first group, the Treasurer was able to give guarantees to certain lending institutions to guarantee them against loans they

had made to people to build or acquire dwellinghouses. With the second group, the powers were extended to certain institutions to enable them to acquire and subdivide land, to build houses thereon, and to sell those houses under extended terms.

Over the years, with the change in money values, people who have purchased houses under these conditions have found that the sum made available under the Act has been insufficient to cover the cost of purchase, and they have been forced into taking out second mortgages. Even when a second mortgage could be obtained, it was usually at extortionate rates of interest, and this placed a great burden on many house builders. In fact, it discouraged some people from building houses and forced them to rent houses.

Under the principal Act, the Treasurer may execute a guarantee of up to 95 per cent of the value of a dwellinghouse provided such loan does not exceed \$6,000. This portion of the principal Act remains unaltered. Also, under the Act the Treasurer may guarantee up to 85 per cent of the value of a dwellinghouse provided the loan on such dwellinghouse does not exceed \$7,000.

Clause 2 amends section 7 of the principal Act to increase this limit from \$7,000 to \$8,000. We appreciate that this is quite a generous increase. We also appreciate that possibly it will not enable certain people to build or purchase houses without their having to take out second mortgages. However, it is a move in the right direction, and I compliment the Government for taking it.

Suggestions have been made that less money will be available because of the increased amount of the loan. This is partly true, but that does not suggest that we should not try to assist those people who are forced into this unfortunate position of having to take out second mortgages at very high rates of interest. Admittedly, perhaps more money should be made available under this Act. However, the Government has to look at all the priorities, and I believe that in this situation, when over recent times we have caught up to some degree with the building of houses and when the waiting time for people wishing to purchase houses has been reduced, the Government is justified in introducing this measure to increase the limit of the loan from \$7,000 to \$8,000. I support the Bill.

The Hon. JESSIE COOPER secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADVANCES FOR HOMES ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 18. Page 1202.)

The Hon. L. R. HART (Midland): I support this Bill, which is in line with the Homes Act Amendment Bill and which is one of three Bills that it is necessary to amend because of the Government's policy to extend the facilities obtainable under certain conditions for the purchase of houses. Whereas the provisions of the Homes Act applied to a number of approved lending institutions, the provisions of the Advances for Homes Act are confined to the State Bank.

The Bill increases the maximum loan from \$7,000 to \$8,000. It will be of great benefit to many house purchasers and will relieve them of the responsibility of having to obtain a second mortgage. Although it will not help all house builders, it will help many. Although the sum to be made available is not perhaps sufficient, we must place priorities in their proper order. Then, too, this is possibly all the money that the Government is at present able to extend for this purpose. I have pleasure in supporting the measure.

The Hon. H. K. KEMP secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADVANCES TO SETTLERS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 17. Page 1137.)

The Hon. H. K. KEMP (Southern): I support the second reading of this Bill. It is possibly the most important single piece of legislation designed to help the farming community, and it has worked effectively indeed. A large proportion of the development of this State agriculturally that has taken place since 1930 must be placed to its credit and to the credit of the people who designed and introduced it.

The purpose of the present Bill is not only to convert the maximum loan to decimal currency but also to increase it by 20 per cent to \$6,000. I draw to the Government's attention the fact that the maximum loan of \$1,200 in 1930 (then considered adequate) was, in relative terms, considerably greater than the \$6,000 maximum today.

The depreciation of the value of money is constantly before all members, as also is the increase in wages and costs and material charges that the farmer must meet today. To reduce the assistance given to the farmer below that

given when the original Act was introduced in the 1930's, a time when money was indeed tight, is not wise. It is probably not appreciated how much assistance will be required by farmers in the coming year.

I know that valuable assistance has been given to farmers under the drought relief scheme, but large areas of country east of the Mount Lofty Ranges have been badly wind-blown, and the topsoil has been lost, and with it the fertility built up over a very long time. A long time measured in years will be needed to rehabilitate that blown-out land. Indeed, I was horrified to see recently that in many areas, some of which had been reseeded three times, the land had again gone with the wind and those areas were still in a very bad state. Now, the whole area is again becoming acutely short of rain.

It is easy to forget that a wet winter does not necessarily mean a good year. I am afraid we will not be able to say that the agricultural industry of this State has recovered from last year's disaster of drought until we receive finishing rains over practically the whole of the State. Some areas are beginning to need them badly. This applies particularly to areas that have been badly wind-blown. These farmers will be looking to this Act for assistance more than they have had to do in the past.

The sum of \$6,000 also is not very much today, when one considers the subjects specifically mentioned as those to be supported by this Act, such as land clearing and water conservation, etc. That sum today would be gone on a few acres, let alone being sufficient to improve a farm to the richly productive stage. Nevertheless, the assistance that this Act can afford, and which it affords quickly, is of vital importance to the farming community. Of course, farmers are substantially supported by financial help that can be obtained from other sources apart from the private banks. We do not give enough credit to the stock firms and pastoral companies, which support the farming community and, to a large extent, act as its bankers. For one not associated with agriculture, it is hard to know how great this help really is.

People on the land are generally thought to be prosperous. For many in recent years it has been a matter of a "skin of the teeth" escape. The wheat farmer has been in a fairly comfortable position, but in the high rainfall areas profitability of farming is not nearly as high as it should be in view of the capital involved.

I do not wish to reiterate what has been said on this subject, but costs in high rainfall areas are very high, and the prices of lamb and wool are at near an all-time low. These farmers will also need help in the coming years. These difficulties do not face secondary industries; for them, legislation of this nature does not seem to be required. In secondary industry there seems to be no great difficulty for a producer in passing on his costs—it causes no great disturbance—but this does not apply to agriculture. In nearly every agricultural commodity the prices realized are ruled not by the costs in Australia but by the money we can obtain for our produce overseas. At times, we resent this bitterly.

The Hon. R. C. DeGaris: The position is also aggravated by subsidized agriculture in other countries.

The Hon. H. K. KEMP: That is the point—the subsidization of agriculture, particularly in countries that import from us. It is the rule in countries nearest to our markets. The only assistance that our farmer gets, except in one or two isolated instances, is the privilege of being able to borrow money at reasonable, although not cheap, rates. He does not get his money cheaply: he has to pay a full interest rate for the money he borrows but, admittedly, at a slightly lower interest rate than obtains in the rest of the financial world. However, he does get limited assistance in that way.

The materials we need for production can be bought elsewhere in the world cheaply but, when our farmers buy them, they have to pay high prices because of import duties designed to protect the secondary industries. In 1930, when this legislation was first introduced, I am not sure of this figure but I believe that petrol cost 1s. 5d. a gallon, although the grade of petrol was, admittedly, inferior to today's petrol. At any rate, the cost of petrol today is somewhat greater in proportion than the increase in aid provided under this Act.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill: And it is different money.

The Hon. H. K. KEMP: Yes. There is a difference between the assistance that should be available under this legislation and what is actually available, but we must thank the Government for at least making a gesture, although I feel it is little more than a gesture. I strongly support the Bill.

The Hon. L. R. HART (Midland): This Bill is somewhat similar to the two previous Bills on which I recently spoke, except that in this case the advance is not for the purchase of a house but for the cost of improvements on Crown lands. In this case, too, the lending institution is the State Bank. The Advances to Settlers Act originated in 1930. There was virtually a consolidation of four Acts at that time. Under the Standing Orders, it was necessary for this legislation, to be referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Consolidation Bills. That committee agreed to the consolidation of those Acts.

As the Hon. Mr. Kemp has just stated, \$6,000 does not, of course, go very far these days when it comes to improvements. However, it is of great assistance to settlers on Crown lands, who are not, of course, involved in the cost of purchase so they probably have more capital available than some other people to invest in improvements. Together with their own capital, this \$6,000 is of great benefit to them. As this Bill is similar to the other Bills on which I have just spoken and as it fulfils a promise made by the Liberal Party prior to the last election, I have much pleasure in supporting it.

The Hon. JESSIE COOPER secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADJOURNMENT

At 3.16 p.m. the Council adjourned until Tuesday, September 24, at 2.15 p.m.