

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday, July 31, 1969

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

## QUESTIONS

## COUNTRY HOSPITALS

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: With the permission and concurrence of the Council, I should like to make a statement prior to addressing a question to the Chief Secretary.

Leave granted.

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: My question concerns the rating of councils for subsidies to country hospitals and the subsidies themselves. I had heard something about this, but what brought it home forcibly to me was that I just could not understand what Sir Norman Jude said yesterday about it, and I thought the Chief Secretary might be able to clarify the position for me. I quote from Sir Norman Jude's address yesterday, as reported in *Hansard*:

It is with some satisfaction that I noted recently that the Chief Secretary was taking steps to assist country hospitals by reducing the contributions in some cases payable by councils by percentages and, where the hospitals are large ones, by turning them into Government institutions so that the local district council would not be responsible for capital additions, as the years went by. I venture to say that this is all-important and, while the Minister has advanced to me certain arguments that it cannot be carried right down the line, I hope it will be taken down the ladder as far as possible because in some districts it has become quite an onerous burden on the council to meet these costs.

As honourable members and I remember, when I was Chief Secretary and in the time of a previous Chief Secretary, a system was operating of a subsidies and a rating committee that rated country district councils according to the needs of their hospitals; it was all worked out together with the subsidy, and there was a highly competent committee to do this job, with efficient people serving on it. Reading between the lines of Sir Norman's speech, some things disturb me. The first is that this quotation refers to "country hospitals". According to Sir Norman Jude's speech, apparently (and I say "apparently" advisedly) this does not apply to all country hospitals. Has the system that has been in operation for many years in connection with the ceiling of payments by councils been changed? If so, does it apply only to certain sections of the country in South Australia or does

it apply to the whole State? Has the policy been changed in connection with that committee's operations by reducing the ceiling of the council payment (I am speaking from memory) down from 6 per cent or 7 per cent of a council's rate revenue?

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: The Leader has asked a number of very complicated questions. If the information that I give now does not fully cover what he wants, I shall be pleased to obtain further information. First, I think the Leader will agree that the previous system was extremely complicated and that it took the Hospitals Department a long time to work out the actual maintenance payments to be made by local government. Secondly, in the metropolitan area the contribution to the Hospitals Department for maintenance varied between 2 per cent and 2.8 per cent of rate revenue. In the country areas the ceiling was 6 per cent, and many councils were paying between 3 per cent and 6 per cent for hospital maintenance.

Last year, after a very close study of the situation, the Government decided to reduce the maximum rating to 3 per cent of rate revenue. This means that this year certain country councils, which were paying more than 3 per cent, will have their compulsory contributions reduced. The contributions of other country councils, which were paying less than 3 per cent—and there are some—will remain unchanged, and the contributions of metropolitan councils, which were paying a little less than 3 per cent, will remain unchanged. The policy has been set that the maximum rating over the whole State for councils will not exceed 3 per cent of rate revenue.

The Hon. A. J. Shard: Will the Government subsidy be increased to meet any deficiencies?

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: The subsidy committee has met and made recommendations on the Government contributions to these hospitals based on the situation of the reduced compulsory council contributions to hospital maintenance.

## CIGARETTES

The Hon. V. G. SPRINGETT: In view of the statement by the Minister of Health recently that legislation will be introduced providing that all cigarette packets shall be labelled to indicate that heavy cigarette smoking is harmful, if not even dangerous, can the Minister inform the Council how soon this measure is likely to be introduced?

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: Recommendations were made to the various State Governments on this matter at the last Health Ministers conference. Cabinet has approved those recommendations and has agreed that legislation will be introduced. I trust that such legislation will be introduced into the Council this session.

#### SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

The Hon. D. H. L. BANFIELD: Has the Minister of Local Government, representing the Minister of Education, a reply to the question I asked last week concerning the delay in the supply of books to the Findon High School?

The Hon. C. M. HILL: My colleague reports that in an effort to prevent a recurrence of the delay in the delivery of textbooks to secondary schools, the Education Department published a list of books required for internal courses in secondary schools for 1970 in the March, 1969, issue of the *Education Gazette*. Further, the Public Examinations Board forwarded book lists of texts set for 1970 to schools in mid-June of this year, some two weeks earlier than usual. Heads of schools have been asked to place their book orders early and wholesale booksellers have been encouraged to place oversea orders in time to allow for reprinting.

One of the causes of delays in the past has been that orders placed overseas by local booksellers in plenty of time for delivery well before the opening of the school year have sometimes been delayed by two months or more because stocks had been exhausted and a reprint had to be made to meet demands.

Heads of schools, seniors and other teachers have made every effort to counteract the late receipt of books this year by the rearrangement of programming and by the provision of duplicated material where this has been practicable. It is expected that there will be no repetition of the delays attached to locally-printed books now that the basic plates and blocks are available.

#### CEDUNA COURTHOUSE

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: It has recently come to my notice that the building of the much-needed courthouse at Ceduna has had to be further delayed because its cost has risen to over \$200,000, thereby necessitating its having to be brought before the Public Works Standing Committee. Will the Minister of Agriculture, representing the Minister of Works,

ascertain what has brought about this extra cost and when the project will be submitted to the committee?

The Hon. C. R. STORY: I shall ascertain that information from my colleague.

#### NURIOOTPA SCHOOLS

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: I seek leave to make a short statement prior to asking a question of the Minister of Local Government, representing the Minister of Education.

Leave granted.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: I suppose that owing to the explosion in the numbers of children in our schools over the last 20 years or so every honourable member could give instances of schools that need either replacement or upgrading. In recent times I have had the privilege of visiting the Nuriootpa district with the Minister and with the member for Angas in another place and the Hon. Colin Rowe. In the town of Nuriootpa there are two schools, both of which are overdue for some attention. The Nuriootpa Primary School is an old school; it is in a very restricted area, bounded by very narrow streets, and is in need of replacement, while the high school does need, and is long overdue for, solid construction buildings. Will the Minister of Local Government ascertain what plans the Education Department has for either the replacement of the primary school or the upgrading of the high school in Nuriootpa?

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I shall ask the Minister of Education for a report on this matter.

#### BUSH FIRES

The Hon. H. K. KEMP: I seek leave to make a short statement prior to asking a question of the Minister of Agriculture.

Leave granted.

The Hon. H. K. KEMP: At a meeting of the Upper South-East Fire Fighting Association on Monday, the matter of controlled burning came up. I understand that at a recent Sydney conference our officers present were informed that the success of controlled burning was undoubted but that there was need for longer study and very careful training of personnel before it could be undertaken on any scale. In individual cases, up to two years of study and trial in other States had been involved.

I point out the very dangerous state that exists in places in the Adelaide Hills. The area of Mount Bonython and west which escaped burning in the fire some years ago

has an enormous accumulation of fuel. It has a steep gully facing west and dense population down wind, so it duplicates exactly the circumstances which led to great loss in the Hobart fire two years ago.

There are other areas of scrubland in the western Hills face which have escaped fire for five years or more, and there is equal risk to the population behind them. Each year more people are building in these areas, with a proportional increase in the life and property at risk. If it takes up to two years to study each of these high risk situations and to train men, it must be at least two years before these dangerous situations can be corrected.

The very steep country and heavy fuel accumulation constitute very high risks in controlled burning, but it is better to undertake some risk rather than accept the risk of this country being set on fire when a hot north-west wind is blowing.

In these circumstances, every living creature is exterminated, the flora takes many years to recover, and lives and property are gravely endangered down wind for the two or three miles such gullies throw fire from burning eucalypt scrub. Will the Minister put before the Bush Fires Advisory Committee the urgency of the position, the need to make a start this summer on the studies involved and, even if only on a small scale in smaller areas, the need to start training the men and services that will be involved?

The Hon. C. R. STORY: I certainly will discuss these matters with the Bush Fires Advisory Committee, referred to by the honourable member. It is not quite right to say that this is a completely new project for South Australia, because it is not. Quite a lot has been done on controlled burning over the years. Only in the last 12 months a very dangerous gully was control-burnt without our losing any of the native trees that were planted in the area. This was in the vicinity of Eden Hills. I can see the honourable member's point, namely, that the gully he refers to is a very difficult one indeed, and I can quite believe that it would take as long as the honourable member says to make a careful study of the situation. It is not the sort of thing that could be handled by every area. It would be necessary for the proper conditions to prevail, and it may be necessary also to ensure the proper degree of dampness by artificial means, or else burn at the exact time when sufficient dampness existed after a shower of rain. Large numbers of people would be needed for such a

job in order to carry out that type of burning. I will most certainly submit this as a project to the research committee because I know it is keen to do anything that will help to alleviate fire danger, and I am equally as interested as that committee.

#### COLEBROOK HOME

The Hon. H. K. KEMP: My question is directed to the Minister representing the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Will the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs table the reasons for the recent refusal of a renewal of the lease of the Colebrook Home for Aborigines at Eden Hills?

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I shall submit that question to the Minister.

#### ADDRESS IN REPLY

Adjourned debate on motion for adoption.

(Continued from July 30. Page 550.)

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE (Northern): I have much pleasure in supporting the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply. I join with previous speakers in congratulating Sir James Harrison on his appointment as South Australia's first Australian-born Governor, and wish both him and Lady Harrison a happy and rewarding stay in our State. I join with all members in this Chamber in expressing sympathy to the relatives of the late Senator Keith Laught, the Hon. R. R. Wilson, the Hon. Clarence Goode, and Messrs. H. B. White and E. E. George. I did not know the three last named gentlemen personally, but I knew Senator Laught as a soldier in the Middle East, where he was regarded very highly by his companions. In addition, as a Senator, he served this State excellently, including that portion of the State I represent.

The Hon. R. R. Wilson, a West Coast man, dedicated his life to public works as well as being a farmer of high repute and a gentleman to whom we were all indebted on Eyre Peninsula. In addition, his service as a State Councillor of the Returned Sailors Soldiers and Airmens Imperial League of Australia was of great significance. Bob Wilson spared no effort to assist returned men from the Second World War, and it is with heartfelt sympathy that I extend my condolences to the relatives of the late members.

I do not remember the State enjoying such a splendid season as the present one, and I cannot remember two successive seasons of such abundant rain and such good prospects.

The Hon. A. J. Shard: We were told by one honourable member this week that it was a drought. I am not criticizing the honourable member—I am criticizing the other member.

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: I think the honourable member was quick to point out that the State's economy was a good deal better because of the good season.

The Hon. A. J. Shard: That is right, yet one of the other honourable members told me last week that we had a drought this year. I just wanted to make the point.

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: Of course, it is ironic to think that, with the second abundant harvest in a row and following a number of lean years that depressed the agricultural economy, we are now faced with overflowing granaries throughout the world. Indeed, the wheat industry is facing a good deal of trouble. I am well aware and appreciative of the efforts of the leaders of our various organizations, and at this point I do not think I can condemn even the Commonwealth Government for its effort to alleviate some of the hardships and problems that the wheat industry is facing.

I have often thought that perhaps our economy would be better served if we were to take advantage of abundant seasons when they arrived. We know that, unless we do provide storage when the opportunity arises, we cannot capitalize on that opportunity. Even an ant makes hay while the sun shines and stores food when possible. The ancient Egyptians were able to dominate the world because of their ability to store grain. We, as Australians, who have such fluctuations in our seasons, would be well advised not to let wheat go to waste or our wheat lands stand out of production. We should make greater provision for storing our grain so that it will be ready to meet world markets when they are available—because, no doubt, they will be available again and possibly we shall not be in a position to provide wheat when that occasion arises.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan: Do you think that would influence the export of Australian wheat to Germany?

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: I do not know that we are very concerned about the export of wheat to Germany. I know there is a suggestion that some of the European Economic Community group are not perhaps playing the game; on the other hand, they may say that we are not playing the game, either. However, I firmly believe that, while we have

the opportunity, we should be thinking more constructively and storing our wheat while the opportunity is with us.

We know that a depressed agricultural economy will reflect on our secondary industries, and in Australia, owing to our geographical position, both of these industries rely upon each other, and the effects of an agricultural depression will be reflected throughout our economy. As I have said, it is ironic that, when we have the good seasons, we have not the markets. It is also noticeable that many of the experts who were in the field 12 months ago seem to have taken cover. Where once they went out and said that we had to produce twice as much at half the cost, now they do not seem to be making much comment. Perhaps they have grown beards and taken to wearing dark glasses in the meantime.

The Hon. A. F. Kneebone: And sideboards!

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: I was not going to mention sideboards.

The Hon. A. J. Shard: We know whom the honourable member means.

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: These experts will be back again, because we need only a decline in meat prices and these experts will then say, "There is chaos in the industry; the farmer is overstocked." Its geographical position is in many ways a disadvantage to Australia, especially as the greater part of its productivity is at its southern end and farthest away from its markets. South Australia, for this reason, is poorly situated and suffers a great handicap because of its lack of deep sea port facilities.

This is becoming more and more evident as shipping is demanding deeper water for bigger ships. At present there are a number of suggested sites, some on Eyre Peninsula—Arno Bay, Port Neill, Sceale Bay and Point Sinclair. To my mind, they have great potential. They have all been mentioned to the Minister and I hope will qualify for investigation. Apparently, surveys have been made at Port Lincoln to see whether the access from Boston Island can be deepened to allow for shipping which, we are told, will before many years' time reach 70,000 tons and perhaps even 100,000 tons.

It is obvious that all countries are expecting to cut freight rates and make use of bigger ships, so we should have the necessary facilities ready to handle them. Recently, at the launching of the *Clutha Oceanic*, the speaker for Clutha Industries said that the ship launched that night of 54,000 tons could not have been

built economically or be run economically by his company unless it had been subsidized by the Commonwealth Government, which is a clear indication that before long ships will be bigger than they are at present. I make these points because I hope a detailed survey will be made of the potential sites. I am not saying which one of them should be a deep sea port, or perhaps there might be some other site more suitable; but, as a South Australian, I know we need a deep sea port. As much as I would like to see one close to my home, I would be happy if the Government could find one at all in the gulf. I have requested that each of these sites be investigated and that any decision by the Government to establish a deep sea port be made known so that the consequences can be considered, to see that Eyre Peninsula is not overlooked in its claim for such a port.

It is heartening to see that in June of this year the Poldo-Kimba main was started. It is scheduled to be completed in 1973 at a cost of \$2,277,000. People along that route, and especially the township of Kimba and district, have, since the early 1920's, been pleading for an adequate water supply. It is to be hoped that adequate rain falls before 1973 because, in view of the present township supply, I believe that the Government will again have to arrange for water to be carted to Kimba township in the next two or three months. I am grateful for the arrangements the Government makes for carting water, but I am mystified why such an essential scheme costing about \$2,000,000 cannot be speeded up and why it has such a low priority. The Government would receive a better return for its money if it speeded up this project, even if this meant perhaps curtailing some of the M.A.T.S. projects or the festival hall.

It is pleasing to note in His Excellency's Speech that work on the urgently-needed new hospital for Port Augusta is about to commence and that it will be completed next year. The Public Works Committee recommended further extensions at the Port Pirie Hospital, and the Port Lincoln Hospital is to have a new maternity block. It gives me great pleasure to hear announcements about all these improvements in the area I represent.

I was interested to see that the Minister of Roads and Transport intends to arrange for the bituminizing of the main street of Coober Pedy. This is one of the first projects that I mentioned after I became a member of this Council, so I feel that in some way I had a

finger in this pie. In the summer time Coober Pedy residents are smothered in dust from dawn to dusk, so they will be very grateful. The main street of Coober Pedy carries most of the north-south traffic.

The Minister of Local Government recently set up a committee to investigate the possibility of extending local government throughout the State. This move is causing some concern, particularly in far-flung areas, where people are concerned that they will pay considerably more once they are rated under a local government system without their enjoying better facilities. At present these people claim that they are paying for nothing, and they do not want to pay any more for nothing.

I notice in His Excellency's Speech that the Licensing Act is to be amended this year. Although this legislation was complex and controversial, I believe that all honourable members did their best when the Council was considering it. Consequently, I am alarmed to find that a person transferring to a retail storekeeper's licence can easily find himself in a difficult position. One such person had to raise \$2,000 to meet his legal fees and, having paid them, he still had to carry on his business without further advantages. In another instance a successful lawyer said that he charged his client \$3,000, and he estimated that the opposition's charges would probably be double this sum. When I wrote a letter about this matter the court judge said that it was obvious that I did not understand the workings of the court. I agree with him, but I hope to get in touch with the judge and ask him to please explain the matter thoroughly to me. I would be very surprised if any honourable member could say that he realized that a person could possibly find himself faced almost with bankruptcy simply as a result of a transfer from one licence to another. When this Council is considering amending the Licensing Act I hope we can do something to alleviate this position.

Nothing has yet been done in connection with the very high rentals charged for land in second-rate and perhaps third-rate country. The issue of perpetual leases in many ways resembles a sale. Such land is a State asset that is being leased permanently. I realize that the Land Board, which is entrusted with this Crown land, works justly within the terms of the Act, but legislation should be introduced to allow discretion, which up to date has not been apparent in many of the cases where land is transferred from miscellaneous lease to

perpetual lease. I wish to quote some evidence prepared by a Mr. McGlasson, of Lock. A total of 2,932 acres was assessed in 1960 for rental at \$82.10; 2,878 acres was assessed in 1965 at \$495; and 2,938 acres was assessed in 1967 at \$1,073.

It is stressed in the prospectus sent with the application forms that applicants will not be considered if they already own or lease land. In other words, their resources for raising capital for development are limited. Having been placed in this position, the applicant is faced with the problem of raising the necessary capital from the Commonwealth and State Banks, which apply minimum rates of interest—but they do, nevertheless, charge interest. The Commonwealth Development Bank is prepared to accept these calculations as correct. Mr. McGlasson claims that the development cost to produce the first crop would be about \$18.15 an acre. He calculates that logging would cost \$1 (in most areas it would be much more than that); ploughing, \$3; back-chaining, \$1; first raking, \$2.50; work-back, \$1.50; second raking, \$2; seeding, \$1.50; superphosphate, \$2; seed, \$1.40; and harvesting \$2.25—a total of \$18.15. That is a rather conservative estimate of what a man would have to spend on each acre before he would receive any income.

If a man successfully cleared land and in a three-year rotation planted 900 acres to wheat and 500 acres to barley, the expected income from those crops would be about \$15,000, the yearly rental for that land being \$1,073. The expected income from similar crops plus stock in the tenth year would be \$21,000. The rental represents 5 per cent of the net income. According to eminent economists, farmer organizations and banks, the best farms have only a 4 per cent return on capital. In this instance the total outlay would not cover the rent. Much more could be said in this respect, but suffice it to say that these rentals are too high.

Although no-one is advocating further development of third-class land (or any land at all), we cannot because of the wheat position afford to adopt a stop-go attitude in our development. People, especially those who have the courage to take on land that has lain idle for so long, must be encouraged, and I sincerely hope that these rentals will be

reviewed and that the necessary legislation will be passed allowing the Land Board to assess correctly the value of such land.

This morning I had the pleasure of going to a workshop at Payneham to see an invention of a young gentleman from Port Lincoln. He has invented an invalid chair which, he says, is the only one of its type in the world and for which he has had to pay \$3,000 to take out world patent rights. It is a most ingenious invention, which many members of Parliament have already seen. This young man found it difficult to develop the chair to a point at which it would be marketable. Not only has it cost him \$5,000 from his own pocket and 18 months of labour to develop it, but also he has found difficulty in obtaining the necessary advice and assistance regarding materials to be used. I mention this because, although I was impressed with the chair, I am not giving it a cheap advertising plug. Inventors of this type need encouragement and assistance. I hope this chair will be a source of income for South Australia.

The Hon. R. C. DeGaris: Have you any idea what sort of help we could give?

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: I think this gentleman would in the early stages of development have wanted technical advice. If such a person could approach the Industries Promotion Branch and be assured of being put in the hands of an expert, much time and expense would be saved.

The Hon. R. C. DeGaris: There are many inventors, some of whom have odd ideas.

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: I realize that, but surely an expert should be able to sort the wheat from the chaff and the crank from the genuine inventor. I realize that this is the time when all the eloquent politicians make good and long speeches and when those who cannot are expected to do so. However, I do not seem to have any more notes of any consequence in front of me, so I will merely say that I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

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

#### ADJOURNMENT

At 3.7 p.m. the Council adjourned until Tuesday, August 5, at 2.15 p.m.