

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday, August 20, 1970

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

### ASSENT TO BILLS

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

Administration and Probate Act Amendment,

Advances to Settlers Act Amendment,  
Supply (No. 2).

### QUESTIONS

#### NURSES

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: I seek leave to make a short statement prior to asking a question of the Chief Secretary.

Leave granted.

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: About six months ago it was announced that sweeping changes would be made in registered nurse training and enrolled nurse training in South Australia. Can the Chief Secretary say whether, since he has assumed office, any changes have been made in the policies announced six months ago?

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: No, there have been no changes; if anything, we have tried to expedite matters. The only thing that could possibly change and slow down the procedure would result from lack of money.

#### NATIONAL STOPPAGE

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. L. R. HART: This morning's *Advertiser* contains a report that the Australian Council of Trade Unions is calling for a three-hour national stoppage of work from noon next Tuesday as a protest against the Commonwealth Budget. The Premier of South Australia (Hon. Mr. Dunstan) has been very critical of the Commonwealth Government's Budget. Can the Chief Secretary say whether the State Government of South Australia is in accord with the national stoppage that is to be called by the A.C.T.U.?

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: This matter has not been considered by the Cabinet, and I am unable at this stage to give the honourable member a reply to his question.

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES: I ask leave to make a short statement prior to asking a question of the Chief Secretary.

Leave granted.

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES: Mr. Hawke, the President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, has ordered that all unions affiliated with the A.C.T.U. strike for three hours next Tuesday between the hours of noon and 3 p.m. As members of the Government are financial members of their respective unions, can the Chief Secretary say whether it is the Government's intention to strike next Tuesday to conform with Mr. Hawke's request, and if this is so, at what time will Parliament sit on that day?

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: To correct the honourable member, let me say that Mr. Hawke did no such thing. Again, it was a misleading press and television report: the decision to strike was made by the inter-state executive of the A.C.T.U. A meeting of the Trades and Labor Council South Australian executive will be held next Monday morning to discuss the position and will grant exemptions to essential services. I am sure that Parliament will come under "essential services" and sit as usual.

#### WINE PRICES

The Hon. C. R. STORY: I seek leave to make a short statement prior to asking a question of the Chief Secretary representing the Minister responsible for price control.

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. R. STORY: It has been announced in the press that as a result of the Commonwealth Budget the price of wine is likely to increase by 8c a bottle. Mr. Stephens, the Secretary of the Wine and Brandy Producers Association, is quoted in yesterday's *News* as saying that he believes the increase will be well in excess of the 8c levied by the Budget. Can the Chief Secretary say what action the Government intends to take to see that the increase of 8c fixed by the Budget is not exceeded in any compilations which may take place when the price fixing authority is computing the price for sale to the public of South Australia?

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: I shall be pleased to take the matter up with the Premier, who is in charge of the Prices Branch. If it is possible to keep the increase at 8c, the honourable member can take it from me that all possible steps will be taken to see that the price is not increased by any more than is necessary.

## HEALTH PROBLEM

The Hon. V. G. SPRINGETT: On August 12, I asked a question of the Minister of Health concerning substances found to be carcinogenic. Has he a reply?

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: The matter of scheduling of pest strips under food and drugs legislation has been thoroughly discussed by the Poisons Schedules Subcommittee of the National Health and Medical Research Council, which has recommended that no change be made in the present requirement, that is, a label marked "Warning" (not "Poison"), with supplementary cautions "avoid contact with food" and "avoid contact with skin and avoid breathing its vapour". In view of the recommendation of the subcommittee, these requirements are likely to remain.

## MEAT

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: It was reported in the press this morning that I had surprised the Minister of Agriculture regarding the cancellation of orders from Russia for meat. I understand that the Minister has worked very swiftly since then and that he now has a reply to my question. Will he give that reply?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I am only too happy to give a reply to the honourable member. From the information I have been given, it seems that the report referred to by the honourable member is incorrect. I am advised that exports of 60,000 tons of meat have already been accepted by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and authorities there are interested in a further 4,000 tons of mutton or beef. However, there has been some delay in negotiations over this further quantity and, as no order has yet been placed for it, obviously there could have been no cancellation. I believe that representatives of the Australian Meat Board will visit Russia next month to continue negotiations in connection with the deal. I suggest that in future the honourable member should ensure that the information he receives is correct, at least in part.

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: I asked my question of the Minister because I knew he had the appropriate contacts and far greater access to information than I had. I am pleased that the Minister has clarified the matter. The same information—

The PRESIDENT: Is the honourable member asking a question? He cannot debate the matter. Has the honourable member a further question?

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: I seek leave to make a short statement before asking a question of the Minister of Agriculture.

Leave granted.

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: One of the reasons why I asked my question was that I wanted the Minister to clarify the matter. Through his department he can clarify it much more readily than can I, the man in the street, or the primary producer. Has the Minister read a similar report in the *Chronicle*?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: The answer is "No".

## SPRAY MATERIALS

The Hon. C. R. STORY: Has the Minister of Agriculture a reply to my question of July 22 about spray materials?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: As a result of its interest in a number of bio-assay examinations of pesticides for citrus red scale control carried out by the Agriculture Department, the Murray Citrus Growers' Association has requested that biological assays be carried out on all materials submitted. It would not be possible for the department to undertake this programme as a routine, but it will carry out occasional testing in the course of its investigational work.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: Has the Minister of Lands obtained from the Minister of Local Government a reply to my question of August 13 about the release to honourable members of the report of the Local Government Act Revision Committee?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: My colleague reports:

The contract for the printing of the report of the Local Government Act Revision Committee was due to be completed by the end of July. However, due to unavoidable problems in printing and binding the report, the contract has not yet been completed. It is expected that printed copies of the report will be available by mid-September.

## GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: On August 11, in reply to a question from the Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill, the Chief Secretary said:

A study was made of the operation of other Government insurance offices before the Government took office. Material was also supplied from university sources as to the profitability of insurance offices of medium size doing business of the kind proposed for the Government insurance office.

On August 12 I asked the Chief Secretary whether these reports could be made available to honourable members to assist them during the debate on the State Government Insurance Commission Bill. Has the Chief Secretary referred the question to the Premier and when will the material be made available to honourable members?

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: I feel sure that the question has gone from my office to the Premier's office. I have not had a reply, but I will again draw the Premier's attention to this matter and endeavour to bring down a report next week.

### ROAD SCHEDULES

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I ask leave to make a short statement prior to asking a question of the Minister representing the Minister of Roads and Transport.

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: On August 12, I asked a question of the Minister concerning the release of the schedule of roadworks by the Commissioner of Highways. On August 17, in his reply, the Minister indicated that the Government did not propose to continue the practice that the previous Government had commenced of releasing these annual reports to members of Parliament. The Minister also said that the Government had made available a copy of the works programme to each Cabinet Minister, Leaders of the respective Chambers, and the Whips in each Chamber. Will the Minister say when these copies were made available to the Leader and the Whip in the Council?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: I will ask my colleague when these copies were made available.

### PERU EARTHQUAKE

The Hon. V. G. SPRINGETT: I ask leave to make a short statement prior to asking a question of the Chief Secretary, representing the Minister in charge of immigration.

Leave granted.

The Hon. V. G. SPRINGETT: A few weeks ago there was tragic news of a vast natural calamity in Peru and much international relief was rushed to that area. Many people were killed and many children were left homeless. I read in an Australian paper that Australia, among other countries, was thinking of making it possible for Peruvian children to come here for adoption; presumably, this State could take part in such a scheme and receive many

of these children. Bearing in mind all the emotional as well as the physical complications involved in adoption on a nation-wide level, even when in the same country, can the Chief Secretary say whether great care will be exercised and great consideration given to fostering, as opposed to legal adoption of children, because in future years they will have grown up in a strange country. Even if they are adopted and live here they may want to go back to their own homeland later.

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: I will go even further for the honourable member and bring his question to the notice of both the Minister in charge of immigration and the Minister of Social Welfare.

### COUNTRY ROADS

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: I ask leave of the Council to make a short statement prior to asking a question of the Minister of Lands, representing the Minister of Roads and Transport.

Leave granted.

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: From time to time, going back to the time of the previous Labor Government, I have requested the Highways Department and the Minister in charge of it that the main streets of some bush towns be sealed, because they carry a large volume of traffic going through to other States. In places like Coober Pedy and Penong the main streets are continuous dust bowls, and there are no local resources capable of doing anything about it. In Coober Pedy there are some excellent dwellings and facilities that are put to great disadvantage because of the dust hazard. I believe tenders were called some time ago for the sealing of some of these streets. Will the Minister ascertain from his colleague when such work will be undertaken?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: I shall be pleased to take up the matter with my colleague and bring down an answer for the honourable member as soon as it is available.

### AIR POLLUTION

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL: Recently, I asked a question of the Minister of Health about air pollution on the Adelaide Plain. I understand he has a reply.

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: The Public Health Department and the Central Board of Health under provisions of current health legislation have responsibilities for securing the proper sanitary condition of the State, including the protection of the quality of food, air and

water. The Public Health Department in conjunction with and with the co-operation of other Government departments, the Clean Air Committee, and local boards of health, takes an active part in the control of pollution of the general environment. Information on the activities of the department in this regard is provided monthly in a newsletter that is distributed to all local boards of health (140), members of the Clean Air Committee, the Committee on Environment, and approximately 70 other interested persons and organizations, including teachers colleges and the universities.

The following is a brief summary of the department's activities in regard to air pollution:

**Dust fall.** The department has been monitoring particulate fall-out in various locations in the metropolitan area and several country areas since 1961. The results have indicated rates of dust fall from industrial sources that are below those general in both Sydney and Melbourne. The figures in this State have continued to show a progressive reduction over the years. An indication of relative dust fall levels in metropolitan Adelaide is given by the seven-year averages of individual gauge results in specific industrial, commercial and residential areas namely: industrial (Birkenhead) 17 tons a square mile a month; commercial (Kent Town) 11 tons a square mile a month; and residential (Linden Park) 6 tons a square mile a month.

As a comparison, dust fall levels recorded in New South Wales show rates as high as 25 tons a square mile in Sydney, 38.7 in Port Kembla and 28.7 in Newcastle. In Victoria, rates as high as 34.9 tons a square mile have been recorded. The overall results are not unfavourable when compared with existing air quality standards for dust fall rates established in several of the States of the United States of America, but differences in types of equipment used and methods of evaluation could substantially affect valid comparisons of this type. Adelaide does not have the degree of industrialization encountered in either New South Wales or Victoria and has generally been less dependent on solid fuels, but does have some areas where fall-out of particulate matter seems unacceptable by practical air quality standards. The overall progressive reduction in dust fall rates has followed changes in fuel usage and the technology of usage, economic conditions and the activities of the Clean Air Committee, in conjunction with officers of the Public Health Department.

**Sulphur Dioxide and Smoke.** In 1964 the department commenced to measure cumulative 24-hour values of sulphur dioxide and smoke in selected areas in the western sector of metropolitan Adelaide and Port Pirie. Smoke readings as measured (as COH units) are invariably low, with peak values of 0.9 units measured twice only in a period of four years. Average values in this period do not exceed 0.2 units in either metropolitan Adelaide or country areas concerned. Average readings from 0.8 to 1.5 have been recorded in Sydney and suburbs, with a peak of 4.9, whilst in Victoria average recordings have been in general higher than those recorded in this State. The average sulphur dioxide levels in South Australia are also generally below those recorded in other States. Average monthly recordings of 0.5 parts a 100,000,000 or less are common, as compared with 0.8 to 5.2 in Sydney and 0.5 to 3.2 in Melbourne.

**Carbon Monoxide** resulting from emissions from motor vehicles. Early in July, 1970, officers of the Public Health Department took measurements at a busy intersection in the City of Adelaide to determine levels of carbon monoxide in the environment. By arrangement with officers of the City of Adelaide, a traffic count was made of vehicles in the area at the time of sampling. The method of sampling used was to pass a measured volume of air through detector tubes by means of a hand pump at intervals of 15 minutes during several different periods of the day. The method used does not have a high level of accuracy. It is essentially a screening method. Observations have been made so far for only a limited period. Therefore, detailed comparison with results from other centres is not yet possible, but maximum levels of 10 parts in 1,000,000 obtained were considerably less than those reported from other Australian and overseas cities. As an example, figures supplied to the Senate Select Committee on Air Pollution indicate readings during tests of peak hour traffic ranging from 14 parts a 1,000,000 to 80 parts a 1,000,000, with an average reading of 50. In off-peak traffic maximum readings of 22 were recorded.

In recent years the department, with the assistance of local boards of health, has been active in investigating instances of excessive smoke and dust emissions and advising on methods to be adopted to reduce the emissions concerned, including advice on the type of fuel used and modifications to equipment. The effectiveness of this policy has been shown by the progressive reduction in values recorded

for smoke and sulphur dioxide as indicated above. In several instances, legal action has been taken, with satisfactory results. Direct action by the local authority, with the support of the department, resulted in the elimination of pollution arising from burning of industrial wastes in the open at Wingfield. The wastes concerned are now being disposed of by controlled tipping. I have copies of newsletters issued so far with me, which are available to the honourable member. I shall be happy to make them available.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL: I seek leave to make a short statement prior to asking a further question of the Minister of Health.

Leave granted.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL: I thank the Minister for his comprehensive reply to my question; this was most informative. The reply referred to a number of things, many of which I did not know before, but it did not make the matter clear to me regarding the appearance of the smog on the Adelaide Plain. The other morning when I was coming to Adelaide the Willunga Plain was absolutely clear, but when I got to the top of O'Halloran Hill I could not see a single building on the Adelaide Plain because the atmosphere was so hazy, and I do not think this was caused by weather conditions. We know that Adelaide has a beautiful range of hills just behind it, and apparently in other cities of the world such hills have been found to hold in this polluted atmosphere. When I went to the Adelaide Airport a few months ago in a taxi the driver pointed out to me a great haze to the west, and when I asked him what it was he said, "That is the smog that has blown off Adelaide with the south-easterly gully wind last night, and today it will blow back again." Although I do not seek an immediate reply to this question, I ask the Minister to make further inquiries for me about whether the topographical situation of Adelaide is having a bearing on the appearance of the air pollution in Adelaide. Could he also comment on what I have just referred to as the appearance of the air pollution rather than its actual chemical content?

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: I have seen exactly the same thing as the honourable member has seen. However, it is rather a technical question, and I will not attempt to answer it. For instance, I do not know what COH means. However, I shall be delighted to take the honourable member's question to the Director of Public Health and bring back a reply as soon as possible.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL: When a person is amongst it, as we are now, he does not notice it very much. However, it becomes most apparent when one is in the Hills and above it, and that is part of the question with which I should like the Minister to deal.

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: I will refer the whole question to the Director and bring down a reply as soon as it is available.

#### SITTINGS

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: Can the Chief Secretary inform members of the proposed sittings of the Council? I know that Parliament usually rises for the Royal Show but I believe it is to adjourn again later.

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: Yes. It is intended that the House will rise on the Thursday before the Royal Show. It is then intended to rise again on September 24 for two weeks, speaking from memory, and to resume sitting on October 13, the Tuesday after the Labor Day holiday.

#### LOXTON INSECTORY

The Hon. C. R. STORY: I seek leave to make a short statement prior to asking a question of the Minister of Agriculture.

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. R. STORY: Just before leaving office I received a deputation from Murray citrus growers requesting assistance for additions to the insectory at the Loxton Research Station, and subsequently I accompanied the deputation to the Commonwealth Development Bank. The whole object of this move was to increase the size of the insectory so that the predators of red scale that have been discovered to be quite useful in biological control could be bred in sufficient numbers and released to make this project worth while. Can the Minister say whether anything has come of the representations made to the Commonwealth Development Bank?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I will look into the matter and bring back a report for the honourable member.

#### RAILWAYS INSTITUTE

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I refer to the lengthy reply I was given yesterday to an earlier question I had put to the Minister of Roads and Transport, through the Minister of Lands, concerning the Railways Institute. It was a politically slanted reply.

The Hon. T. M. Casey: But very truthful.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I now ask a further question on this matter. Would the Minister be so kind as to permit me to peruse the reports and dockets dealing with this whole question up to May 30 this year so that I can further consider this matter in the interests of the railway employees, whom I have always endeavoured to assist to obtain a new Railways Institute building with a minimum of delay?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: I will convey the question to my colleague and see what can be done about it.

#### ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE

The Hon. Sir NORMAN JUDE: Last year the Hall Government made an additional grant beyond the normal one to the Royal Flying Doctor Service. This service, which is well appreciated by our outback citizens, is still hard pushed to maintain its services at its high standards. Can the Chief Secretary say whether the Government will increase the annual grant to this service, which is recognized world-wide, commensurate with its general increase in all costs, the latest of which is fuel?

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: I am not quite sure of the figures, so I will not mention any amount. However, the amount allocated by the Hall Government was not sufficient to keep the service going for the whole of the financial year and additional provision had to be made to keep it in operation up to June 30. I know that the service, which is a very good one, is in financial difficulties. I have had talks with representatives of that service. Just what will be provided for it in the coming year I am unable to say, but the honourable member can rest assured that its interests will be fairly well looked after. I hope that it will be happy with what will be provided in the Budget for it.

#### REFLECTORIZED NUMBER PLATES

The Hon. C. M. HILL: The previous Government agreed, in the interests of road safety, to introduce reflectorized number plates in South Australia, and the issue of such plates was to commence, as I recall, in about September this year. Can the Minister representing the Minister of Roads and Transport say whether the Government intends to proceed with this proposal and, if it does, when these plates will be made compulsory for new car registrations?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: I shall be pleased to convey the honourable member's question to my colleague and bring back a reply as soon as it is available.

#### STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE COMMISSION BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from August 19. Page 816.)

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE (Northern): The points of opposition that I wish to raise to this Bill can be dealt with during the Committee stage. I support the Bill in principle. The Australian Labor Party clearly stated when it was last in Government that it would establish a Government insurance office at the first opportunity. Since the voters re-elected that Party to Government in the full knowledge of its intention, this Bill cannot be labelled as one of the surprise measures that we often see from this Party. Consequently, the Government to some extent has a mandate for this Bill.

The Hon. A. F. Kneebone: It has a mandate to a very great extent.

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: The Government's desire to enter this field is every bit as perplexing as was the result of the last election. However, if money can be made available for general revenue from this source and if the Government is prepared to operate the insurance office in clean competition with private enterprise, I say "Good luck to it." I doubt whether this field is as lucrative as some people may think, and as, apparently, the Government thinks. The Labor Party is full of financial geniuses who no doubt have taken good stock of this matter.

The Hon. M. B. Dawkins: Is that their assessment, or yours?

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: We are working on their assessment. Since the assessment has been made and since the Government seems confident that the insurance office will work, let us hope that it will. The Minister made play of the various shortcomings and malpractices of some of the private insurance companies at present operating. It surprises me that the Government intends to counter such malpractices by establishing a Government insurance office. Perhaps the Government, finding itself unable to control this matter, has taken the attitude, "If we cannot beat them, let us join them."

It is hard to gauge to what extent the general public wants a Government insurance office. I have discussed the question of Government insurance offices with people in other States, where such offices have been operating for some time. It appears that they are not always as beneficial to the community as the Government has indicated. It is found that claimants

have to wait just as long and to fight just as fiercely to obtain money from Government insurance offices as they do from private companies.

I am concerned about clause 3(3), which clearly provides that the commission will be under the direct control of the State Government, through the Minister. If we rob the commission of the power of autonomy, it will be very hard for it to function effectively. Government departments are full of competent men, none of whom is prepared to make a decision without Ministerial approval. In some departments a chain reaction runs right through to the office boy, and a member of the public cannot get an answer from anyone. To set up a commission that is hamstrung in this manner does not appeal to me.

The main bone of contention in the previous Bill on this matter does not appear in this Bill, because the Government has spelt out clearly that it does not intend to enter the life insurance field, possibly as a result of the debate on the previous Bill. Can the Minister say what money is involved and what building will be used as the commission's headquarters? Who will act as agents on behalf of the commission and how will they be paid? Will commissions be paid to the appropriate departments, enabling them to employ adequate staff to cope with the burden of selling insurance? What protection will the community have against being obliged to do business against its own choice with the Government insurance office? I should like the Bill to contain a provision that people have the right to choose the office with which they insure. I am certain that this point will be raised during the Committee stage. At this juncture I support the second reading.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL (Central No. 2): This Bill is similar in its nature to the Bill that was before us in 1967. Like the Hon. Mr. Potter, I spoke at some length on that Bill. I do not propose to do so again today, but I should like again to express, perhaps in a briefer form, a few of the points I made then. The first is in the way of the question I asked the Chief Secretary the other day—whether a feasibility study had been made of the project. As I take the answer, it means that there has been no feasibility study. The answer was as follows:

A study was made of the operation of other Government insurance offices before the Government took office. Material was also supplied from university sources as to the profitability of insurance offices of medium size doing business of the kind proposed for the

Government insurance office. The policy secretariat in the Premier's Department is preparing recommendations on setting up the proposed commission.

I should like, in the face of that answer, to get back to what I said in 1967, because it is perfectly clear that no feasibility study (to use again a rather objectionable business phrase) has been made. If a company set out to establish a business without providing the kind of information we ought to have before us when we are considering this Bill it would be prosecuted under the Companies Act, because the provisions of the Act require that a prospectus must contain all kinds of information for the purposes of the likely investor.

In this case, the promoter is the Government and the investors are the taxpayers, and I, for one, have had no clue from the Government as to the likelihood of the commission's making a profit or whether it will be a burden on the State's finances for years. I think it will be the latter, in view of the lack of information on the subject given to me by way of study. I venture to say that this commission will be a burden on the taxpayers for years to come.

I do not say that lightly and I know that there are ways in which a Government insurance office can be made to appear profitable, even if it is not profitable. I know of the operations of other insurance companies that have been established since the Second World War and of companies that have existed for up to 200 or 300 years. Many of the last-mentioned companies are still living on investments that were made during the days when insurance companies were nicely profitable. I know, too, that companies that have been established since the Second World War and in a way that has given them a tremendous advantage in the business world have been unprofitable in their underwriting. For example, one well-known company, Fire and General Insurance Company, established about 13 years ago, is still, despite its capital investments, showing a total loss of about \$1,500,000 in that period, with all the undoubted advantages that it enjoys.

I could quote figures from other companies showing that in many of the years since they have been established they have made underwriting losses. Indeed, one only has to read the financial papers to see that fire and general insurance business is one of the most highly competitive businesses and that companies are not making very great profits. In the face of

that, I can only think that the establishment of a Government insurance office, in the lack of any feasibility study or attempt to predict profits, can be only a doctrinaire matter. From listening to some of the speeches and from reading in the papers what has been said in other places, the Government has the idea that because insurance used to be a very profitable line, it is not a bad field in which to engage. However, the Government is going quite blindly into this proposition.

I asked my question about the feasibility study deliberately because I wanted to know whether the Government knew where it was going. With all respect to people at the university, for instance, I would not think that it was the best place to go for a study on the viability of a business project any more than I would think that a university would go to any business for it to pronounce on academic courses: I cannot see what relation one has with the other but, apparently, this seems to have been one of the sources of the very sketchy information that the Government has obtained. I am told that the other study made before the Government took office was that of the operation of other Government insurance offices. I know there are other Government insurance offices in Australia and that some of them have substantial accumulated funds from which they are drawing income. I also know that some of them have monopolies on some lines of insurance business, perhaps sometimes created in a direct way and sometimes created in an indirect way.

So the only way, in my opinion, to gauge whether or not a business will be successful, because this is a business, is to look into the whole facts and figures surrounding it and make a business study of what is likely to happen and gauge the situation on that information. From the reply given to my question there cannot have been any such study, otherwise I would have been told if there had been one. Life insurance is not mentioned in the Bill, but it came up in the form of an interjection or two by, I think, the Hon. Mr. Casey. It was mentioned by other speakers because it was contained in the 1967 Bill but, in its wisdom, the Government has not included life insurance in the present Bill. One of the reasons given for the introduction of this Bill (and, indeed, for the introduction of the 1967 Bill) was that the Government considered that in some way it could reduce premiums. Regarding life insurance companies, practically all the major companies in Australia are what are called mutual associations; this means that

they have no shareholders and that any profits they make go to the policyholders. The Hon. Mr. Casey, by interjections, implied, as I thought, that the Government considered that it might make some profit out of its insurance venture.

The Hon. R. C. DeGaris: He suggested that the Government was looking for a profit out of it.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL: Yes. Fortunately, most of our large insurance companies are mutual companies and, therefore, if there are any profits, they all go to the policyholders; in other words, the policyholders are the people who receive any advantages that the directors or management of a company may be able to create for them. As far as life insurance is concerned, I cannot see that any Government office could possibly do any better for the people than the mutual companies do. In fact, with all their expertise, one would expect that mutual companies could do better than a newly-formed Government office could do. I mention this because I think the same thing applies to fire and general insurance, on which the Government will embark if its office is established.

In my experience (I am not a director of a fire company now, although I was for some years on the South Australian branch board of a wellknown English fire insurance company, so I think I have had some experience of the business), the same thing appertains to fire and general insurance. It is highly competitive, which is one of the reasons why the profits are minimized, and also why premiums are, in my opinion, minimized. The Government seems to have the idea that, if it ventures into the fire business, it will thereby get some advantage for the people of South Australia but, for the life of me, I cannot see how the Government can possibly do anything but add to rather than subtract from the costs of insurers. I really cannot see how it can possibly help any useful interest for the people of South Australia by this venture.

This is one of the reasons why I asked the question about a feasibility study, because I wanted to see what the Government had in mind, where it thought it was going, where it thought it would be profitable or where it thought it would help in the reduction of premiums; but I have no more information on this than when I started. As a member of this House of Review, I have had to think



extremely seriously, as other honourable members have, about what my attitude should be on this Bill, feeling that I know that this insurance office will be a burden on the taxpayers of this State for years to come.

It has been a most difficult question for me to decide, because the Government put this policy before the people in its election speech and could be said, therefore, to have a mandate for it. Last time, things were rather different, because the then Labor Party's policy speech related to workmen's compensation and motor vehicle bodily injury insurance only: this time, the policy was a much more comprehensive matter of fire and general insurance in a fairly widespread way. The problem confronting me is that, with such experience as I have had, I do not think the venture will be of any benefit to South Australia. I have had to pit this question against the fact that the present Government put this up deliberately in its policy speech and has got an apparent mandate for it. I had a good deal to say about mandates when the Labor Government was elected, I think about five years ago.

The Hon. A. J. Shard: In 1965.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL: Yes. I went into the question fairly considerably then because it was something I thought I ought to know about. I found out something about it, mainly that a mandate related not to a vote on a particular subject but to what one interpreted as being the steady will of the people—and I emphasize "steady"—not just a snap or haphazard vote on any particular subject but a steady will. A policy speech, of necessity, contains very many items of very different natures. If one examined the Labor policy speech, one would probably find about 200 different items dealt with, but the voter has only one vote, so I do not think anyone on earth could tell me that a person voting for the Labor Party (or, for that matter, for the Liberal Party) could possibly approve of every single plank of these 200 items of policy. The voter gives general approval to that Party conducting the government of the State.

I have weighed these matters very carefully and have decided that, in the light of what I have thought about, it is not for me as a private member in these particular circumstances to pit my own personal judgment on this business matter against that of the Government, despite the fact that the Government has not, in my opinion, done what I think it should have in putting up this matter. In these circumstances, I have decided, difficult

though it may have been to make the decision, that it is my duty to support the second reading of the Bill.

The Hon. G. J. GILFILLAN secured the adjournment of the debate.

#### REFERENDUM (METROPOLITAN AREA SHOP TRADING HOURS) BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from August 19. Page 818.)

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS (Leader of the Opposition): This Bill provides for the holding of a referendum in certain House of Assembly districts on the question of trading hours for certain shops in the metropolitan area, as defined. This Bill has, so far, raised some controversy both in the press and amongst the people of South Australia, and will cause further controversy in the next few days. My first comment on the Bill is that the question that will be referred to the electors in the metropolitan area, as defined, is loaded; it will not allow the electors to express their opinion on shopping hours within this area. On this score, I believe firmly that, if a referendum is to be conducted on a matter such as this, the first thing that should happen is that the Government should introduce a Bill explaining to Parliament exactly what it proposes to do and, when the Bill has passed through both Houses, the matter should then be referred to the people in a referendum, if the Government desires that course. But the full facts of the Government's intention should be known to the electors before the matter is referred to them.

Under the Commonwealth Constitution, as honourable members know, referendum powers are available to the Commonwealth Government. The first thing it must do, in those circumstances, is to introduce a Bill, explain it fully and then supply explanations for and against to every elector. On this question that will be going before the people, either a "Yes" or a "No" vote will be possible. Irrespective of what answer the Government gets, it cannot interpret from that answer what the public desires. As I have said, the only way that public opinion can be gauged in a question such as shopping hours is for the electors to know in the first place exactly what the Government intends.

It is apparent that practically everybody (including the Minister of Labor and Industry, the Minister of Works, and the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Assembly) agrees that a "Yes" vote to this question will be

returned. The straw vote poll taken through the press also indicates this. As I have pointed out, even if we get a "Yes" vote it will not be an indication of public opinion on this question of shopping hours. Apart from the straw polls that have been conducted, many influential people and the press seem to agree in the inevitability of a "Yes" vote to this question.

The question that immediately comes to mind is this: why go ahead and spend about \$100,000 on a referendum to get an answer that everybody seems to agree is inevitable? Would it not be more sensible if we in this Council said, "All right, we accept the fact that 9 o'clock closing on Friday night is going to be carried" so that the \$80,000 or \$100,000 of the taxpayers' money could go back into their pockets and we could then proceed from there? I submit that, in a question like this, that is the logical step to take. I do not think any person in Parliament would think for one moment that the outcome of the referendum would be anything other than a "Yes" vote.

Let us assume that a "Yes" vote is returned. What will the Government gather from this, Mr. President? Will the electorate to whom the question is referred have voted for Saturday morning or Saturday afternoon closing? Why should not the electors of the State, when a question like this is being put to them at a referendum, express a view on these other questions? The Government has said it has no intention during this Parliament of closing shops on a Saturday morning. However, if 9 o'clock closing on Friday nights becomes general, Saturday morning shopping could be threatened.

If by some chance a "No" vote is returned at the referendum, what will this mean? Will it mean that people want the shops closed on Saturday morning, too? Will it mean that people will want shops closed on Saturday afternoon? Whether it be a "Yes" or "No" vote, these questions remain unanswered. If the Government intends using referendum procedures to ascertain public opinion in what might be termed a Gallup poll sort of situation, I believe that it should frame questions that allow members of the public to express their opinion quite clearly to the Government. It should not restrict the expression of the people's opinion to one loaded question which, however it is answered, cannot give any indication to the Government of how the people are thinking.

Many problems could be posed, and at this stage I will pose just one. Supposing the vote

throughout the area as defined in the Bill is almost a 50-50 one but that 80 per cent of the people in Elizabeth and Tea Tree Gully and 80 per cent of the people in the Mawson District want no change; in other words, they vote the only way they can for no change, namely, 9 o'clock closing on Friday night. What conclusion will the Government draw from this sort of vote? That is only one of the problems that can come from a loaded question such as this.

The Government has indicated in the second reading explanation that it is hoped that the referendum will be held on September 12. The Bill also contains provision for compulsory voting at the referendum. I think everyone in this Council knows my views on the question of whether voting should be compulsory or voluntary. In my view, no case can be substantiated for compelling people, under pain of penalty, to go to the polls and vote. However, this case is somewhat different in that the Government is virtually conducting a large local option poll. At present a local option poll can be conducted in a local government area to determine the question of shopping hours, and in such a situation voting is voluntary. Here the Government is stepping in and taking over this question of a local option poll. It is expanding the area involved and is then telling people that they must vote. Furthermore, September 12, as we all know, is the date of a by-election for the Midland District. The Statutes of this State provide for voluntary voting in Legislative Council elections, so it is perfectly reasonable to assume that the Government requires this referendum, with its compulsory voting, to be conducted on September 12 in order to get around the law of this State, which is that there shall be no compulsion to vote in Legislative Council elections and no penalty for not voting. Indeed, one can take the argument further and show that in this by-election 4½ of the Assembly Districts of the eight in the Midland District will be compelled under pain of penalty to go to the polls, while the people in 3½ of the Assembly Districts will be exercising a democratic voluntary vote.

I ask the Government whether it considers that this approach is completely fair. Is it fair that, in a by-election where the Statute provides for voluntary voting, the Government should force electors from 4½ out of eight Assembly districts to go to that poll? Is it politically honest to tackle the matter in this way? Further, what is the Government's

intention in regard to shopping hours in the country? In his second reading explanation the Chief Secretary said:

The Government intends to introduce legislation to provide that the present country shopping districts should continue, but that the present system of petitioning and counter-petitioning should be abolished. However, provision will be included in that legislation for a local government authority outside the metropolitan area to apply for the creation or abolition of a country shopping district within its area. In making such an application the local government authority will have to report to the Minister of Labour and Industry on the inquiries that have been made to ascertain the wishes of the public in their district, as well as indicating the view of the municipal or district council concerned.

The Minister will be empowered to make further inquiries (if he wishes to do so) and if, after such application has been made, he is satisfied that the Act should or should not be applied in any country district, then he would recommend to the Governor that a country shopping district be created or abolished.

I agree with the Government that the system of petition and counter-petition is outmoded and cumbersome, and I raise absolutely no objection to the alteration in this procedure. However, will country areas and country shopping districts have the right to decide their own destiny? I repeat part of what the Chief Secretary said in his explanation:

The Minister will be empowered to make further inquiries (if he wishes to do so) and if, after such application has been made, he is satisfied that the Act should or should not be applied in any country district, then he would recommend to the Governor that a country shopping district be created or abolished.

In effect, the Minister is going to decide what will happen to country shopping hours. If people are to be questioned by way of referendum about whether shops should remain open until 9 p.m. on Friday, why should they not at the same time have the opportunity to express their views on what should happen to their right of choice in respect of shopping hours? I firmly believe that country people should be able to decide for themselves whether they want restricted shopping hours or not, and what hours they want. They should have the right to say what they want through their own local choice system. The Minister should not have any say at all, except to put into effect the opinion that country people express on this matter through their local choice machinery.

People within the metropolitan area will express their views on a matter related to the Early Closing Act. However, that Act relates to people outside the metropolitan area as well as to those within it. Therefore, why should country people not be able to express their views, too? It seems that the views of these people will be conveniently ignored. If the whole State expresses its views clearly on the whole question of shopping hours (not on a loaded question, but on a question that gives them the opportunity to express their views clearly) then at least the Government and the Parliament will know what most people in various areas want.

I have not yet had a chance to study the Bill thoroughly in all its detail. So far, I have dealt with matters in broad principle. However, I want to emphasize that I firmly believe that the single question to be put to the electors in this referendum can be classed only as a sham. If the Government requires a question such as this to be put to the people, it should first follow the accepted principle of introducing a Bill, so that not only members of Parliament but every person voting at the referendum may know exactly what he is voting for or against. Or, if this procedure is not followed and the Government does not like this method, the Gallup poll type of question, which we have in this Bill, should be enlarged to give all people affected throughout the State the opportunity to express their views clearly and meaningfully. I support the second reading, but I hope to say more during the Committee stage.

The Hon. L. R. HART secured the adjournment of the debate.

#### ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. A. J. SHARD (Chief Secretary): I move:

That the Council do now adjourn.

I should like to have the Council's co-operation. Because there is a time element in the Referendum (Metropolitan Area Shop Trading Hours) Bill, it is necessary to complete our consideration of the Bill as soon as practicable. Consequently, it may be necessary for the Council to sit in the evening next week.

Motion carried.

At 3.45 p.m. the Council adjourned until Tuesday, August 25, at 2.15 p.m.