

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday, September 2, 1971

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

PUBLIC PURPOSES LOAN BILL

His Excellency, the Governor, by message, intimated his assent to the Bill.

QUESTIONS

ABATTOIRS

The Hon. C. R. STORY: Has the Minister of Agriculture a reply to my question of August 24 about the Gepps Cross abattoir?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: The reply I shall give deals not only with the honourable member's question but also with the questions of the Hon. Mr. Hart and the Hon. Mr. Russack. A letter dated July 27, 1971, was received by the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs Board from the Australian Meat Industry Employees Union, applying for:—(a) \$20 a week increase in award rates of pay for all union employees, to operate from August 3, 1971; (b) four weeks' annual leave with five weeks' pay for such four weeks, operative from August 3, 1971; (c) eighty hours' sick leave, also operative from August 3, 1971, the extra 40 hours to be cumulative in line with the present agreement with the board. The union's application was considered by the board on August 2, 1971, and was rejected.

A further letter, dated August 12, 1971, was received from the union, wherein it submitted a revised claim, seeking (a) a \$5 a week increase in award rates of pay to all adult employees (with proportionate increases for juveniles) to operate as from August 3, 1971; (b) four weeks' annual leave, operative from August 3, 1971; (c) two weeks' sick leave, operative from August 3, 1971, the extra week's leave to be cumulative in line with the present agreement with the board. The union's letter was considered by the board at a meeting held on August 16, 1971, when it was directed that the union be informed that the claims must be referred to the appropriate authority competent to deal with them, namely, the Abattoirs Conciliation Committee.

Union representatives called a stopwork meeting at 2.30 p.m. on Thursday, August 19, 1971, to discuss the board's reply to the claims for increased wages, annual leave and sick leave. The meeting continued for 15 minutes, and it was decided that work would cease for

the day and that the meeting would be continued at 8 a.m. on Friday, August 20. Advice of the men's action was promptly conveyed by the General Manager to the Chairman of the board, Mr. G. Joseph, who later communicated with me.

Late on Thursday evening I informed the Chairman of the board that it was Government policy to grant Government employees four weeks' annual leave and 80 hours' sick leave and, as the Gepps Cross abattoir fell within the category of a State instrumentality, these benefits should in my opinion apply. At the same time I expressed the view that the union's claim for increases in wage rates should be submitted to the Abattoirs Conciliation Committee. These matters were then referred by the board to union delegates, who submitted them to the meeting of employees held at 8.15 a.m. on Friday, August 20, 1971. They were accepted by the men, who thereupon returned to work.

A letter from the union dated August 23, 1971, referring to the additional leave benefits granted, and seeking a conference with representatives of the board and management for the purpose of discussing a claim for a 10 per cent increase in rates based on weekly earnings of all employees on the job in lieu of the previous claim submitted, was considered by the board at the meeting held on August 30, 1971, and arrangements were made for a conference between the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, General Manager, Works Manager and Secretary with the union representatives on Wednesday, September 1, 1971, at 7.30 p.m. I am informed that at that conference it was decided the union's submissions would be further considered by the full board at its meeting on Monday, September 13. I believe this to be a factual summary of the sequence of events leading up to the stoppage and of the negotiations that have taken place subsequently.

The Hon. E. K. RUSSACK: Has the Minister of Agriculture a reply to the question I asked on August 25 regarding the estimated cost to the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs Board of increased leave benefits for its employees?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: The board reports that the estimated cost of the increased leave benefits for union employees calculated on current wage rates is \$209,352. The Government does not contemplate any additional financial assistance to the board specifically to offset these increased costs.

The Hon. E. K. RUSSACK: On August 24 I asked a question of the Minister of Agriculture concerning the Gepps Cross abattoir. Has he a reply?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: No; I have given two answers today to questions in which the honourable member was interested. I hope that those queries have now been cleared up.

The Hon. L. R. HART: Can the Minister of Agriculture inform the Council of the extra annual cost to the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs Board of the granting of an additional week's annual leave and increased sick leave to members of the Australian Meat Industry Employees Union?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: Earlier this afternoon I gave a reply along these lines to the Hon. Mr. Russack, and I am sure that will satisfy the honourable member.

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: I seek leave to make a brief explanation prior to asking a question of the Minister of Agriculture.

Leave granted.

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: The Minister has explained very fully the processes regarding the dispute at the abattoir and indicated that the arrangements will cost the board something over \$200,000 a year. Can the Minister inform the Council of the cost to the board of the imposition of pay-roll tax at the State level as opposed to the previous system of being levied by the Commonwealth?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I will endeavour to obtain the information for the Leader of the Opposition and bring back a reply when it is available.

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. R. STORY: I hate to badger the Minister on this question, but it is of tremendous concern to honourable members representing both country districts and metropolitan districts, because it has an overall effect. The Minister seems to have made a few conflicting statements over the last week or so. In his earlier reply he said:

Late on Thursday evening I informed the Chairman of the board that it was Government policy to grant Government employees four weeks' annual leave and 80 hours' sick leave and, as the Gepps Cross abattoir fell within the category of a State instrumentality, these benefits should in my opinion apply.

Can the Minister say what his authority is for stating that the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs Board is a Government authority under either the Abattoirs Act or any other legislation? I cannot see how the board could possibly be regarded as a State instrumentality. If one takes this matter to its logical conclusion, surely any abattoir that kills animals for export or home consumption must also be regarded as a service abattoir. Can the Minister say under what authority he acted when he dictated to the board that it would conform to Government policy? It seems to me that that is in direct conflict with his statement of several days ago that the management of the abattoir should make economies and dictate virtually its own terms on a matter of policy.

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I do not want to get into a legal argument with the honourable member. It appears to me that he is trying to play politics on this matter. First, he asked why I should apply a certain thing in my opinion to another person. Actually, I did not apply any opinion: I was asked for an opinion and I gave it. That kind of thing happens to any honourable member when he is dealing with other people. I have never at any time claimed that the abattoir is run by the Government. However, I have said that it can be classified as a semi-government instrumentality, and honourable members themselves have classified it as a public utility—and so it is. One cannot classify the Gepps Cross abattoir in the same category as the Metro Meat Company at Noarlunga or the Murray Bridge abattoir. Primary producers cannot go to the abattoirs at Noarlunga or Murray Bridge and ask for their stock to be slaughtered, but they can do that if they go to the Gepps Cross abattoir.

For the honourable member to insinuate that I dictated to the board is completely ridiculous: I have no authority to dictate to anyone. What I said in my earlier reply is the fact of the matter: if I am asked for an opinion by anyone, either in person or over the telephone, I will give it at all times. I am very pleased that a strike was averted, and honourable members opposite ought to be very pleased, too. As I said before, we have the largest number of lambs to be killed that we have ever had in this State. If there had been a strike at the Gepps Cross abattoir for any length of time, Liberal members would have taken the opposite attitude: they would have asked why the Government was not doing something to resolve the strike.

I give the board full marks for averting a strike. No-one likes strikes—least of all I—especially in a primary industry. I am sure that honourable members realize how complicated the whole situation would have been if there had been a prolonged strike at the Gepps Cross abattoir at this stage, when so many lambs have to be processed. The appropriate committee there has to make arrangements so that lambs from various parts of the State can be processed at an opportune time. I ask honourable members to treat this matter seriously, in the light of the fact that work is proceeding smoothly at the abattoir in the interests of both the producers and the consumers of this State.

The Hon. C. R. STORY: I seek leave to make a short statement before asking a further question on this matter of the Minister of Agriculture.

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. R. STORY: I can see the predicament that the Minister is in, but I must draw his attention to two things. First, is the Minister aware of the fact that any privileges granted to employees of the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs Board (which abattoir he considers to be a public utility, though he has gone further than that—I think he really means a service abattoir) will automatically flow to all other meat employees in this State? The Metro Meat Company, the Peterborough abattoir and other abattoirs will be affected. Secondly, the Minister said that he thought the board had acted properly. However, it seems from his replies over the past fortnight that the board has had no opportunity to act in any manner.

In his reply the Minister said that the board had referred the matter to the appropriate authority—the abattoirs conciliation committee. He was informed by the Chairman that that action had been taken but, in effect, the whole matter was a *fait accompli* on Friday when, in fact, the conciliation committee did not accept the matter. The men went back to work on the assurance that the Government would support the Chairman in getting this matter through the conciliation committee and the board on the following Monday or Tuesday. I find it hard to reconcile the Minister's statements on this matter. Is he aware that there is an automatic flow-through of benefits to the rest of the meat industry?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I am not aware that there is such an automatic flow-through, but it is quite possible that there could be.

I suppose it is normally the case. The whole crux of the matter is that it is Government policy to grant four weeks' annual leave and 80 hours' sick pay to employees of semi-government instrumentalities and Government instrumentalities. This is exactly what is going on. The honourable member reminisced; he was trying to make some political capital out of something or other. I draw his attention to the specific points in my replies; if he examines those replies, he will find out that there were two meetings—one on the Thursday night and the other on the Friday morning.

The Hon. L. R. HART: In his reply the Minister referred me to a reply he gave to the Hon. Mr. Russack. I point out to the Minister that the answer he gave—

The PRESIDENT: Does the honourable member wish to make an explanation? We are getting near to a debate on this matter. If the honourable member is framing a question, he may proceed.

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. L. R. HART: The reply the Minister gave to the Hon. Mr. Russack dealt only with the increased costs that will be incurred as a result of the increased leave granted to the board's employees; it did not include the extra costs that will be incurred as a result of increased sick benefits. Will the Minister therefore obtain for me details of the total increased costs to be incurred by the board? Also, as the Government imposes its policies on the board, will the Minister say whether the Government has considered disbanding the board and taking over the board's works, operating them as a complete Government utility?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I shall be delighted to obtain the information sought by the honourable member in the first part of his question. Regarding the second part of his question, I think the honourable member said that the Government dictated terms—

The Hon. L. R. Hart: I said it imposed its policy on the board.

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: The Government does not impose its policies on anyone. It merely tells them what is its policy, and there is no reason why they cannot act. I do not think there is any definite imposition on the board; I do not look at the matter in that light. If the honourable member cares to

do so, that is all right with me. I will try to obtain the information the honourable member has sought and let him have a reply when it is available.

POLLUTION

The Hon. V. G. SPRINGETT: Has the Minister of Lands received from the Minister of Environment and Conservation a reply to the question I asked on July 28 regarding the times at which air pollution warnings are given?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: My colleague the Minister of Environment and Conservation has supplied the following information:

Air pollution potential alerts are issued from 7 a.m. daily and form part of all weather announcements throughout the day on the radio and on the recorded weather service. Announcements are made daily to advise whether that particular day is an "alert" or a "no alert" day. On certain other days following an "alert" day it is necessary to issue an "alert" for a specified period only, until an expected change in the weather arrives. These warnings have been made possible by the co-operation of the Bureau of Meteorology, for which assistance we are most grateful. Bushfire warnings are given only at fixed times during the day while A.P.P. alerts are given continuously throughout the day. These alerts are only in an experimental stage at this point of time and are proving to be very successful. While the present system is working efficiently we will not consider changing the timing of the alerts, as both the public and radio stations are satisfied with the present arrangements.

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: Recently I directed a question to the Minister of Agriculture concerning pollution and fishing grounds. Has he a reply?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: My colleague, the Minister of Works, has informed me that there is no definite proof that the sodium cyanide pollution at Whyalla was directly caused by any actions of the Broken Hill Proprietary Company. Discussions have been held with senior officials of that company and it is not intended that any legal proceedings will be instituted against the B.H.P. Company.

TANUNDA DERAILMENT

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: I seek leave 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. M. B. DAWKINS: Towards the end of July a derailment occurred near the township of Tanunda on the Barossa Valley line. Fortunately, there was no loss of life

because the line is used entirely for freight traffic. However, I believe that eight trucks left the line and that two of them that were loaded with cement capsized and one of these also rolled down an embankment. I have been told that a special crane as well as the normal wrecking crane had to be used to get back on to the rails those trucks that had rolled away a considerable distance from the line, and that although the line was cleared within 24 hours it was some three weeks before those two trucks could be rescued. I should appreciate it if the Minister of Lands could inquire from his colleague the actual cost of this derailment, including the losses on account of damaged goods.

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: I will take the honourable member's query to my colleague and bring back a reply as soon as possible.

WOOLLEN BLANKETS

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES: I seek leave to make a short statement prior to asking a question of the Minister of Lands as Acting Leader of the Government in this Chamber in the absence of the Chief Secretary.

Leave granted.

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES: The States of Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania have a policy of supplying woollen blankets to their hospitals. New South Wales has a policy of supplying pure wool blankets to its hospitals with the exception of special wards such as accident wards, operating theatres and children's and babies' cots where cotton blankets are used. Western Australia has a similar policy except that, in the climatically unsuitable areas in the North-West of that State, woollen blankets are not insisted on. The Commonwealth Repatriation Commission uses woollen blankets exclusively.

It is said in South Australia that the Central Linen Service cannot handle woollen blankets, yet in Victoria 78 hospitals in the metropolitan area of Melbourne have woollen blankets laundered by the Central Linen Service at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. Will the Minister of Lands, who has shown his ability in helping the primary industries, now try to see whether it is possible and practicable to have a greater use made of woollen blankets in Government hospitals in South Australia?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: I will call for a report on this matter from my officers and bring back a reply as soon as it is available.

RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

The Hon. M. B. CAMERON: Is the Minister of Lands aware that, at the present rate of outflow of funds for rural reconstruction, it will take about 45 years to allocate the \$12,000,000 that has been made available throughout the Commonwealth? Is there likely to be any increase in the rate of outflow of the funds as the scheme develops and the committee gains experience in the allocation of the funds?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: I am very interested in the honourable member's computer mind, which has worked out that it will take so many years to apply the funds, but he cannot take the present rate of outflow as the rate that will apply throughout the administration of the scheme. As I have said many times in this Chamber, I am surprised, in view of what I was told and of the inquiries that were made before the scheme came into operation, that more applications have not been received. I made a statement here, in answer to a question asked by the honourable member only this week, in which I indicated my thoughts on what could be the reasons for that. I would think that the rate of outflow might increase but, as I stated the other day, I have been talking to my colleagues in the other States to see whether we could get together and discuss the application of the scheme. I am sure that the outflow of the funds in South Australia is in line with what applies in Victoria. My information is that an Act of Parliament has not yet been passed in Western Australia as regards the application of funds. I have been told that many applications in that State have been approved. I cannot understand how applications could have been approved, when no legislation has yet been put before the Western Australian Parliament in regard to that matter, or that any funds are being paid out in that State, anyway, at this point of time.

In answer to the second part of the honourable member's question, I would think that the rate of outflow might increase, provided that the applications came forward and that those that did come forward indicated that the applicants were eligible for funds. The honourable member must realize, too, that it took a little while to set up a committee and it takes some time for the committee to handle the applications it receives. The number of applications coming to my office is increasing (at least, those that come to my notice are increasing) and we are keeping up with those that are coming in. That is all I can say in

answer to the honourable member's question. It was a question asked on the basis: do I think the rate of outflow of the funds will increase? Do I realize that at the present rate of outflow it will take so many years for the money to be paid out in full? What period is the honourable member looking at in this regard? After all, only so many thousands of dollars have been paid out in so many weeks. We cannot say what the actual rate of outflow will be. Some applicants need more money than others with which to carry on.

The Hon. D. H. L. Banfield: And some people will take 45 years to make up their minds whether to apply or not.

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: Other people are asking for money for debt adjustment; again, other applicants are asking for funds in order to build up, and in the case of build-up substantially more funds are needed than are required for carry-on finance. Some people come in and ask for assistance in regard to rural reconstruction; they ask for finance with which to carry on, in some cases the amount being only about \$2,000 to carry on over this year. They think if they can get over this year then they will be all right. It is difficult to say what the situation will be in the future. I am hoping that the people who are eligible will put in an application.

The Hon. M. B. CAMERON: Will the Minister of Lands say whether the price of wool plays a major role in the determination of the future viability of a wool growing property when a specific proposal is put before the rural reconstruction board, and will the Minister assure the Council that the present short-term crisis in wool marketing will not affect the committee's views regarding the viability of properties?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: I cannot give the honourable member such an assurance. I apologize to the Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill for using the word "viability". I looked up its meaning, as he must have done, and I think it covers the situation. The price of wool must be considered in relation to the viability of certain applicants for assistance. Otherwise, what standard does one use? This standard must be used in relation to wool, as the price of wool is the main cause of the slump in the wool industry. I cannot give the honourable member an assurance that we will ignore the present situation regarding wool when considering the suitability of applicants for assistance.

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL: I think the Minister has enticed me into asking this question, because he has obviously looked up the meaning of "viability", and I have certainly done so. I have found that the primary meaning thereof is "capable of living". How does the Minister interpret that in relation to a man on the land? Does it mean living physically: that is, is he going to be medically examined to see whether or not he is viable and, if a person stands up to that examination, will he be advanced any money, or does it mean that a person is capable of surviving financially? I do not know exactly what it means. This is a most unfortunate term to be used in this relationship, and I realize that the Minister is not the only one who uses it.

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: I am not a purist regarding the use of words, as I use words that seem to suit the occasion. In this respect, I plead with the honourable member not to hound me on this, because "viability" is an inherited word that has been used widely by the Commonwealth Government and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics in reports on this matter.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill: You have to make an interpretation.

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: As does the Commonwealth Government, we must accept this type of word. When using this word, I think the economists in the Bureau of Agricultural Economics relate it to one's being able to keep alive one's interests in one's farm, or whatever it may be, and to pay one's operating and living costs, the latter of which covers the point referred to by the honourable member. I think it also means that one is able to keep alive by being able to service all debts and to meet one's financial obligations. That covers the situation physically, mentally and financially.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL: Does the Minister consider that it involves him personally in being somewhat of an old-time prophet regarding what is going to happen to the pastoral industry?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: Yes, and I often wish I had a crystal ball into which I could look. Unfortunately, however, they are not procurable these days.

WAR SERVICE SETTLERS

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I ask leave to make an explanation before directing a question to the Minister of Lands.

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I understand that in the war service settlement areas throughout South Australia assistance has been given to settlers over an initial 10-year period, and that after that time they are expected to rearrange their affairs and obtain financial help, if it is needed, through other sources. I believe that whilst some have done this, elsewhere there are settlers who have carried on by arrangement with the war service settlement branch. Those who have obtained finance elsewhere pay higher interest than under the war service arrangement. In view of the extremely difficult times facing these returned servicemen in rural areas, irrespective of the part of the State in which they have settled, will the Minister consider allowing at least some who have left the scheme after the initial 10-year period to return to it so that their financial affairs can be improved to a point where they may avoid financial ruin or even bankruptcy?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: The honourable member must realize that this is a matter of policy and I will have to look at it very closely before giving a reply. I will prepare a considered reply and bring it back as soon as possible.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I seek leave to make a short statement prior to asking a question of the Minister of Lands.

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: Some time ago the Lands Department sold up a soldier settler on Kangaroo Island (whose name was, I believe, Mr. Berriman), which sale received much publicity on television. From what was said on television on that occasion it appeared that after the realization sale some debt would still be owed to the department by Mr. Berriman. If this is so, will the Minister say how the department has approached the unfortunate problem of collecting the remainder of the debt?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: This is not the first occasion on which a settler has had to be foreclosed by the department. I assure the honourable member that in such circumstances a loss is usually incurred by the department, as happened on this occasion. Some of that loss is irrecoverable and, as has

happened in the past, it must be written off. As the soldier settlement scheme is a joint Commonwealth-State one, any losses incurred are borne by both Governments.

ROSEWORTHY COLLEGE

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. L. R. HART: The Minister recently announced that the Roseworthy Agricultural College would be established as an autonomous college of advanced education. At present, the college is a Government department in its own right and comes under the control of the Minister of Agriculture. Now that it is to be an autonomous college of advanced education, can the Minister say whether it is intended that it will remain under his control or whether it will be transferred to the Education Department and come under the control of the Minister of Education?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I will get a prepared statement for the honourable member on this matter. This will be prepared in conjunction with the Minister of Education. As the honourable member has said, the college is now a department within the Agriculture Department and comes under my jurisdiction. However, when it becomes a college of advanced education it will be quite a different matter. I do not think colleges of advanced education, in the true sense of the word, really come under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Education, either. However, I think it is a sort of flow-on in that field and that probably it would come within the sphere of the Minister of Education. In view of the complexity of the question, I will get a prepared statement for the honourable member as soon as possible.

The Hon. G. J. GILFILLAN: Will this college of advanced education be based on the system operating in Western Australia? If not, what system is envisaged?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: This matter has been given some thought by the Minister of Education. In fact, it will be something like the teachers colleges. I shall be happy to refer the question to the Minister of Education and bring back a reply as soon as it is available.

NON-RATABLE LAND

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: Some time ago I drew the attention of this Chamber to the special difficulties being incurred by the District Council of Mudla Wirra and also the district councils of Barossa and Gumeracha because of the area of Government land within those councils that was not ratable. Because of the continuing policy of the Government to buy up further land for pine plantings and also to some extent because of the extension of Roseworthy Agricultural College and the continuance of the Turretfield Agricultural Research Centre, all of these three councils are at considerable disadvantage from the point of view of the unavailability of rates from those properties, and in some cases the councils have had to increase their rates to ratepayers. Will the Minister of Lands ask his colleague to reconsider the special difficulties of these councils with a view to making an *ex gratia* payment in view of the special circumstances in which they find themselves?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: I will take the honourable member's query to my colleague and bring back a reply as soon as it is available.

STOBIE POLES

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I seek leave to make a short statement prior to asking a question of the Minister of Agriculture, representing the Minister of Works.

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: On November 12 last year, in answer to a question I asked regarding the possibility of the Electricity Trust's developing an impact absorbing electric light or power pole to replace some of the poles used (and commonly known as stobie poles) throughout the metropolitan area, both for safety purposes and for aesthetic reasons, the Minister of Agriculture replied:

In a recent trial at Glenelg some experimental poles of different appearance were used. The results of the trial are still being evaluated. Has the evaluation been completed? If it has, can any further information be given regarding any plans to replace at least some stobie poles with impact absorbing and aesthetically acceptable poles as an alternative to those at present being used?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I will refer the question to my colleague and bring back a reply when it is available.

PAY-ROLL TAX BILL

The PRESIDENT: I have received the following message from the House of Assembly:

In reply to the Legislative Council's message requesting a conference on the Pay-Roll Tax Bill, the House of Assembly informs the Legislative Council that the Assembly has vacated its proceedings on the suggested amendments to the Bill and it has now agreed to all amendments suggested by the Legislative Council, without amendment, and will amend the Bill accordingly. The return of the Bill to the House of Assembly is requested.

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE (Minister of Lands) moved:

That the request contained in the message from the House of Assembly be agreed to.

Motion carried.

LAND TAX ACT AMENDMENT BILL

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

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE (Minister of Lands): I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The principal Act provides that an assessment of the unimproved value of land shall be made as of the first day in July in every fifth year. Such a quinquennial assessment was made in July, 1970. The Act further provides that land tax for a particular financial year shall be calculated on the basis of the assessment in force on June 30 immediately preceding that financial year. Therefore, the assessment made in July, 1970, is the assessment to be used for the 1971-72 land tax.

Since the making of the 1970 assessment, the Government has viewed with growing concern the steady decline in the value of primary-producing land. Since that date it has also become clear that the sales on which the assessment was based did not in fact fully reflect the drop that had already occurred in the profitability of rural production. It has been estimated that rural land sales over the past 12 months reveal an average drop in value of about 20 per cent. The unfortunate result is that, under the Act as it now stands, the 1971-72 land tax must be based on an assessment which, in effect, now grossly overvalues much of the primary-producing land. Not only land tax but also water rates would be unreasonably high in respect of the primary producer, as the Commissioner of Waterworks calculates his rates on the basis of the quinquennial land tax assessment. The Government is of the opinion that such a situation is unreasonable and places an unfair burden on the primary producer. Objections have been lodged against about 13,000 of the 48,000 land tax assessments issued in respect of rural properties on the basis of the 1970 assessment.

In order to produce a fairer situation and to by-pass the costly and lengthy process of hearing and determining so many objections (which in any case could not resolve the real difficulty), the Government seeks to amend the principal Act so as to provide for an assessment to be made of the unimproved value as of June 30, 1971, of all land used for primary production. The 1971-72 land tax and water rates will be based on such valuation, which will continue to be the current assessment until a further quinquennial assessment is made in 1975. The land tax revenue to be derived from rural land in 1971-72 could as a result be expected to be \$1,000,000 or thereabouts, which was the amount expected by the Government when the 1970 assessment was undertaken and newly reduced rates set. Although the objections already lodged will lapse, the taxpayer's right to object to the new 1971 assessment will in no way be interfered with. It is expected that the Valuation Department will be able to complete the revaluation by about the end of October.

I shall now deal with the clauses of the Bill. Clause 1 is formal. Clause 2 enacts a new section which provides that the Commissioner shall make the 1971 assessment of primary-producing land as of June 30, 1971. As with quinquennial assessments, general notice that the assessment has been made must be given. The new assessment has effect from June 30, 1971, until a quinquennial assessment is made in 1975. Particular notice of the individual assessment for land tax must be given to each taxpayer with respect to his primary-producing land, and that notice will explain to the taxpayer the new provisions regarding the old 1970 assessment and the objections that arose therefrom. When the general notice of the making of the 1971 assessment is published in the *Gazette*, that part of the 1970 assessment which relates to primary-producing land, together with all objections that arose as a result of that part, shall become void and shall lapse. The Commissioner is not obliged to take any further action with respect to those objections. The 1971 assessment replaces the relevant part of the 1970 assessment. The rights of the taxpayer are fully preserved with respect to objecting to an assessment for land tax based on the 1971 assessment. Clauses 3 and 4 effect minor consequential amendments which enable sections 21 and 23 of the principal Act to apply to the 1971 assessment.

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

SWINE COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL

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

The Hon. T. M. CASEY (Minister of Agriculture): I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The effect of this short Bill is to reduce the payments required to be made to the Swine Compensation Fund in respect of the sale of pigs and carcasses. Despite a substantial increase in the number of pigs and pig-slaughterings, the amounts paid from the fund by way of compensation have shown no marked increase, thus suggesting that the level of disease in relation to pig numbers in the State has decreased significantly.

Accordingly, after consultation with the appropriate industry organization, it has been decided to reduce the stamp duty payable on sales of pigs or carcasses from 5c for each \$10 or part thereof of value to 1c for each \$3 or part thereof of value, a reduction of about 40 per cent. At the same time, the maximum amount payable in respect of any one pig or any one carcass has been reduced from 35c to 21c.

Clauses 1 and 2 of the Bill are formal. Clause 3 amends section 14 of the principal Act by having the old rates of stamp duty apply to sales before the commencement of the Act proposed by this Bill and, at proposed new subsection (2a), having the new rates set out above apply to sales that take place after that commencement.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS secured the adjournment of the debate.

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE ERADICATION FUND ACT AMENDMENT BILL

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

The Hon. T. M. CASEY (Minister of Agriculture): I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This short Bill amends the Foot and Mouth Disease Eradication Fund Act, 1958-1965, and is intended to ensure that this State, in common with the remainder of the Commonwealth, is in the best possible position to deal with an outbreak of any exotic disease affecting animals.

Honourable members will no doubt be aware that under the principal Act, which was

passed in 1958, the Foot and Mouth Disease Eradication Fund was set up to provide a source of revenue to deal with outbreaks of this disease. Contributions are liable to be made to this fund by the Commonwealth and the States, and the States' contributions are based on numbers of livestock in each of the States. On this basis the contribution by this State would be about 5 per cent of the total amounts required for any campaign of eradication. Honourable members will further appreciate that the State's liability is not limited to an outbreak occurring within its territorial boundaries since an outbreak anywhere in the Commonwealth becomes of concern to all the States.

In 1965, the definition of "foot and mouth disease" was extended to include the diseases of vesicular exanthema and vesicular stomatitis, although these diseases are not in fact foot and mouth disease in the accepted sense. It is now considered desirable to widen this definition further by including within the definition "any disease for the time being declared by proclamation to be included within the definition of foot and mouth disease for the purposes of this Act". This extension has been effected by means of clauses 3 and 4 of the Bill. Necessarily, any such extension will be made only after agreement between the Commonwealth and the States, but I am in a position to inform this Council that it is proposed that rinderpest, swine fever, African swine fever, rabies, Newcastle disease (in its classical virulent form), fowl plague and blue tongue will be included within the extended meaning. The use of the proclamation in this matter is, it is suggested, necessary to ensure that there are no legal or financial impediments in the way of bringing to bear maximum effective eradication measures in the event of the outbreak in this country of, say, some exotic disease not mentioned above.

Clauses 5 and 6 of the Bill are designed to make it clear that there will be no delay in securing appropriate advances to the fund of this State's share of the cost of any eradication scheme and that this State can lawfully contribute towards an eradication scheme that is conducted outside its own border.

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

ADJOURNMENT

At 3.21 p.m. the Council adjourned until Tuesday, September 14, at 2.15 p.m.