

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday, July 25, 1973

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

QUESTIONS**DIAL-A-BUS**

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: Does the Chief Secretary intend to make a statement to the Council about the announcement in the press this morning concerning dial-a-bus?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: Not at this moment.

MILK

The Hon. M. B. CAMERON: Has the Minister of Agriculture received an application for an increase in the price of milk?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: Yes.

The Hon. M. B. CAMERON: I thank the Minister of Agriculture for his very concise answer to my question. Can he indicate the amount involved in the price rise application, what percentage rise this will mean to the public, and when the price rise will be decided on?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I am unable to give the honourable member the information he requires. This matter is before the Commissioner for Prices and Consumer Affairs at the moment and when the docket comes back to me I will be able to assess the situation.

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: I understand from the Minister's reply to the Hon. Mr. Cameron that the matter of fixation of the price of milk is before the Commissioner for Prices and Consumer Affairs. I should like to ask the Minister by what authority the Commissioner deals with the price of milk when, under its constitution, the Metropolitan Milk Board is the authority for fixing that price.

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: What the honourable member said is quite true. The Metropolitan Milk Board is the authority for fixing the price of milk, but as we have a Commissioner for Prices and Consumer Affairs in this State there is no earthly reason, in my opinion, why his advice should not be sought in cases such as this. That is exactly the situation. I hope that the matter will be resolved in the way the board has indicated, but I think in fairness I should ask for the opinion of the Commissioner.

The Hon. C. R. STORY: Do I understand from what the Minister has said that the Metropolitan Milk Board will be no longer the sole authority, under its constitution and its Act, for fixing the price of milk?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: No, that is not the situation. I am sure the honourable member realizes that.

YORKETOWN SCHOOL

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: Has the Minister of Agriculture, representing the Minister of Education, a reply to my question of June 26 regarding the construction of the new Yorketown High School?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I understand that the honourable member has already been notified about this matter. The present programme provides for completion of the new school towards the end of 1974. Tenders have been called and it is expected that work will commence soon.

ABORIGINES

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: I seek leave to make a statement prior to asking a question of the Chief Secretary, representing the Minister of Community Welfare.

Leave granted.

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: For a number of years many Aborigines have taken it for granted that officers of the Aborigines Department would assist them in matters such as taxation returns, medical benefit claims and many matters akin thereto. However, with the establishment of the Community Welfare Department it appears that, because of the department's expansion and the greater demands made on officers, these offices are now understaffed; therefore, they can no longer comply with the wishes of the Aborigines who need assistance. I quote from a letter, addressed to a gentleman who had sent taxation returns on behalf of two Aborigines to the department, as follows:

I regret that this office can no longer undertake the preparation of taxation returns and medical and hospital claims. This is due to a serious staff shortage, and with little prospect for improvement.

Will the Chief Secretary ask his colleague to investigate this matter urgently and ask him to do his best to supply sufficient staff to cope with the needs of the Aborigines in this field?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: I will refer the matter to my colleague and obtain a reply as soon as possible.

GAWLER BY-PASS

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: The Gawler by-pass has been in use for about 10 years and has been of great benefit to the public; nevertheless, there are one or two dangerous spots on the by-pass. There have been some very serious accidents and, although the by-pass was a great step forward as compared with going through the township of Gawler, it needs further improvement. I understand that the Minister of Transport made a public statement nearly 12 months ago in which he said that the possibility of duplication or other restructuring of the Gawler by-pass would be the subject of a study, and that he hoped to have a further report on this during 1973. I ask the Minister of Health to obtain from his colleague any further information on the very necessary improvements which are required to the by-pass.

The Hon. D. H. L. BANFIELD: I will refer the honourable member's question to my colleague in another place and bring back a reply as soon as possible.

LAND TAX FORMS

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES: I direct a question to the Minister of Lands. Grave concern has been expressed by many primary producers regarding form 9 issued by the Valuation Department and headed "Landowners return, agricultural and pastoral lands". This form requires information dealing with the productivity of the primary industry and other matters related to the cost of capital improvements. Is it the intention of the Valuation Department to include productivity as a means of establishing the valuation of primary properties for land tax purposes for agricultural and pastoral lands?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: These forms were sent out as a result of a direction by the Treasurer, who is in charge of the Valuation Department. I will convey the honourable member's question to my colleague and bring back a reply as soon as possible.

AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: When he was speaking on the Australian Broadcasting Commission *Country Hour* on 5CL on April 26, I am informed that the Chief Agronomist said, at the beginning of his talk:

A little while ago the Agriculture Department was accused in the letters to the editor of making "dangerously absurd statements" in relation to the safety of 2,4,5-T and other herbicides. Unfortunately these issues, because of their technical nature, do not lend themselves to debate in the daily press, but so concerned was the Commonwealth Pesticide Co-ordinator, Mr. Jack Snelson, who has nationwide responsibilities regarding the control and safety of agricultural chemicals—so concerned was Mr. Snelson that we were being unfairly accused of neglecting what I believe is a very important responsibility, that last week he came to Adelaide to publicly debate the issue. About 140 people attended the meeting; the dangerously absurd statements were aired and in that scientific atmosphere our integrity was restored.

My questions to the Minister are: first, to which letter to the editor was the Chief Agronomist referring when he used the words "dangerously absurd statements"? Secondly, what were the date, time and place of the meeting at which the Commonwealth Pesticide Co-ordinator (Mr. Jack Snelson) "publicly debated" the issue and at which (according to the Chief Agronomist) the Agriculture Department's "integrity was restored"?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I will obtain the information for the Leader and bring down a reply as soon as possible.

FORESTRY

The Hon. M. B. CAMERON: I seek leave to make a short statement prior to asking a question of the Minister of Agriculture.

Leave granted.

The Hon. M. B. CAMERON: Several statements, and one in particular, have been made by the Minister about the price of land for the purpose of producing forests in the South-East. It has been indicated that the price of land may in fact be becoming too high to be bought for the purpose of establishing forests. When I first entered this Chamber, I raised the matter of the system whereby the Victorian Forests Commission offers a loan, up to a maximum of \$5,000, to landholders for the purpose of establishing softwood plantations. The principal is repayable over a maximum of 25 years, the first payment to commence 12½ years from the date of the first advance. No interest is payable for the first 12 years, and after that interest of only 5 per cent is payable. Will the Minister consider introducing a similar scheme in South Australia in view of the concern expressed about the cost of land, because in this way the taxpayer in this State would not be put in the position of having to buy quite as much land as he does at the moment?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: One reason why the Forestry Department will find it increasingly difficult to purchase land for afforestation is the fact that more lucrative forms of agriculture are available at the moment. As the honourable member knows, this may not be the case in the years to come because if history repeats itself we shall have this up-and-down movement in agriculture as is the case in many other industries. At present, I do not think that a scheme of this nature would be in the interests of the agriculturists. I am sure they would find that it would not be as economical to produce timber as it is to produce agricultural products in the present buoyant situation.

WEEDS

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL: I seek leave to make a short statement before asking a question of either the Minister representing the Minister of Transport or the Minister who has just left the Chamber.

Leave granted.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL: My question is directed to inquiring as to who is responsible for noxious weeds along the freeways—the Highways Department or the Agriculture Department? Thus, I do not know to which Minister I should address my question. Shortly, I am likely to be representing in this Council the country as well as the city.

The Hon. A. J. Shard: You are optimistic, aren't you?

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL: Well, for a short time. I travel along the South-Eastern Freeway quite regularly (and a very good piece of traffic engineering it is—a credit to the State, the Highways Department, and the other people responsible) but I notice that right along the freeway, not so much at this end but certainly at the Hahndorf end, African daisy is rearing its ugly head. I have also noticed that workmen are planting trees along the freeway, but they are not tiptoeing through the tulips: rather, they seem to be dodging the daisies, I imagine because they do not know what they are. The Highways Department has said on a number of occasions that African daisy does not thrive in well cultivated and properly nourished areas, but I noticed two African daisies in my rose garden at Woodside the other day, and very healthy specimens they were. So, I am inclined to disregard that information issued by the Highways Department. Also, on the roadside outside my property we have found stock from one of last year's daisies (adjoining someone else's property, but close to mine). We picked out 70 plants that had come out of that single one from last year. Unless something is done about the problem fairly soon the whole of the sides and even the centre of the freeway will be covered with African daisy. It is a simple job at present, but it will not be simple, even next year. Therefore, can the appropriate Minister say who is responsible for this matter, and can he say whether something will be done about it fairly quickly and whether, if necessary, the Ministers concerned will liaise and see what they can do about it while there is still time?

The Hon. D. H. L. BANFIELD: I shall be happy to refer the honourable member's question to the appropriate Minister and see that the honourable member gets a report.

UNDERGROUND WATER

The Hon. M. B. CAMERON: Has the Chief Secretary a reply to my question about underground water in the South-East?

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE: The South-East of the State has been defined under the Underground Waters Preservation Act mainly to prevent pollution of the underground waters and, in certain restricted areas of high groundwater usage, to implement controls to rationalize production so as to protect adequately the underground water resource. Thus, there is likely to be no control on stock bores, other than to ensure that drilling techniques are satisfactory. The time from receipt of application for a bore to issue of permit will be minimal, and delays should not be such as to seriously inconvenience landholders. All matters relating to underground water arising in connection with the administration of this Act are referred to the advisory committee. Under the constitution of this committee, the membership must include representatives of local councils and landholders. Thus, people directly

associated with the area using the water are already adequately represented. An advisory committee for the South-East area is at present being constituted as laid down in the Act.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE (Chief Secretary) brought up the following report of the committee appointed to prepare the draft Address in Reply to His Excellency the Governor's Speech:

1. We, the members of the Legislative Council, thank Your Excellency for the Speech with which you have been pleased to open Parliament.

2. We assure Your Excellency that we will give our best attention to all matters placed before us.

3. We earnestly join in Your Excellency's prayer for the Divine blessing on the proceedings of the session.

The Hon. C. W. CREEDON (Midland): I move:

That the Address in Reply as read be adopted.

Although I did not know the Hon. H. K. Kemp well (other honourable members have spoken of his ability and his enthusiasm in attending to the duties that were assigned to him), I, too, express my sympathy to his family in their sad loss.

I was pleased to hear the Government's intention, as enunciated in His Excellency the Governor's Speech, to reintroduce legislation that was previously dealt with extremely harshly by this Council. The Council is still in a position, however, to act as it did before, but the Australian Labor Party has made some inroads into the Liberal and Country League majority here, and will reduce it further in the future. It may be within the next week, or not until three years but, whenever it is, the complexion of this Council will be vastly different. I am impatient to see that happen—it can't be soon enough for me. I should like to see the end of the rule of property and wealth, for it is time the ordinary man had a say in what he believes to be the best interests of the State and its people.

Speaking of the Legislative Council reminds me of another form of government that has been abused since its inception: local government. Recently, the South Australian Government sought to amend the Local Government Act to improve its operation, but this Council, in its desire to express "the permanent will of the people" decided that full adult franchise in local government was something that people were not entitled to. During that debate many councils printed and distributed leaflets to ratepayers urging opposition to full franchise. It might be said that this was not a bad idea on the part of councils because for the first time they were making some effort to communicate with the people they represent; however, it meant, of course, that Government subsidies were being used to defeat a Government measure that was in the best interests of the people.

Rates received by some councils are barely sufficient to pay staff and the day-to-day running expenses, and it is an abuse of money and power that wealthy people are able to maintain privileges to which they have become accustomed at the expense of others. Some councils seem to spend unlimited money and time presenting cases to the boundaries commission to ensure the retention of those councils; they give little thought to the people they represent or to the State, of which they are part. People should be aroused and should take a new interest in local government. Full adult franchise and compulsory voting, I believe, would help. There should be fewer councils and they should

have larger boundaries, which I believe would allow them to operate more economically, and they should be administered from a central point in each council area. Council doors should not be closed while council meetings are being held. It is wrong that so many councils in the past (and this applies even now) closed their doors while meetings that affected so many people were being held. People are not given adequate opportunity to express their feelings or to raise their voices about certain topics.

We still have areas in which people who own houses in different wards can vote in all those wards, and this is against the people's interests. I am not opposed to urban farm rating, but the thing that troubles me is the system under which councils operate in deciding who are entitled to it. In many instances people seeking this rating say they are putting the land to good use, but they are unable to give clear definitions of what they consider is its true value. Councils should not have to deal with these values; it should be done by someone who can sift evidence and give a considered opinion on these matters. These are many of the things that contribute to the sickness of local government, and the Australian Labor Party will work to restore democracy and economic stability in the field of local government.

Regarding land agents, I have always known that, if there was a dollar to be extracted, some people were more adept at this than were their brothers, but it is a shocking indictment of our community morals when such practices are allowed to exist. Because land agents give a personal service to the public, they should be honourable. However, some land agents are placed in the unscrupulous class because they have no feeling for human suffering. Indeed, some land agents are willing to place people in a disastrous financial situation with resultant poor health, just for the pleasure of seeing their own bank balances grow. It would be wrong of me to suggest that land agents work on their own, because often they have the backing of some financial institution that profits from the individual's helplessness by charging high interest.

Worse, of course, is the shadowy individual or company in between that is often the purchaser of properties. It is this shadow in between that does a quick renovation job with a tin of paint, a few rolls of wallpaper, and then places the property back on the market through the same land agent. With the assistance of the finance company, the land agent sells the property at about twice its value. No attempt is made to upgrade these houses by the inclusion of a decent bathroom, toilet facilities or a hot-water system. More often than not, such properties are riddled with salt damp, and that is the reason for the coat of paint and the papering of the walls. Unscrupulous land agents go as far as to deny that salt damp exists in many of these properties. There is only one intention in the buying and selling of these properties by this kind of exploiter: to make as great a profit as possible at the expense of the aged or of young, inexperienced couples. I can understand the Opposition not wanting to discontinue the financial advantages that it claims have been so much a part of the system. However, I am not interested in the advantages accruing to these unscrupulous people, but only in the persons adversely affected, for whose cause I will always fight.

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON (Midland): In seconding the motion, I wish to say how glad I am to be a member of this reformed Legislative Council, which was dragged into the twentieth century only a few short weeks ago. We have abolished the inequalities and injustices of more than a century. The question we now face is whether honourable members will accept their responsibility under

the new Constitution and work for the benefit of the whole State and not merely for the narrow sectional interests that have been so well represented here in the past. Banking, land speculation, insurance companies and estate agents are but some of the groups that have had an undue influence over the legislation that has been introduced in the best interests of most South Australians.

Now there is no gerrymander and no restricted franchise, but will the Council change its approach to the legislative programme placed before it or will it continue to obstruct and delay? I compliment the Government on the establishment of the economic intelligence unit within the Premier's Department, because for too long we have been making long-term far-reaching decisions without suitable information; this applies to Australia as a whole, not merely to South Australia. It is good to see the Government taking decisive action to overcome this weakness. To give an example of what I mean, new pine plantings in South Australia will be used for the next 40 years. One of the most important uses of this timber is in new housing which, in turn, is related to population growth. Obviously, a relatively minor change in the growth rate will greatly affect the demand for pine timber. I am glad to say that we have had a low rate of population growth during the last year, but it would be foolish to accept this as a long-term trend, without more research.

Besides the decline in Commonwealth Government-sponsored immigration, there has been a slight decline in the birth rate. Probably of greater importance are the results of a public opinion survey which showed that young people are more aware of population problems, and now desire to have smaller families. Therefore, it is our duty to provide family planning services to ensure that their wishes are granted. This is one example of the great impact of a population policy on the State's economy. As the rate of population growth can dramatically affect education and hospital services, it surprises me that there has been so little discussion on South Australia's future population and the time that it would take to reach any population targets that might be set. I hope that a study of this State's population trends will be high on the list of priorities for the new economic intelligence unit. I have much pleasure in seconding the motion.

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

SESSIONAL COMMITTEES

The House of Assembly notified its appointment of Sessional Committees.

ADJOURNMENT

At 2.51 p.m. the Council adjourned until Thursday, July 26, at 2.15 p.m.