LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday 16 September 1982

The PRESIDENT (Hon. A. M. Whyte) took the Chair at 2.15 p.m. and read prayers.

QUESTIONS

DEVONBOROUGH DOWNS

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: I seek leave to make a brief explanation before directing a question to the Minister of Local Government, representing the Minister of Lands, about Devonborough Downs.

Leave granted.

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: In answer to a question I asked on Tuesday of this week the Minister of Lands said that he had a report on the condition of the Devonborough Downs Station, which is due to be sold today. He also said that no action would be taken to prevent the sale of that station. That answer was given despite the clear evidence revealed in the wool returns from that station that overstocking has occurred on it for at least two decades. When I say 'overstocking' I am not referring to a minor infringement of the covenant but to overstocking of the order of 50 per cent to 100 per cent.

Will the Minister of Lands say, first, who provided the report to him on the condition of Devonborough Downs Station? Secondly, did the investigator who produced that report examine the wool returns for the past two decades to ascertain the number of sheep that must have been shorn? Thirdly, will the Minister of Lands table that report in the Parliament? And, finally, if it is shown in future that the covenant on that lease has been breached, and if in the future there is a Minister of Lands who is prepared to take action in such matters, will the present owners be subject to prosecution or will any blame for overstocking be placed on the purchaser of that property at today's sale?

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I will refer those questions to the Minister of Lands and bring back a reply.

McLEAY AND SONS

The Hon. C. J. SUMNER: In view of the civil proceedings presently pending in the Supreme Court in which a statement of claim has been filed on behalf of the liquidator of Clinton Credits against the directors of McLeay and Sons among other things alleging certain breaches of the companies legislation in this State, will the Minister of Corporate Affairs provide the Council with a report on the progress in the Corporate Affairs Commission inquiry which he undertook to have carried out some time last year (in June, I believe) following questions asked by me in this Council?

Secondly, has the inquiry conducted by the Corporate Affairs Commission reached the stage where the Minister can determine whether or not a special investigator should be appointed in this case, given that it is now well over 12 months since the inquiry was instituted?

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: I will be particularly cautious in responding because civil proceedings in this matter are *sub judice*, as there has been some preliminary hearing. All that I can say about the Corporate Affairs Commission's inquiry is what I reported to the Council earlier in the session, that is, that the liquidator of Clinton Credits had issued summonses under, I think, section 249 of the Companies Act to conduct his own inquiry and to question various people. The return date on that summons is 28 September.

The Corporate Affairs Commission has intervened and, as I understand it, the inquiries by the court under section 249 will be proceeding in the latter part of this calendar year. So far as any other aspect of the Corporate Affairs Commission's inquiry is concerned, some progress is being made, but the Corporate Affairs Commission determined to intervene in the liquidator's proceedings as part of its own inquiry to gain evidence of matters relating to questions raised in this Council last year. There is no information which, at this stage, would indicate the desirability of appointing a special investigator.

YOUNG UNEMPLOYED

The Hon. J. R. CORNWALL: I seek leave to make a short statement before asking the Minister of Community Welfare, representing the Minister of Health, a question about hospital treatment for young unemployed.

The PRESIDENT: Is leave granted?

The Hon. N. K. Foster: No.

The PRESIDENT: Leave is not granted.

L. RON HUBBARD

The Hon. R. J. RITSON: I seek leave to make a brief statement before asking the Attorney-General, representing the Chief Secretary, a question regarding undesirable psychological practices.

Leave granted.

The Hon. R. J. RITSON: As members know, yesterday I told the Council that I had referred the matter of a particular hand bill relating to the Hubbard organisation to the Psychological Board of South Australia. Since that issue was reported in this morning's *Advertiser* I have received a number of telephone calls from people who have given me information which is absolutely horrifying. The information I have been given includes matters that sound very much like the practice of hypnosis and the administration of pills to people prior to therapy sessions.

For the most part, the people who have contacted me had responded to an advertisement which they thought would offer them employment in the helping professions. What has happened is that these people have been offered therapy to prepare themselves for this. The less vulnerable of these people have recognised the dangers and quit, but some people have become involved in therapy which has led to the break-up of marriages, the neglect of children and mental breakdowns. I expect to receive from these people written evidence in due course which I will, of course, forward to the Psychological Board of South Australia to assist it in its investigation.

However, the board is funded only by the subscriptions of registered psychologists. It has a budget of probably less than $5 000 a year, so that it might not be able to conduct a substantial investigation or prosecutions. For that reason, I ask the Attorney-General whether he will consult with the Chief Secretary, asking the Chief Secretary to consider referring the matter to the police if early indications from the Psychological Board suggest that that course would be appropriate.

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: If there are illegal or improper practices, they will be investigated. I shall certainly refer the question to the Chief Secretary and arrange for a reply to be brought back. I note that in the past two days the honourable member has raised questions directed to the Minister of Health, as she is responsible for the Psychological

Board, and I will ensure that the question asked of the Chief Secretary is also referred to that board.

BAIL ON MURDER CHARGE

The Hon. N. K. FOSTER: I wish to direct a question to the Attorney-General on the matter of bail in a case of alleged murder. Recently I questioned the release on bail of Peter Charles Hughes, a person apprehended for allegedly having murdered Ross Leonard Whitwell at Kimba on Sunday 22 August. In view of the Attorney-General's reply to that question and the subsequent granting of further bail to the accused in another court, will the Attorney-General, even though he and his department are looking at the overall position of the law in these matters, make an urgent and necessary investigation into this case to ensure that the defendant is brought speedily to trial, so that the bereaved are not confronted by the person who is alleged to have committed the murder? In these circumstances, will the Attorney seek to have the matter brought before a court that can properly pay regard to whether or not bail should be granted?

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: I shall certainly take up the question that the honourable member has raised. I indicated to him in my answer to his question several weeks ago that I am undertaking a comprehensive review of the whole area of bail. It is necessarily a matter of some sensitivity. On the one hand, there are those who would argue that in most if not all cases bail should be granted; on the other hand, there are people who would argue that no bail should be granted. It is important to have some middle ground and that the matters of concern to the honourable member should be considered in determining whether or not bail should be granted.

Again, I hesitate to make any comment on the proceedings because of the fear of prejudice to an accused person, but normal practice is for a court of summary jurisdiction to hear the evidence at committal proceeding and, if there is a case to answer, to then refer the matter, in this case to the Supreme Court, for trial, and for the trial to be held at the earliest opportunity. I shall make some further inquiries for the honourable member to ascertain what is the likely time-frame within which the committal proceedings are likely to be held and, if the case is to go to trial, then the time-frame within which the trial will come on. I certainly recognise the concern of the honourable member and of other members of the community who have contacted me about this case.

MIGRANT WOMEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Hon. ANNE LEVY: I seek leave to make a brief statement before asking the Minister of Local Government a question about the Migrant Women's Advisory Committee.

The PRESIDENT: Is leave granted?

The Hon. N. K. Foster: No.

The PRESIDENT: Leave is not granted.

The Hon. ANNE LEVY: Will the Minister inform the Council of the formal relationship, if any, between the Migrant Women's Advisory Committee and the Women's Advisory Unit in the Premier's office, in view of the fact that both these organisations have been set up to advise the Government on matters relating to women and, in particular, migrant women? Does the Minister agree that some sort of relationship between these two bodies would seem eminently sensible so that they at least know in which area each group is working? Also, does the Minister agree that it would perhaps be desirable for an observer from the Women's Advisory Unit in the Premier's department to sit in at meetings of the Migrant Women's Advisory Committee? Of course, I realise that the Women's Advisory Unit consists of full-time employees—

The Hon. N. K. Foster: Is that part of the question or are you starting to comment?

The PRESIDENT: Order! I would have to agree that perhaps it is beginning to sound more like an explanation than a question.

The Hon. ANNE LEVY: Does the Minister agree that, while the members of one body, that is, the Migrant Women's Advisory Committee, work in a purely honorary capacity, the members of the Women's Advisory Unit are full-time employees and that, therefore, it would be appropriate for the liaison to take the form that I have suggested, with someone from the Women's Advisory Unit attending as an observer?

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. N. K. Foster: Just ask your question, Cornwall. If you're too incompetent, forward it to an M.P.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. N. K. FOSTER: Mr President, I rise on a point of order. Mr President, you may rule that this is not necessarily a point of order, and I am being honest in that respect. However, I am not going to sit here and tolerate the rubbish that Cornwall likes to throw around. I have denied the honourable member leave and I ask you, Mr President, whether or not Standing Orders provide for that to occur and whether or not, in your opinion, you believe that any member of this Council has been prevented from asking questions in respect of any matter on behalf of his constituents or members of the public?

The PRESIDENT: I think that the honourable member wants to ask me a question rather than take a point of order. If the honourable member asks his question in a moment, I will deal with it. I call on the Hon. Miss Levy.

The Hon. ANNE LEVY: I was half way through a sentence, Mr President, and I cannot recall what stage I had reached.

The Hon. N. K. Foster: That doesn't surprise me. You're incompetent and, worst of all, you're in here.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. ANNE LEVY: It was the Hon. Mr Foster who interrupted me.

The Hon. N. K. Foster: I know I did—you're incompetent.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Mr Foster will come to order.

The Hon. N. K. Foster: I have come to order, now.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Miss Levy was half way through her question.

The Hon. ANNE LEVY: I was asking a question, and I was half way through a sentence when I was interrupted. I think I was asking the Minister whether, in view of the different nature of the two units to which I have referred, he agrees that perhaps the most profitable liaison between them would be for someone from the Women's Advisory Unit to attend as an observer at meetings of the Migrant Women's Advisory Committee.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I appreciate the concern that is behind the question posed by the honourable member. Mrs Rosemary Wighton, the Women's Adviser to the Premier, who is in charge of the unit in the Premiers Department, did discuss this matter with me some weeks ago. I had some discussions with the Chairman of the Ethnic Affairs Commission in regard to the point which was raised by Mrs Wighton and which has again been raised in this Council today. I understand that the Chairman was to have some discussions with the Ethnic Affairs Commission about the matter, and he undertook to look into it.

The Hon. Anne Levy: Ms Wighton has not spoken to me.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I did not say that she had: I am saying that the matter has already been raised with me and that I have referred it to the Chairman of the commission for further consideration. I believe that one must keep the two areas of concern for women separate to a certain degree, at any rate, within those areas. The Migrant Women's Advisory Committee of the Ethnic Affairs Commission looks into problems confronting migrant women, and they are a special kind of problem. That committee, reporting as it does to the commission, has done, and is doing, a very good job. I am pleased that it is established and working as well as it is. Further, the Women's Adviser in the Premiers Department and her unit cover the whole ambit of women's affairs throughout the length and breadth of the State, and frankly, I see in my own mind a division between those two areas of concern to women and those two investigatory bodies. It may well pay to keep them somewhat separate and not have them married together too much.

The problems experienced by migrant women are much different in many cases to the general problems confronting women, and those problems should from time to time be brought to the attention of the Government as a whole. If the Migrant Women's Advisory Committee makes submissions to the Ethnic Affairs Commission on matters that ought to be taken to help migrant women, and if the commission believes that those issues should be taken further, they actually come to me and, through me, to the Government. Certainly, by the present machinery that has been established, the problems of ethnic women can reach Government level, and they will most certainly reach that level if that is a recommendation to me from the commission.

However, there may well be some merit in having an observer from the Premiers Department sitting in on the Migrant Women's Advisory Committee. I will raise the matter again with the Chairman of the commission and ask him to report to me on his commission's view on the subject, and I will bring back that information for the honourable member.

MURRAY RIVER SALINITY

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: Has the Minister of Local Government, representing the Minister of Water Resources, a reply to the quetion that I asked on 26 August about Murray River salinity?

The Hon. C. M. HILL: The information that the honourable member has requested on the progress of measures being implemented at Rufus River and also at Noora to reduce salinity in the Murray River is as follows.

Rufus River Groundwater Interception Scheme:

Construction commenced on this scheme in March 1982, after protracted negotiations over land acquisition and detailed investigation of alternative methods of groundwater interception. The contractor for the well point installation is on-site, and construction of pumping stations is expected to commence shortly. The current programme is for the scheme to be complete, ready for commissioning, by June 1983.

Noora Drainage Disposal Scheme:

All main laying for this scheme is complete and the Berri Basin pumping station is currently undergoing commissioning trials. Earthworks for the roads and the combined road-rail embankment are approximately 80 per cent complete, and it is understood that Australian National has finished approximately 30 per cent of the track re-laying. The civil contract for the construction of Dishers Creek Basin pumping station is 60 per cent complete, and a plant contract has been let for this pumping station.

An additional part of this scheme was to have been a pumping station and rising main to pump drainage waters from Bulyong Basin to the Dishers Creek Evaporation Basin and thence to the Noora Evaporation Basin. However, large reductions have taken place in drainage flows towards the Bulyong Island Evaporation Basin, and this has prompted a re-evaluation of the design criteria used for this portion of the scheme. It is expected that construction of a revised scheme will commence in 1983.

The Noora Scheme will be progressively commissioned, commencing in September 1982, and extending over the next 1½ to two years.

SWAN SHEPHERD GROUP

The Hon. C. J. SUMNER: I seek leave to make a brief explanation before directing a question to the Minister of Corporate Affairs about the investigation into the Swan Shepherd Group.

The PRESIDENT: Is leave granted?

The Hon. N. K. Foster: No.

The PRESIDENT: Leave is not granted.

The Hon. C. J. SUMNER: First, does the Attorney-General recall that on 18 April 1980 (almost 2½ years ago) he announced that the South Australian Corporate Affairs Commission would carry out a special investigation into the affairs of the 25 companies of the Swan Shepherd Group and that this followed the appointment of a liquidator in March 1980? Secondly, is the Attorney-General aware that since then the matter has not progressed very far, despite its having been raised in this Council by myself and the Hon. Barbara Wiese? Thirdly, does the Attorney-General know whether one of the principals of the group, Dr C. A. W. Aylen, has left South Australia and resides in the United States, and that Dr Aylen owes a considerable amount of money to the group of companies but that this will not be pursued because of the cost involved in legal proceedings?

Fourthly, does the Attorney-General know whether early in the life of the liquidation it was suggested that some action be taken to ensure that persons involved in the liquidation and the subject of investigation did not leave the country, and that it appears now that one of the principal participants has left South Australia and resides in the United States, apparently safely beyond the reach of South Australian law? Fifthly, is the Attorney-General aware that the Corporate Affairs Commission inquiry is bogged down and that insufficient resources and staff are being applied to its investigations and that, in the meantime, creditors are left lamenting because of certain unscrupulous business practices and ineffective Government action?

Sixthly, why were steps not taken to ensure that Dr C. A. W. Aylen did not leave South Australia while still under investigation? Seventhly, why has the inquiry not been completed? Eighthly, what is the present position with the inquiry and the liquidation, when are they likely to be completed, and what satisfaction can creditors expect? Finally, what resources, manpower and money are being used for this inquiry?

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: A number of those questions will need to be referred to the Corporate Affairs Commission for its response. However, the general picture, on which I have reported to the Council a number of times, is that the Swan Shepherd Group failure is a particularly complex matter, and the liquidator has been involved in putting together certain facts and records on which, to some extent, the Corporate Affairs action was dependent. The special investigation by the Corporate Affairs Commission has not been bogged down, and has had adequate resources. I will obtain details as to what resources have been applied to

this investigation. However, one must remember that the Corporate Affairs Commission was appointed a special investigator in this matter and that several of its officers were delegated specifically to handle this special investigation.

The last information that I received from the Corporate Affairs Commission concerning this matter is that the interim report relating to the special investigation is well advanced. I am not sure whether the special investigator can give an indication as to when exactly that report will be in my hands, but the interim report is certainly nearing completion.

Regarding Mr Aylen, I have no personal knowledge of the matters to which the Leader has referred, so they will need to be referred to the Corporate Affairs Commission. If information concerning this matter is available, I will endeavour to bring back a reply about it in due course.

ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION

The Hon. R. J. RITSON: I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the Attorney-General a question about artificial insemination.

Leave granted.

The Hon. R. J. RITSON: An article which appeared in today's *Advertiser* and which was headed 'Donor children's status undefined' deals specifically with the legal problems attaching to circumstances where either the sperm or the egg is donated by a person from outside a marriage so that the child born within the marriage is not exclusively the product of genetic material of the two partners. This has given rise to concern for a long time about the legal status of the child, and about many other surrounding problems.

I was concerned because this article describes conferences of Australia's Attorneys-General and states that New South Wales appears to have abandoned the quest for uniformity and has decided to legislate unilaterally. Some further remarks indicate that New South Wales thinks that the rest of the States are out of step, but that it is not. It is a great pity if such an important and complicated matter has to fall by the wayside in terms of national uniformity merely because—

The Hon. C. J. Sumner: You obviously have never been to a meeting of Attorneys-General.

The Hon. K. T. Griffin: You didn't go to many yourself.

The Hon. C. J. Sumner: I know. I have a good idea what happened though—nothing!

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. R. J. RITSON: Notwithstanding that bit of light entertainment, I think it would be a pity if the system has to fail. I wonder whether this article is accurate in implying that New South Wales is all sweetness and light and that the other States are somehow being tardy. Will the Attorney-General inform the Council as to the position and progress in this attempt to achieve uniform legislation?

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: I was surprised to see in the *Advertiser* this morning the statement by Professor Cox that he understood that the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General was dragging its feet in respect of this legislation. All the Attorneys-General have been anxious to have uniform legislation that would define the status of children born as a result of artificial insemination and to extend that legislation to the law relating to children born as a result of *in vitro* fertilisation. I was also rather disturbed to read that New South Wales apparently was becoming impatient with delays and was threatening to go its own way in regard to this legislation.

The fact is that, as early as July 1981, it was agreed by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General that New South Wales would present to it a draft Bill dealing with the legal rights of children born as a result of artificial insemination. In November 1981 the Standing Committee was still waiting for that New South Wales draft Bill. The Bill was finally produced at the July 1982 meeting of the Standing Committee and, as is usual with the first draft of any Bill, whether at the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General level or at Government level, a number of areas needed further attention, so it was referred back to the New South Wales Parliamentary Counsel.

Quite ironically, of course, New South Wales, as I said, made some announcement that it was tired of the delay and would introduce its own legislation. When the responsibility for drafting the uniform Bill is with the New South Wales Parliamentary Counsel, it is curious that the New South Wales Attorney-General should criticise the Standing Committee and suggest that it was the other Attorneys-General who were dragging their feet. All of us are anxious to get this legislation agreed and into our respective Parliaments, because we believe that it is an important area of the law that is deficient at present.

In the consideration of this issue at the Standing Committee level, some of the issues have been clarified significantly. For example, it has been agreed in principle that, where a husband consents to his wife's being artificially inseminated, he is to be deemed the father of any resulting child. It has also been agreed that the donor of the semen used for artificial insemination in that context shall have no rights and no liabilities with respect to the use of the semen, and the child produced by artificial insemination shall have no rights or liabilities in respect of the donor of the semen. So, the issues with respect to artificial insemination have been clarified, and it is a matter of ensuring that they are reflected in the draft legislation that is currently being prepared by the New South Wales Parliamentary Counsel.

The area of *in vitro* fertilisation has also been the subject of this draft legislation because, as I have said, the Standing Committee is anxious that that issue be dealt with as well. Of course, a lot of ethical questions in relation to *in vitro* fertilisation are more the province of Health Ministers, as well as of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General. Notwithstanding that, we believe that if we can get a draft uniform Bill it will significantly advance the course of ensuring that the status of children born as a result of either of these procedures and the respective responsibilities of donors and parents can be clarified and put beyond question. It is not a matter on which the Standing Committee is dragging its feet; it is firmly in the province of New South Wales at present.

MISS LESLEY SPOONER

The Hon. J. R. CORNWALL: My question is directed to the Minister of Community Welfare, representing the Minister of Health. Will the Minister investigate the following allegations? On Friday 27 August, Miss Lesley Spooner, an 18-year-old health card holder, broke her nose during a basketball match. Miss Spooner is a typical 18-year-old South Australian—bright, alert, well educated, and unemployed. She went to Modbury Hospital at approximately 10.30 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I must draw the honourable member's attention to the fact that he was not granted leave to make an explanation, and the question must be asked.

The Hon. J. R. CORNWALL: My questions regarding the allegations follow. Will the Minister investigate them as a matter of urgency? Miss Spooner went to the Modbury hospital at 10.30 on the Friday evening. It would not be within the knowledge of the Minister to know that, so it is not appropriate for me to ask whether the Minister is aware.

Her nose was X-rayed and the attending doctor said that he thought it was fractured. She was given a letter of referral to a private ear, nose and throat specialist in the city.

The PRESIDENT: Order! We go through this process every day, and I am accused of allowing the honourable member some leniency in asking his question. It is not my affair that leave has not been granted, and I ask the honourable member to come to the question.

The Hon. C. J. Sumner: He's asking it.

The PRESIDENT: No, the honourable member is not doing so.

The Hon. J. R. CORNWALL: Is the Minister aware that Miss Spooner was given (or whether Miss Spooner was given) a letter of referral to a private ear, nose and throat specialist in the city? Is the Minister aware that, when Miss Spooner tried to make an appointment immediately after the weekend, she was told that that specialist was overseas? Is the Minister aware that Miss Spooner then returned to the Modbury Hospital, where she was given a further letter of referral to another private ear, nose and throat specialist? Is the Minister aware that Miss Spooner obtained an appointment with him for late in the afternoon of Friday 3 September? Is the Minister also aware that Miss Spooner was told at that consultation that the now confirmed fracture could be reduced the next morning at the Ashford Community Hospital, where she could be treated as a same-day patient?

Is the Minister also aware that Miss Spooner was told that the alternative would be to wait for three or four months for the procedure to be undertaken at a public hospital? Is the Minister aware that Miss Spooner was also told that by that time it would be a much more difficult procedure, involving three or four days hospitalisation? Is the Minister aware that the attending specialist did the job very satisfactorily and for the assignment of benefits only? However, Ashford Community Hospital asked for payment of $105 in advance. Is the Minister aware that this was very difficult, because Miss Spooner had no money and her parents were away from Adelaide at that time? Is the Minister aware that Miss Spooner borrowed $60 from her brother and paid the additional $45 from her unemployment cheque a few days later? The Minister may be aware that Miss Spooner's nose is now apparently healing satisfactorily. However, this case has several very disturbing features. The Minister should know that quite obviously Miss Spooner's fracture reduction should have been done by the Modbury Hospital because—

The Hon. N. K. Foster interjecting:

The Hon. J. R. CORNWALL: The Hon. Mr Foster seems to find this very amusing. It involves an 18-year-old, who was denied—

The Hon. N. K. Foster interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. J. R. CORNWALL: She was denied treatment at a public hospital. If Mr Foster finds that amusing, then so be it. Obviously, the fracture reduction should have been done by the Modbury Hospital because, as a health card holder, Miss Spooner was a public patient. I am sure that the Minister would consider it extraordinary, as I do, that she was given a referral to a private specialist. Would the Minister agree that, if the Modbury Hospital was unable to do the reduction, quite clearly it should have referred Miss Spooner as a public patient for prompt attention at the Royal Adelaide Hospital?

Is the Minister aware that I have had inquiries made as to whether referral of public patients (that is, health card holders) to private specialists is a common practice at the Modbury Hospital? I have been told by officers of the Department of Social Security that they have had numerous complaints from health card holders regarding similar incidents. Will the Minister have these matters investigated urgently? Will she obtain and give assurances that no further health card holders requiring hospitalisation will be referred for private treatment for which they are not covered? Will the Minister further ensure that such patients are not disadvantaged by being placed on waiting lists as public patients when they are urgent rather than elective patients?

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: I am sure that the Minister is not aware of all of those things, and I cannot really see the relevance of whether or not she is aware of them. However, I will refer the question to her and if she sees fit to make a further reply doubtless she will do so.

SHADOW MINISTER OF HEALTH

The Hon. N. K. FOSTER: My questions to the Minister of Community Welfare are as follows:

1. Will the Minister of Community Welfare confer with the petulant shadow Minister of Health in an endeavour to instruct the Hon. Dr Cornwall in the elementary Parliamentary art of asking a question without notice?

2. Will the Minister seriously consider the necessity of having to offer such advice out of consideration for the Hon. Dr Cornwall's health?

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: The replies are as follows:

1. No.

2. No.

The Hon. N. K. Foster: Cornwall's hopeless—he can't be advised, anyway.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

ETHNIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION

The Hon. M. S. FELEPPA: I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the Minister Assisting the Premier in Ethnic Affairs a question about the Ethnic Affairs Commission.

Leave granted.

The Hon. M. S. FELEPPA: I refer to a letter addressed to the Premier (Hon. D. O. Tonkin) from a wellknown and distinguished member of the Italian community, copies of which were forwarded to me, to the Hon. Mr Hill and to the Leader of the Opposition in this Chamber. The letter states:

Dear Dr Tonkin,

In returning to Adelaide from Italy I have been greatly disturbed by a report I have read in *Hansard* (dated 18 August 1982, pages 543, 544, 545), in regard to certain statements made by the Hon. Murray Hill in the Upper House, in his answer to questions raised by the Hon. Chris Sumner on the Ethnic Affairs Commission. In that report I read of an astonishing statement by the Hon. Murray Hill in a speech to the State Council of the Liberal Party in 1978, that the Chairman of the Ethnic Affairs Commission should not be from one of the major groups, that is, from the Italian or Greek communities.

The Hon. L. H. Davis: We've heard this before.

The Hon. M. S. FELEPPA: I am afraid that the Hon. Mr Davis will have to listen to it again, in the hope that I can put an end to this situation. The letter continues:

Amongst others, I was one of the unsuccessful applicants for the position stated above. I wish to state right from the outset that I respect the Chairman of the Ethnic Affairs Commission, Mr Bruno Krumins, with whom I have established an harmonious relationship since his appointment to the position. The content of this letter has therefore no reflection whatsoever on Mr Krumins merits and/or his ability to discharge his duties as required by the Government of the day.

However, I cannot leave unchallenged a decision which can only be suspected of being influenced by the Minister's private bias. It is a basic tenet of law in this country that justice should not only be done, but also that it should be seen to be done. I would suggest that the same principle is applicable in all walks

of life and that in this case, it is certainly not obvious that justice has been done.

The Minister has denied that the statement he made four years ago is now Government policy. He has asserted, apparently after much hedging (from reading *Hansard*), that the choice of applicants to fill the position was made purely on selection of the best person for the job. But how can I or any other applicant of either Greek or Italian background accept this without serious doubts? I honestly feel now, more than ever before, that the Minister discriminated against me and didn't give my application a fair go. Proof of this is provided by the following:

> At my interview for the position the panel consisted of the Public Service Commissioner and the Director of Local Government who left part way through the interview for an alleged appointment with his Minister. While I must admit the complete courtesy of the Commissioner at the interview, I felt at the time that the arrangements were rather 'offhand'. Having now read the Minister's earlier statement I cannot but assume a much more serious significance in these arrangements, viz, that my interview, and those of other applicants of Greek or Italian background, were mere formalities.

Perhaps the Minister should have drawn attention to his personal bias when applications were called for the position. In this way persons of Greek or Italian background would have known not to waste their time applying.

However, the Minister should be aware that his statement has caused an enormous amount of resentment in both the Greek and Italian communities and this can only lead to a great deal of unnecessary and regrettable ill feeling between the various ethnic communities.

For a Minister of the Crown responsible for ethnic affairs to have on record so blatant an expression of racial prejudice is incredible and inexcusable.

Yours sincerely, Cav. Raffaele De Marco.

The Hon. Frank Blevins interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. M. S. FELEPPA: It is regrettable that I must raise this question again. As Mr De Marco said in his letter, I wish to state quite clearly that my question does not reflect in any way on Mr Krumins or his ability as Chairman of the South Australian Ethnic Affairs Commission. Before asking my question I will refer to comments made by the Minister in this Chamber on Wednesday 10 June 1981 as follows:

> In regard to the second question as to whether Mr Krumins is a member of the Liberal Party, I certainly do not know (and most certainly I did not ask him during the interview whether he is involved in political activity of any kind). As I have said time and again in this Council, the present Government, contrary to the approach of the former Government, appoints people to boards upon their ability to act in the capacity for which they are sought, and we do not take into account the fact of any political affiliations . . .
>
> The third point dealt with the information the Leader claims he has, that a recommendation of the selection panel was not accepted by me in regard to the choice of the person whose name was put forward as Chairman of the Ethnic Affairs Commission. As I recall the situation, I do not think the interviewing panel came down strongly in recommendation of any one particular person in the group interviewed . . .
>
> **The Hon. C. J. Sumner:** He was not recommended?
>
> **The Hon. C. M. HILL:** I am trying to make the point that, as I recall, no one person was recommended.

In answering the Leader's question the Minister said on two occasions 'As I recall'. As this matter has sparked so much concern amongst the ethnic community, why did not the Minister quote from the report of the interviewing panel rather than relying on his memory, because I doubt whether his memory would be that reliable after all that time? Considering the Minister's clear answer to the Leader that the panel did not strongly recommend any particular applicant, why did the Minister limit his choice by interviewing only Mr Krumins and no other applicants?

Now that this question has been brought up again, I ask the Minister to table in this Council the interviewing panel's report on every applicant in order to lay this matter to rest once and for all. Finally, can the Minister say whether the claim of discrimination made by Cavaliere De Marco falls within the sphere of responsibility of the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity?

The Hon. C. M. HILL: It is not my intention to bring down any confidential documents from an interviewing panel whose members have a task of interviewing applicants for senior positions within the general Public Service structure. The honourable member can take the message back to the Cavaliere that there was no discrimination whatsoever exercised by the interviewing panel, the Public Service Board, me or the Governor in the selection of the Chairman of the commission. I repeat: there was no discrimination whatsoever. The honourable member has dragged up the red herring of this document which at one stage I presented as a suggested form of an ethnic affairs policy during the time that this Government was in Opposition. During that time—in Opposition—I was involved in the preparation of several documents of suggested policy.

The Hon. C. J. Sumner: It was not suggested.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: Yes, it was. It was not the policy of the Government at all when we went to the election but, in the general discussion of these items and all aspects of these items within my Party, these points naturally arose.

The Hon. L. H. Davis: You should look to the future and not to the past.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I thought when the honourable member was explaining that, if this was the best Her Majesty's Opposition could do in this Council so close to the next election in questioning and probing the Government on its policies, then it is a weak Opposition.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Is this the answer?

The PRESIDENT: It does not sound like it.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I must stress in reply that I have said over and over—

The Hon. M. S. Feleppa: I hope that it will be for the last time.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I hope that it will be the last time that I have to say this: in the selection of the Chairman of the commission there was no discrimination whatever by the Government against any particular community or person on racial grounds. I emphasise, as I have said before, the Government chose the person who it thought was the best man equipped for that particular office. I hope that the honourable member will accept that explanation because, by dragging out the question and discussion on racial discrimination, he does himself no good.

The Hon. M. S. Feleppa: I was asked to bring back the matter to you.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: You were asked to do that and you have certainly done it. When the honourable member is asked next time, I hope he will tell the people who contact him that it does no good raking up the subject of racial discrimination when there is no truth whatsoever in this matter.

ROAD UPGRADING

The Hon. G. L. BRUCE: Has the Attorney-General a reply to the question I asked recently about upgrading roads?

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: The Flagstaff Hill/Aberfoyle Park area is bounded by a network of arterial roads, which includes Blacks Road, Main South Road and Coromandel Valley Road to the north, and Chandlers Hill Road and Kenihans Road to the south. They can cope adequately with the major through traffic movement in this area. The status of Reservoir Drive is currently under review. The network of local roads, including Flagstaff Road, which provides access between the Flagstaff Hill/Aberfoyle Park areas and the arterial road network, is the responsibility of the District Council of Meadows. Planning and transport issues in the

southern metropolitan area are being reviewed by an implementation committee, comprising the Director-General of Transport (Convener), the Commissioner of Highways and the Director-General of Environment and Planning, which is looking at the long-term role of roads such as Flagstaff Road.

REPLIES TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. ANNE LEVY: I ask the Attorney-General when replies will be given to the following questions:

1. Ageing Citizens, asked on 20 July 1982;
2. Youth Advisory Panel, asked on 28 July 1982;
3. Traffic Lights, asked on 17 August 1982;
4. Council Prosecutions, asked on 18 August 1982;
5. Abortion Statistics, asked on 18 August 1982;
6. Carcinogens, asked on 19 August 1982;
7. *Hansard,* asked on 19 August 1982;
8. Access Facilities, asked on 19 August 1982;
9. *Rheobatrachus silus,* asked on 25 August 1982;
10. Abortion, asked on 26 August 1982;
11. Water Charges, asked on 26 August 1982.

Of the 11 questions listed, I have received replies to two questions. I have been told today that Ministers have replies to six other questions, but I did not have a chance to ask for those replies during Question Time. However, regarding questions Nos. 4, 6 and 8 I have not received replies, nor have I been told that replies are available.

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: I suggest that, if the honourable member wants to put the question on notice (eliminating the questions to which replies either have been received or are available), she can do so for Tuesday 5 October. Alternatively, she can accept the undertaking that between now and then I will try with my colleagues to ensure that we have answers to all the outstanding questions and, if we fail, the honourable member can ask another Question on Notice at that stage.

The Hon. ANNE LEVY: I will wait and hope that the replies will be available by 5 October.

BLOOD LEAD LEVELS

The Hon. J. R. CORNWALL (on notice) asked the Minister of Community Welfare:

1. For how long has the Port Pirie survey into blood lead levels in pregnant women and children under three years of age commissioned by the previous Government now been conducted?

2. Will the Minister request and authorise an interim report to indicate the number of women and children tested, the blood lead levels detected in both the women and the children and the geometric mean of those readings?

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: The replies are as follows:

1. Funds were made available by the National Health and Medical Research Council at the end of 1978 and the initial recruitment of pregnant women for the study began in May 1979 in Port Pirie and surrounding towns. The first births to women enrolled in the study occurred in August 1979.

2. It is inappropriate to provide interim reports on epidemiological surveys as they may appear to pre-empt final outcomes.

PRIMARY PRODUCERS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 15 September. Page 1062.)

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: I support the Bill. I have some concerns about the practicality of the legislation, how it will be administered, but I will raise those details in Committee and concentrate here on the general principles. The Bill follows a meeting between the State and Commonwealth Ministers where the drought was discussed and a number of new measures to assist primary producers were introduced. That meeting on 6 September introduced the fodder subsidy, under which primary producers can obtain 50 per cent of the price of the fodder that they need to purchase to maintain sheep or cattle, based on the price of feed and wheat.

That allowance enables primary producers to keep their livestock during periods of drought. By subsidising the price of fodder the aim is that sheep, in particular, can be kept and the return from them in the form of wool payments will then pay all the costs that a primary producer incurs. At the moment, the primary producer who is faced with a decision whether to keep his sheep or not would be very foolish to sell them because he can keep them through virtually any period of drought at Government expense because his share of the payment for fodder, and any other costs, will be covered adequately by his returns from the sale of wool.

Of course, the price that a primary producer can sell livestock for at present is very low, whereas the price he can sell livestock for after the drought has broken can be very high. Therefore, the obvious thing to do is maintain the whole of a flock and feed it on grain, which is available at this very low price because of the subsidy applied under this scheme. The other interesting feature of these drought measures is the subsidy that is going to be made available on interest rates above 12 per cent. Of course, there is an inter-action here between this particular form of assistance and the one I have just mentioned because a farmer who decided to sell his sheep rather than keep them would be adding to his current account at the bank and, therefore, would not be eligible for this rebate on his interest rates. Again, there is a strong incentive for the farmer to keep his sheep, feed them with this grain bought at a subsidised price and thus obtain the interest rate subsidy on interest rates above 12 per cent.

Those two measures are to be funded completely by the Commonwealth Government. The funds for the other two measures, including the one incorporated in this Bill, will come initially from State funds up to an amount of $3 000 000. Once that figure is reached there is an arrangement whereby the Commonwealth pays $3 for every $1 spent by the State. The current carry-on loan amount has been raised to $40 000 which, of course, actually applied during the drought in 1977 when the State lent money to farmers and primary producers by way of low-interest, carry-on loans. There was no limit on those loans, but now the other States (which did have limits on their loans) have raised their limit to $40 000 and that same limit will apply in South Australia.

These carry-on loans are to be extended under this legislation to small businesses in rural areas that are dependent upon primary producers as customers. It is fairly obvious that this raises a number of problems as to how those businesses can be defined. Many small businesses in rural areas do not know whether their customers are primary producers or not. It is fairly easy to identify those businesses if they are selling goods such as farm machinery, fertiliser

or herbicides, which obviously would be going to primary producers and which would be of little interest to other people.

However, in the case of other types of rural business it is going to be difficult to define whether their customers are primary producers or not. I am thinking particularly of people in country towns who sell motor cars and who, I am sure, do not ask their customers whether they are primary producers or people working in some other area. It seems to me that it is going to be difficult to define those businesses which are dependent upon primary producers. The corner deli or grocery shop in a country town is going to be seriously affected by the drought, but I am sure the owners would not ask customers whether they are farmers, tourists, or who they are. I do not know how that particular definition is going to work. Clause 2 states that 'small rural business' means a business that relies wholly or mainly on transactions with primary producers. That is one of the examples of matters in this legislation that I do not think have been fully thought out. Another major problem that I think is going to be faced with this particular scheme is the difficulty of getting banks to maintain current levels of lending.

I have been informed by a number of machinery sales companies and agents who are looking to this piece of legislation to help their businesses that they are under great pressure from the banks to reduce their overdrafts. If overdrafts are reduced, this scheme will not have achieved anything in substance but will have merely transferred the lending from the banks to the Primary Producers' Emergency Assistance Fund. It will, of course, have benefited the small businessman substantially because the interest rates he is paying will decrease, but in terms of keeping employment and business going it will be only marginal in its effect. In other words, I think that the Government will somehow have to try to put pressure on the lending institutions to maintain at least their current level of lending to small rural businesses; otherwise, this money will not have any additional effect.

There are, of course, a number of substantial problems that I will deal with in more detail when we come to the question of eligibility of the small rural businesses to participate in this scheme. The first criterion of eligibility appears in new section 5 (2b) *(a)* as follows:

> ... his business has been adversely affected by a decline in rural liquidity resulting from drought.

That definition seems to be something that will be difficult to assess. We can obviously get from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics figures on the decline in farmers' incomes applicable to particular areas. However, I am not sure that those sorts of figures will be available until the drought is long over, but we can, in theory, get those sorts of figures. I am not sure that we can get the sort of breakdown of those figures that would apply to particular types of rural business. In other words, it is fairly obvious that certain aspects of rural liquidity will decline much more than others. For example, many farmers are quick to stop purchasing new machinery during times of drought. It is an investment that they can do without or forgo for some period of time.

So, that sort of decline in rural liquidity will be fairly dramatic and fairly obvious. In other areas of farm purchasing the decline will be very slight because it is virtually impossible for farmers to reduce their requirements, for example, of farm fuels and other farm inputs. So, it would be a fairly difficult operation for the administering authority to assess how far the decline in rural liquidity has, in fact, affected that particular rural business. Even if those figures are obtainable in theory, I very much doubt whether they would be obtainable in the time scale that is needed if we are going to get funds out quickly to assist these small country businesses.

Another problem that will arise from that particular definition of 'eligibility' is this: how will it be possible to ensure that a business has a reasonable prospect of continuing once the drought has broken if that particular advance is made? When the carry-on loans are provided to farmers under the existing system (which is a fairly straightforward assessment), what is done is that the farmer provides a budget for the drought period and for a normal year and, in those circumstances, the cash flow is assessed on that period and the deficit is met by the loan. In a normal year that farmer has to be able to repay the loan and any interest on that loan.

It is easy enough to see whether a farmer can put in an acreage of crop which is required, or whether the average yield for the district would give sufficient income to be able to produce a budget which has a positive cash balance at the end of it. But, as far as the small rural business is concerned, it is by no means as easy to make that sort of forward projection because, of course, it is dependent upon so many other factors, including what other businesses are operating in that particular country town and what new models might be brought out by a machinery manufacturer or car manufacturer. It is not very easy at all to assess a budget as to how that business proprietor will fare once the drought is over.

I raise those matters because I think that they are very important. The amount of money involved is very considerable. The first $3 000 000 is provided by the State alone and, after that, for every $1 provided by the State $3 is provided by the Commonwealth. Obviously, there is a responsibility to ensure that not only is the rural business community supported, but that funds coming from taxpayers are used in a responsible manner.

In the past, a number of schemes have been introduced to support primary producers and these schemes have proved to be of considerable embarrassment to the Governments concerned. While these schemes might have had laudable aims originally, they proved to be open to considerable abuse and caused a large amount of misappropriation. I am thinking here particularly about the 1977 scheme which was introduced by the Commonwealth to assist beef producers. I understand that, of the funds made available on that occasion, $7 000 000 was misappropriated. In other words, primary producers put in false claims and some of the staff in the Department of Primary Industry were involved in putting forward claims for fictitious farmers. That particular scheme was very poorly thought out. It had no criteria or guidelines associated with it and was rushed in hastily before a Federal election because the Cattlemen's Union was threatening to run candidates against Country Party candidates in a number of rural electorates.

Now, here we have some new legislation to support rural business which, as I said earlier, is something we all support in principle. However, we also need to know how it will be administered in a practical way to ensure that the funding to people who need to get this support is not used in ways that are irrelevant to the needs of the rural community. I support the second reading of the Bill and I will be asking a number of more detailed questions about these practical matters of administration during the Committee stage.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: We are facing a very serious situation indeed and I would like to compliment the Opposition on its support for this Bill. I am pleased to agree—and I cannot do that very often—with much of what the Hon. Mr Chatterton has said. He explained a number of provisions in the Bill and I do not intend to repeat them at this stage.

The Bill, as I understand it, was supported on all sides in another place. There were some difficulties which were mentioned in that place and which also have been referred

to by the Hon. Mr Chatterton this afternoon. Of course, they will need to be overcome and that will not be as simple as we would like. However, I wish to commend this Government for its initiative in introducing this Bill, which I fully support. I also commend the Federal Government for its initiatives in this matter.

As I and other members have indicated, in many areas of the State there is a serious drought situation. Many districts have reached the point of no return in so far as the 1982 season is concerned. In some other areas—and let me say that these areas are becoming fewer every day—there is still some prospect of some returns, given late rains, but this only applies to a small area of the State. Even in those areas, the return which is possible would be minimal, as against normal returns. This, of course, will not only have some devastating effects upon primary producers and the rural economy in general, but will also have disastrous effects upon rural businesses, at which some parts of this Bill are aimed.

The drought will have a disastrous effect on rural businesses which depend, to a degree, upon support from the rural industry—support which cannot be forthcoming at present because of the great financial difficulties posed by the drought. These problems arise not only in the farm machinery businesses, for example, where unemployment may occur because of a lack of business, but in all types of country stores and businesses which depend to a greater or lesser degree on the patronage of primary producers. As the Hon. Mr Chatterton said, there will be some problems as to how this is sorted out, in the situation where people are supplying both primary producers and other people.

As I have indicated earlier, we must try to solve those problems. I could give some examples of where there have already been real problems in the rural areas because of the complete lack of funds and the complete lack of support from the primary industry for the reason of the drought, but I do not intend to do so at this time. Suffice it to say that, if we cannot support the rural economy and extend that support to business interests in those areas, as this Bill seeks to do, we could be in dire straights for some considerable time.

I trust that this Bill will have the support of all honourable members, as I understand it has had in another place, and I am sure that it will have your support, Mr President. I hope that the Bill will have a speedy passage through this Parliament, and I support it.

The Hon. M. B. CAMERON: I support the Bill. I do not think that at the moment there is a true understanding of the situation that will face the rural community as a whole, not only in this present year, but extending into next year and perhaps for the next two or three years, as the effects of the drought extend within the community. It is not only the loss in stock at the moment, but the fact that, if the drought breaks next year (and one trusts that that will occur), the cost of restocking and the cost of the farming community's getting back on its feet will be enormous. It is exaggerated greatly by the fact that interest rates are almost double what they have been in any previous drought situation, so that the recovery time will be much longer and the spending habits of farmers will be restricted for a much longer period.

This affects everyone in the local community, and every rural business will be affected dramatically. If businesses have to extend credit or continue on a borrowing basis, they will be faced with the same problems as will the farming community. I commend the extension of this provision to rural businesses, and I congratulate the Opposition on its support for this very worthy measure.

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT (Minister of Community Welfare): I thank honourable members for their contributions to this debate. The support that will be given by the Bill will be rather more than marginal, I would suggest. The Hon. Mr Chatterton seemed to think that it might be marginal only and that other steps were needed. Any other steps that may be needed to persuade various credit organisations to provide—

The Hon. B. A. Chatterton: It is only marginal if the other organisations withdraw credit support.

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: That is what I am saying. Any other steps that should be taken will be taken. I suggest that the support will be more than marginal, and the important thing is that, if the supporting rural businesses go bankrupt or leave country areas, it is hard to get them back. For the support of the primary producer it is necessary to see that these supporting rural industries survive.

The Hon. Mr Chatterton raised the question of how to estimate viability, particularly in regard to rural businesses as opposed to primary producers. It is true that the Rural Assistance Branch of the Department of Agriculture has not had the expertise in the past (because it has not had to do it) to assess the viability of rural businesses, but both at the officer level and at Ministerial level arrangements have been made with the Department of Trade and Industry, and I understand that the procedure will be along the lines that the Department of Trade and Industry will prepare, first, a model application form designed to ascertain whether or not a rural business is viable. These application forms will be transmitted through the Rural Assistance Branch of the Department of Agriculture and will come back to that branch and then go to officers of the Department of Trade and Industry for assessment, before coming back to the Rural Assistance Branch of the Department of Agriculture. The Department of Trade and Industry has had quite a lot of expertise in judging the viability of small businesses in regard to pay-roll tax concessions, and all sorts of things. There will be that ability, and I suggest that it is no more difficult to assess than in the case of farmers. In many respects, there may be fewer imponderables.

There is no question of the funds being used inappropriately. The intention of the Bill is simply to extend rural assistance, assistance to primary producers, to businesses essentially connected with them. There is no question of the funds being used inappropriately, because that would merely erode the funds available to the primary producers themselves and to the appropriate businesses. The funds will be used only in the strict terms of the guidelines of the Bill, and the intention is very much to assist primary producers in relation to their primary production activities and those rural businesses in relation to their relying wholly or primarily on the support of people in primary production.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clause 1 passed.

Clause 2—'Interpretation.'

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: Will the Minister say who will carry out the assessment of rural liquidity? Will it be the Department of Agriculture or the Department of Trade and Industry, or will it be the applicant, on his own application form, who assesses what the rural liquidity will be for that product?

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: The clause refers to rural liquidity as meaning the total amount of money that primary producers have available to spend. This would mean that the judgment ultimately would have to be made by the Department of Agriculture. Clearly, it could not be made by the applicant. The Department of Agriculture certainly would consult with the Department of Trade and Industry, which would be looking at these matters, but I would say

that primarily the judgment would be made by the Department of Agriculture itself, because of the definition of rural liquidity. We are looking at the primary producer and the amount of money that he has to spend, and that judgment can best be made by the Department of Agriculture's Rural Assistance Branch.

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: Within that definition of rural liquidity, will there be a splitting up into various products, or is it just to be, as I mentioned, a general matter? B.A.E might say that the amount of money that primary producers have available to spend has dropped by so much. Will that be it, or will it go into more detail? For example, I believe that very detailed information is available on the sales of new farm machinery, and that could be split up, saying that the amount of money being spent on new machinery has dropped a great deal more than has spending in some other areas. If this is to assist those who are in need of help, funds should not be made available to those in areas where there has not been a drop in spending. While there may have been a general drop in spending by farmers, they will still spend the same amount on fuel and fertiliser. Those people should not receive any assistance, even though they may be in difficult circumstances, because those difficult circumstances would not be due to a drop in spending. Will that be split up into various categories?

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: I think that the honourable member's question relates to a number of different issues. First, he referred to the actual question of rural liquidity and the total amount of money available to primary producers. That relates only to the assessment of the amount of money that all primary producers have to spend. In making that assessment, the department will take into account the money that primary producers have to spend in particular physical locations and areas of the industry. Of course, in a drought situation different parts of the industry are affected in different ways. Rural liquidity will be assessed across the board, having regard to individual areas and individual parts of the industry.

The honourable member's second question was really comprehended in his comments about the viability of rural businesses as opposed to farms. An individual's viability will be assessed. I am aware of the honourable member's concern, as expressed in his question and in his second reading speech. I think the honourable member was concerned to see that farmers were not abused and that this assistance would not be available to businesses that did not need it. I assure the honourable member that the Department of Agriculture and the branch will be most concerned to see that the fund is not abused. In the past, these funds have been available to primary producers only. An extension initiated by the Federal department has been approved to extend the fund to rural businesses.

This is a very logical extension, because a small family business that is almost totally reliant on primary producers for its survival, for instance, a producer of farm machinery, is just as dependent on the seasons and the success of primary production. It is intended that the legislation will stay within the spirit of the principal Act and that assistance will only be given to those people who are directly affected by a drought. Of course, many people are indirectly affected by a drought and, I suppose, most of the South Australian community would be affected in some way. However, it is not intended to take it that far. I assure the honourable member that the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Trade and Industry will zealously restrict the assistance to the correct areas.

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: I think the Minister has given me the assurance that I was looking for. I was concerned to point out that while there might be a general decline in rural liquidity, which is fairly easy to assess from Department of Agriculture statistics and elsewhere, the impact of that general decline is not equal in its effect on rural businesses. The best two examples might be, on the one hand, a small machinery agent who suffers a very much larger decline in sales rather than a drop in rural liquidity, because farmers do not purchase new machinery when their cash flow is adversely affected. At the other end of the scale there is the rural tax accountant who would not suffer at all, because farmers must still put in tax returns and they still pay the same tax fees.

It is important when assessing this question of rural liquidity to exclude country tax accountants, because all their clients are farmers and, even though the clients may suffer a decline in rural liquidity, the tax accountants do not suffer at all because of that decline. I believe that point must be made quite clear. I suggest that the situation is quite easy to assess in the two extremes to which I have referred, but there are a lot of complicated cases in the middle where it will be difficult to assess the impact of a general decline in rural liquidity on a specific rural business. How will those grey areas be identified and how will an assessment be made in those cases? Good figures are available in relation to farm machinery agents, because I understand that all manufacturers of farm machinery have up-to-date sales figures. Therefore, it is easy to identify an overall collapse in that market. How will the grey areas be identified in relation to this legislation?

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: I believe that the honourable member, the Minister of Agriculture and I are very much in agreement about this. It has been very clear in the discussions that I have had with the Minister of Agriculture and his officers that direct assistance is contemplated and intended for those people who are directly affected by a drought. It is not intended to go beyond that. The honourable member has given two good examples. It is obvious that the first example is a clear case for assistance and that the second one is not. Obviously, the honourable member is quite right when he says that there will be some grey areas. There are always difficulties at some point when trying to apply guidelines correctly in relation to assistance in any field, whether it be in primary production, community welfare, social security, or anything else. I do not think that I can make it any clearer than that, and I do not believe that departmental officers could define exactly how the guidelines will apply in those grey areas.

The honourable member has my assurance that the intention is not to broaden this field beyond what was intended by the Federal Government. Assistance will be confined to the rural community. It is well acknowledged that primary producers should have some measure of support in times of drought or when other calamities occur. Those people dependent directly on primary producers for their livelihood should have the same ability to apply for assistance. However, this assistance will not be extended outside that category. It is not intended to make a general primary extension to small businesses; the legislation is restricted to the areas to which I have referred. I have no hesitation in assuring the honourable member that officers from the Departments of Agriculture and Trade and Industry will apply the legislation in that way. I suggest that there is no fear that the total amount of money will be available. Therefore, primary producers will not receive less money.

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: I now refer to the definition of 'small rural business', paragraph *(a)* of which provides:

> that relies wholly or mainly on transactions with primary producers;

That seems to raise some problems because, in a number of areas, (for example, farm machinery dealers and taxation accountants, to whom I have already referred), it is simple

for a small rural business to say that it is wholly or solely involved with transactions with primary producers, because few other people use farm machinery. Of course, the tax accountant would have the occupation of his clients, because that is one of the things that is included in taxation forms.

However, many other small rural businesses rely partly on primary producers who would not be able to give any substantial proof that they had been doing so. I refer to motor car dealers and other people selling both to people living in country towns and to primary producers. How would they supply evidence to show that they had been wholly or mainly involved in transactions with primary producers? It is obvious that the assessing group would want some evidence to show whether 20 per cent, 40 per cent, or the like, came from that area. Some sort of eligibility criteria would be requiried. Otherwise, they could be supplying credit to anyone who had sold a car to a primary producer, and that is not the intention of the legislation. There is a difficulty in providing that sort of proof.

If we go even further down the track in terms of small country business, such as grocers, delicatessen owners and the like, we see that they could be in even greater difficulty in trying to trace their customers and in determining whether or not they were primary producers. Perhaps car dealers could ascertain from registrations which people had primary producer concessions, but small business people may not know the names of their customers. How does the Administration intend to get such evidence to confirm whether a rural business was involved mainly in transaction with primary industry?

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: The word 'mainly' obviously relates to more than 50 per cent, which is perfectly fair. It would not be difficult to get that evidence. One example given by the honourable member concerned car dealers, and they would well know and could give evidence on what proportion of cars they sold went to primary producers. Even a country grocer or the like would know which of his customers were primary producers or not, and those details could be supplied.

The honourable member has correctly made clear that difficulties will be experienced in assessing, in the grey areas, whether or not people will be affected, but that does not mean that the exercise should not be undertaken. Although the officers have received a number of inquiries, they have not started processing, and I would be willing to undertake to give the honourable member an assessment in writing of the way in which these things are worked out when that process begins.

Some of it will remain in that grey area and will not be specified in black and white. There will always be problems, but one of the things that ought to be made clear is that, although the Bill gives the criteria under which applications can be made, once one establishes that people come within the criteria and are eligible to make application, it does not follow that the application will be granted. The department will still have the ability to obtain the advice of the Department of Primary Industry to sort out the applications, even if they fall within the criteria, and determine whether or not they will be granted.

The honourable member has my assurance, based on my conversations with the Minister and his officers (this would follow, as it all falls within the area of the Department of Agriculture) that the intention clearly is to support rural industries, primary producers and people in difficult times of drought or other natural calamities who directly depend for their living almost entirely on primary production. That is very much the thrust of the legislation and, what perhaps is more important, because it would be impossible for this type of Bill to be entirely precise, that is the thrust of the Administration.

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: I should explain to the Minister that my motive for asking questions is to try to help people so that they can make up their minds about whether they have a reasonable chance to succeed with an application. I accept that, even if they fall within the criteria, it does not automatically mean that applicants will get a loan: their situation will have to be assessed by the department's officers. In a number of areas like this, if some indication is given about the sort of evidence required, they can take steps to prepare it or provide the department with that sort of information.

I understand that the main group seeking this sort of support are machinery dealers; they have already suffered severely because farmers have already indicated, as a result of the bad season, their intention not to purchase harvesting machinery, and the decline has been rapid.

In regard to other rural businesses, the effect has not been nearly so substantial, because the effect of rural liquidity will not become obvious until next January when farmers do not get their appropriate wheat, barley or wool cheque. That is when the severe result of the decline will become obvious. Other small rural businesses which still have time to get their affairs in order are seeking the sort of information about which I have asked regarding what evidence will be required by the department to make them eligible under the definition. I accept the Minister's statement that it will be difficult to provide that; at this stage all the details of the scheme have not been worked out, and that those details will have to be further determined.

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: A useful piece of information that I can give the honourable member is that the assessors from the Department of Trade and Industry will visit the premises concerned when people apply. It will be a case of separation. The nature of the evidence required will be to establish the extent to which the business concerned relies wholly or mainly on primary production.

As I have suggested, that in itself should not be too hard because those businesses which are, by definition, relatively small will know where their customers come from and whether or not they are primary producers. That evidence should not be too hard to provide. I certainly understand the problem that the honourable member has with this matter. It is a problem that the department also has, because inquiries are already being made of it. It will not be possible for the department to say 'Yes, your application will be successful,' or 'No, it will not be successful,' before an application is made to the department. Broadly speaking, I think the criteria have been fairly adequately clarified in the second reading explanation and through this useful discussion at the Committee stage.

Clause passed.

Clauses 3 and 4 passed.

Clause 5—'Power to make advances.'

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: I have a number of questions about new subsection (2b). I refer to the effect on business of the decline in rural liquidity. One obvious problem is the extent to which farmers take out carry-on loans, as during the last drought it was quite noticeable that the small rural businesses benefited substantially because farmers had taken out carry-on loans and were able to pay their fuel accounts and those sorts of accounts. The people who were not really covered at that time were the machinery companies, because carry-on loans are not available, with a few exceptions, for the purchase of new machinery. A farmer can get a carry-on loan for new machinery only if he can prove to the department that it is absolutely essential for him to have it to plant his next crop; otherwise he must carry on with existing machinery.

Therefore, other rural businesses were really being supported by farmers taking carry-on loans and spending that

money within the rural community. One of the problems seems to be in assessing this decline in rural liquidity on rural businesses and in assessing how much farmers will expand that rural liquidity by taking out further loans. Will the Minister comment on this?

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: The point is well taken. Obviously, that does happen. 'Rural liquidity' is defined as meaning 'the total amount of money primary producers have available to spend'. If a farmer is insured and obtains money under his insurance policy, he will have more money available to spend. That must be taken into account in assessing rural liquidity.

The honourable member made the point that people involved in rural businesses such as those selling agricultural machinery, and so on, usually cannot take out that type of insurance. However, if one looks at the Bill, one sees that new section 5 (2b) states, in part:

> The proprietor of a small rural business is eligible for an advance under this section if—
>
> *(a)* his business has been adversely affected by a decline in rural liquidity resulting from drought.

The small business owner must establish that his business has been affected by a decline in rural liquidity. 'Rural liquidity' is defined as meaning 'the total amount of money that primary producers have available to spend'. If primary producers have insured against drought, they have more money available to spend, and that fact is taken into account. That is one of the things that the applicant must establish, namely, that his business has been adversely affected through a drop in liquidity. If, for example, in a particular area everyone had insured and every primary producer had as much money as he would have had, anyway, rural liquidity would not have dropped and that particular business man would not have been adversely affected. Therefore, the answer to the honourable member's question regarding insurance is that the first of the criteria (and they are all hooked together) is that the business man must establish that his business has been adversely affected by a decline in rural liquidity, that is, the amount of money that farmers have to spend. One must take into account the extent to which rural liquidity may have been bolstered by insurance payments.

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: I think there is some misunderstanding. I was referring not so much to insurance as to carry-on loans themselves. It seems to me that the problem is anticipating what farmers are going to do. In other words, the difficulty is that we can take the situation now before the crop is harvested and be able to say that, because of declining crop returns, there will be a decline of 50 per cent in rural liquidity of wheat and barley farmers. However, we do not know at this stage how much of that decline will be offset by farmers taking out carry-on loans. If, for argument's sake, the gap in rural spending was filled by carry-on loans (which is very unlikely) then, as I understand the situation, there would be no drop in rural liquidity, and rural businesses would not be eligible for assistance. That will not happen, but I want to know how it will be possible to provide funds for rural businesses without being able to anticipate what farmers will do in January or March next year, when the decline in rural liquidity becomes very obvious.

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: Taking the hypothesis posed by the honourable member that, if the whole gap was filled by carry-on loans, rural businesses would not receive anything, I say that they should not do so. The real question posed by the honourable member is how to assess that.

The Hon. B. A. Chatterton: How do you anticipate that?

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: The partial answer to that is that, if applications are made early and at a stage when it is not possible to anticipate the future, consideration will be postponed until it is possible to anticipate what will happen. In the meantime, and as far as is necessary, every attempt will be made to assess the situation. As I have said before regarding all forms of assistance, whether rural, welfare, social security, or other forms of assistance, there are always problems of assessment. That does not mean that these projects should not be undertaken, and this one has been undertaken in this matter and will be carried out sympathetically. The main thing is probably that the administration will be with the Department of Agriculture.

They are people who know what they are about, so that it is a primary industry matter and that is what it is all related to. I am sure that the Bill, if it is passed and proclaimed, is intended to do that quickly so that primary producers will have that assurance.

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: Can the Minister give an assurance that people will be informed of that? In other words, obviously people will be seeking early assistance in their applications and perhaps they could be informed, whether or not the application is approved, that they are still free to apply again at a later stage. It is important that that information be provided to applicants because, if they are just told 'No', they might then feel that that cuts them off completely whereas, if the situation does change, perhaps that information could be provided in a letter saying that they have not been granted that particular application.

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: I agree with the honourable member and I give that assurance. This has been done with primary producers; they were not simply told 'No', but that there was some possibility in the future of a claim being favourably assessed. The best possible information will be given to applicants. If the appropriate information is that a claim cannot be assessed at the present time, then applicants will be told that.

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: Another question I raised in my second reading speech relates directly to the problems that have been raised with me by machinery selling agents and relates to banks calling in overdrafts. There are substantial problems at the moment in that machinery selling agents have great difficulty with this. In fact, sometimes there is difficulty in paying the manufacturers because, when the agent sells a machine, the money received is paid into the bank and the bank says that it is marvellous that the overdraft has been reduced.

This has proved to be of great difficulty for manufacturers who want to get money from agents. I understand that trust accounts and various other things are being established to ensure that that does not happen. This is of grave concern to me and has been raised by a number of agents, that when they get a $40 000 loan it goes straight to paying off the bank overdraft. While these people can have a substantial subsidy on their interest, they really have not been able to achieve any additional funds to keep the business going, which is, after all, the objective of the whole scheme. I wonder whether there are procedures which would enable the Rural Assistance Branch to see that banks maintain a level of lending, and whether the branch can obtain those sorts of guarantees from existing lending authorities.

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: I think that the situation is the same with primary producers. The basis on which the department operates in regard to farmers, which is also to apply to rural businesses, is that the department assesses the cash flow on a quarterly basis and the deficit in the cash flow, and an advance is made in order to make up the difference in deficit necessary to establish the cash flow. The intention of the department is to continue with that method so that, in regard to rural businesses, as with primary producers, an assessment will be made on a quarterly basis of the cash flow required, of the deficit of an operator, which will be met on the proper terms.

It means, of course, that the money is paid to that operator personally and not to the bank for the overdraft. Also, it means that if, as a result of what happens, the credit dries up, in the next quarter that operator has a greater need to maintain the cash flow. This system has been fairly successful in regard to primary producers and I see no reason why it should not be equally successful with rural businesses.

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: I have a further question relating to security for loans. What will the department use as security? In the past, it has always been by way of mortgage on the farmer's land and usually this has been quite sufficient because, normally, a farmer's equity is very high. Even second or third mortgages are still adequately covered by the land value. But, in terms of machinery agents and people like that, I imagine that security would have to be some other sort of arrangement over machinery on display. As I understand it, that is one of the greatest problems, that agents who have purchased machinery are finding it extraordinarily difficult to keep it on the show room floor. That is quite a different form of lending from what the department is used to. Will that be the situation? Will agents be taking out bills of sale on machinery?

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: This question has been put and the main criterion will be viability, rather than security. It is accepted, of course, that in the principal Act, as it stands at the present time, as mainly primary producers and farmers are involved, the department has some security. In many cases, of course, security may not be very good, but if those people are in difficult circumstances they may not have much valuable property. There may be cases where the equity is not very high.

The question certainly has been considered. Viability will be the main criterion, rather than security. Certainly, it will be expected that many rural businesses will be conducted in leased premises and, in many cases, proprietors of those businesses will own their own homes and will have the security of a further site. I think that that will apply very much across the board in most cases. There may be some cases where people cannot give any security of real estate. Bills of sale certainly have been considered by the department as primary security, which the department is prepared to accept in appropriate cases.

The answer really is that security is not a problem. The department will want as much proper security as it can get, and it will be looking at viability as being the main criterion in deciding whether or not a loan will be granted, rather than security.

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: I come to a minor point; clause 5 (2b) *(e)* states:

> The proprietor of the business would have, given the advance, as reasonable prospect of being able to continue in the business.

I suggest to the Minister that this is not really a straightforward lift-out from the earlier part of that section that applies to primary producers because, for the primary producer to make that assessment, one could apply fairly reasonable standard forms of management, and so on, and get that assessment reasonably by looking back on a farmer's records and saying that he has had an average wheat crop, the same as the district average or above or below, and therefore in a reasonable year it could be expected that that farm would continue to operate and the cash flow would be such that the loan could be repaid and other farm costs met.

There is a fairly straightforward working model of various efficiency factors that will show that the budget put forward by the farmer is reasonable, but I suggest that, with rural businesses, there are many more intangibles than there are even with farmers. For instance, there is the factor of competition between rural businesses, a factor that does not apply to farmers. If one farmer is doing extremely well in terms of high wheat yield and making a lot of money, he gets that money. However, if there are five machinery agents in a town, all competing for the same market, it is much more difficult to assess how much in future each of those agencies will have and be able to hold. It is more difficult to assess than it is to assess whether a farmer can keep up with the district average for wheat, for instance.

It seems to me that that will be a substantial problem. It is not always related directly to the agent. If the manufacturer brings out a new machine he might do well; on the other hand, he might do badly because a new machine has not been brought out. Sometimes factors beyond his control will affect an agent in business, and that is why I suggest that that is a substantial difficulty. I raised the matter during the second reading debate. It is much more difficult than assessing the future of the cash flow of farmers, given a normal year.

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: When I replied to the second reading debate, I suggested that perhaps there were fewer imponderables in regard to businesses than in regard to farmers. I understand what the honourable member has said. In his own personal experience he has had a great deal to do with primary production, and no doubt he can assess what is going to happen. As a former Minister of Agriculture he has had some experience there. Primary production is something he knows in his own experience, and he finds it fairly easy to assess the difficulties in that area. I suggest that the person with the proper accounting expertise and expertise in relation to small businesses has just as much ability to assess the viability of small businesses as the honourable member has to assess the viability of farming. In some respects there are fewer imponderables. They are not so closely connected with the season, and so on.

Certainly, there is the question of marketing, but there are bases on which that can be assessed. With the expertise in the Department of Trade and Industry, that department will be looking at businesses, assessing each application, and sending back the findings to the Rural Assistance Branch of the Department of Agriculture. I do not believe that it is much more difficult to assess a business and its viability than it is to assess a primary producer. Even if it is, the question really is whether or not we undertake the exercise or whether we say that it is too difficult and so we will not do it. I think the honourable member has agreed already that it is important to undertake the exercise. The answer really is that there will be available, through the Department of Trade and Industry, the best possible advice, and I suggest that it will be adequate. It will not be any more difficult than the problems have been which the department has successfully faced in the past in determining the viability or otherwise of the primary producer.

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: With these schemes, it is essential that the money is paid out quickly, because the need is there now, and not some years into the future. In those circumstances, it is almost inevitable that some mistakes will be made. I am not critical of the administration for that, because it is necessary to respond to a need and to act quickly. However, it is important to have safeguards, and I would like to know whether the Minister will have a situation where these loans can be recalled if he is satisfied that the application was false in some respect or where in some other way he has evidence to show that a person has not fulfilled the criteria and that the assessment of the application was done on a false premise. It seems to me important in those circumstances for the Minister to be able to recall the loan. I understand that that procedure has been available in the past.

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: The need for speed is recognised. The honourable member has referred to the difficulty in assessment, but there will be speed and the department will process the applications as soon as possible, subject to

the relevant data being made available. Applications will be promptly dealt with and appropriate findings will be made. This gives rise to the need for an ability to recall loans, and that is encompassed in the principal Act. The honourable member has an assurance that additional safeguards will be there and that, in appropriate cases, they will be exercised.

Clause passed.

Title passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.

BUDGET PAPERS

Adjourned debate on motion of Hon. K. T. Griffin:

That the Council take note of the papers relating to the Estimates of Payments and Receipts, 1982-83.

(Continued from 15 September. Page 1072.)

The Hon. M. B. CAMERON: I wish to support the Bill and, in doing so, I want to raise some questions relating to the problem that South Australia is now facing with gas supplies and, in particular, the price of gas. I have watched with some interest the attempt by the Leader of the Opposition to impugn certain wrong doings in relation to the transfer of Liberal Club Limited's building, and I have noted that somehow or other, by some twisted thinking, the Leader has somehow concluded that the Attorney-General was responsible for the non-payment of stamp duty by a tax evasion or tax avoidance scheme.

The Hon. Mr Sumner is a lawyer and, although he has not practised much, he has some knowledge of the law. Certainly, I know that he does not believe what he is saying, and perhaps one should put this matter in perspective once and for all. First, it was the purchaser of the building who presented those transfers, and the Hon. Mr Griffin had nothing to do with that—with the transfer documents. The position was that the President of Liberal Club Limited had to sign them. The resulting loss of revenue which the Hon. Mr Sumner talked about was $7 000.

The Council should look at what happened as a result of a Labor Government's decision in the 1970s in relation to gas which has caused an enormous problem this week for South Australia and every person in this State. Every person in South Australia, because of the increase in gas prices that occurred this week, will now pay an additional $30 a year for their power and gas bills, and in most cases households are combined. So there will not be a $30 payment just on this jump in price alone but probably $60 per household in the one rise resulting from the 80 per cent increase in the price of gas.

The situation is that the Electricity Trust, from 1 January, will pay an additional $30 000 000. The figures that I am giving will not be exact but will be close enough for the purposes of this debate. The South Australian Gas Company will pay $11 500 000 in addition and Adelaide Cement Company will pay an additional $3 000 000. That is an enormous increase and burden on the people of this State which can be directly attributed to the actions of a previous Labor Government. I am talking about almost $50 000 000, yet the Hon. Mr Sumner has talked about a normal transaction that cost the State, according to him, $7 000.

How the Leader can even raise that subject when he knows what the actions of his Party have done to the people of this State is beyond me. I refer to the contract drawn up and I make a comparison with the contract applying to New South Wales. I will outline the details. South Australia's entitlement to natural gas expires at the end of 1987. The entitlement of New South Wales to natural gas expires in the year 2006. South Australia's price is subject to annual review and, if no agreement is reached, arbitration. The price for New South Wales is subject to a three-year review and, if no agreement is reached, arbitration.

Arbitration under the South Australian contract is by a single arbitrator, yet in New South Wales the contract provides for two arbitrators, one to be appointed by each party to the agreement. South Australia's price is backdated to 1 January of the relevant year, yet the New South Wales price comes into force three years from the date of the previous price increase which New South Wales agreed to or had arbitrated, which ever is the later. The future requirements agreement does not oblige the producers to find gas for South Australia after 1987 but, if the producers do find gas, this State is obliged to obtain gas from the producers at a price to be determined even if cheaper supplies are available from elsewhere, such as the Northern Territory.

What an incredible situation we have applying in South Australia and not in New South Wales. I sometimes wonder whether that agreement was drawn up to assist New South Wales in particular because, when one reads that detail, it is clear that New South Wales has an enormous advantage over South Australia. At present there is a significant short fall of gas available to supply just the New South Wales contract. We have a situation where gas producers (Santos and others) say that this money will be useful because it will be used for exploration. At last, the producers will be able to get on with the job of exploration! People in this State have been paying an amount to the producers to cover exploration costs. What is this money being used for? It is being used to explore for gas to meet requirements for New South Wales.

All the money that is now to be paid out, back dated to 1 January in this State, will be used to explore for gas for New South Wales. As yet, we have not got sufficient gas for New South Wales, let alone ourselves. Of course, South Australia has to supply New South Wales until the year 2006. That is a disgraceful position in which the previous Government has left the people of South Australia: not only the ordinary people but business and industry in South Australia as well. I refer to the example of the cement company, of which the Hon. Mr Laidlaw has some knowledge. In 1969 it entered into a 30-year contract to take gas at 30c per million British thermal units. That figure has escalated slightly because of the new measurement used.

In 1975 the company was requested by the Labor Government to renegotiate because the Cooper Basin consortium claimed that it was not able to continue and was not getting sufficient money: it was in a desperate financial situation. The company entered into this contract at the request of the then Labor Government, but the then Government pooled all the gas that was then available. The gas that the cement company had already put aside was pooled, and the end result was that, because of the important contract that was drawn up by the then State Labor Government, we now have this incredible situation where we will be not only short of gas in South Australia but also we do not know what the price will be.

True, we know what it is going to be this year: it will be 80 per cent higher; but we do not know what it will be next year or even who the arbitrator will be. It could be another retired judge from Queensland, but I do not want to reflect on him, because the matter is subject to appeal. It may be another retired judge as arbitrator from Victoria, where the price is 55c and not $1.33 as in this State.

I understand that the Geelong Cement Company has arrived at a negotiated deal with Victorian gas producers for $1.10 per unit but with a 10-year guarantee of price escalation based on c.p.i. increases. Surely that would have been a sensible thing for South Australia. Why were the people of South Australia left exposed to this incredible arbitration system by the previous Government in its mad

rush to sell gas to New South Wales in order to provide liquids for the myth of Redcliff? The former Government left us in an incredible position: it left the ordinary people and the present Government in this situation.

We have a position where electricity prices will increase dramatically unless we can reverse the situation. What an incredible situation for South Australia to be put in because of the pie-in-the-sky Redcliff project. I doubt that it was ever at a developed stage as claimed repeatedly by the Hon. Mr Dunstan. I have read with some interest of the adulation poured on him as he departs from South Australia to another job in Victoria. But I must say that I do not feel that same adulation, based on this contract alone. As far as I am concerned we are well rid of him because of what he has done to the people of this State in this instance, as well as in many other instances.

Let us read some of the things that were said during the 1970s in relation to gas supplies. Mr Dunstan, on 24 November 1970 said the following:

Experts are confident that there is enough gas in the Cooper Basin to satisfy the South Australian and Sydney demand well beyond the year 2000.

The Hon. R. J. Ritson: Who said that?

The Hon. M. B. CAMERON: Mr Dunstan, in 1970. He had that ability to see into the future. In 1973 Mr Hopgood said the following:

We are reasonably confident that there is at least as much undiscovered gas in the field as the quantity that has already been proved. In addition, there are the as yet unexplored basins of Pedirka and Officer, north and west of the Cooper Basin.

They are having a little bit of trouble with those. It was only after the Cooper Basin indenture had been passed in 1975 that the Dunstan Government started again expressing reservations about gas supplies in the Cooper Basin. Mr Hudson said the following on 2 November 1976:

I do not believe that one can make a firm judgment now about the security of future gas supplies for the Adelaide market. Although it is expected that there will be additional gas in the Cooper Basin, we do not know that for certain at this stage.

By that time it was too late—we had committed our gas supplies to New South Wales until the year 2008. Had there been any doubts, surely they should have been taken into account when those contracts were being established with New South Wales so that this State was not left exposed to this situation of increases that we have now. Mr Dunstan said the following on 22 August 1972:

The situation of reserves of gas is continuing to improve. Considerable gas reserves have now been established and, on the estimation we have, they more than meet the requirements of the initial market. Indeed, there are indications that far more gas reserves can be proved in the area when the demand arises.

He said further in 1973:

We are satisfied that there will be proven in the field sufficient gas to cover our requirements in South Australia for a considerable period beyond the period of the present contract.

Mr Hopgood said the following in 1973:

... there are vast quantities of natural gas in the Cooper Basin. It is simply a matter of getting up there, doing the job, and putting the wells down.

What an incredible situation. He had the idea that one went up to the Cooper Basin, put holes down, gas flowed out and there were no problems. Mr Hopgood said the following in 1973:

The discovery record of the Cooper Basin producers suggests that this additional gas will be found in the near future. To date their success ratio in exploration activities has been 34 per cent, that is, 56 exploration wells have resulted in the discovery of 19 fields, of which many have multiple reservoirs. Experts are confident that there is enough gas in the Cooper Basin to satisfy the South Australian and Sydney demand well beyond the year 2000.

That is totally different from what Mr Hudson said in 1976 after he had committed us to those contracts. Mr Dunstan went to much trouble to claim the credit for the contract to sell gas to Sydney. It has been said by members of the Opposition that former Premier Steele Hall somehow did this deal with Sydney, but Mr Dunstan made a point of making certain that he got the credit for that deal when he told the Parliament on 31 March 1971 that although some negotiations had taken place while the Hall Government was in office:

The negotiations were suspended simply because at that time there were no reserves which could be proven and which could form a basis of supply to New South Wales.

I do not know when he proved these reserves because they still have not been proven and we still do not have sufficient gas. However, he went ahead and established a contract with New South Wales on unproven reserves of unproven gas supplies. All that was done was to get rid of sufficient dry gas to get the liquids for the proposed petro-chemical works at Redcliff. What an incredibly naive and stupid decision to make—to commit this State's energy supplies to a project that was not proven to be viable and to not put in any proviso that Redcliff had to go ahead before we had to supply all that gas to New South Wales. In fact, this Government is further down the line towards establishing a petro-chemical works in this State than Redcliff ever was. I am quite certain that, if we were faced with the same situation as that faced by the Dunstan Government at that time, we would have inevitably included a proviso to ensure that this State's gas supplies were not put at risk, as they have been because of the previous Government.

Mr Dunstan, in fact, tried on 6 October 1972, at a meeting with the Cooper Basin producers, to commit the gas already committed to ETSA to New South Wales in order to supply Sydney with gas. If anybody is interested in reading it, I have a summary of the minutes of that meeting which show that it was a producer representative, Mr Blair of Delhi-Santos, who had to point out to Mr Dunstan the disadvantages that that move would have for South Australia and that if we committed the gas we already had to Sydney and did not find any more we would have absolutely nothing. That was, therefore, his attitude towards South Australia at that time.

We now have the situation in South Australia of an 80 per cent price rise in the price of gas. That increase will force up electricity costs unless this Government can do something about it. Those prices will be forced up to a degree that I believe is unacceptable to all the people of this State and not just to industry. This increase has put our industry in a difficult situation, not only this year but for the future because industry has no idea what an arbitrator is going to do about future price increases for gas. There is no set course that can be followed, so industry cannot plan its future cash requirements or future costs because it might find, as it has this year, that it is faced with an escalation in price again next year of 50 per cent or 80 per cent because of an arbitrator's decision. Also, any such decision is back dated six months.

How on earth can one run an industry on that basis? Industry has been left in this position because of the absolute stupidity of the previous Government in entering into this particular contract—it is a disaster. This shows that not only was the Labor Party unfit to govern then but that it is unfit to govern now, because it has shown exactly the same attitude towards the Roxby Downs project. The Opposition has attempted to do the same thing to one of the biggest mines that this country, and probably the world, has ever seen. It has shown through its attitude towards that project that it has no knowledge of big business or of industry and is not fit to govern. I trust that the ordinary householder in this State will realise when the next electricity or gas bill arrives, if we have been unable to alter the present situation, who is responsible for the increases in those charges.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Mr Tonkin.

The Hon. M. B. CAMERON: It was the previous Government's assinine attitude towards that contract that will have caused those increases. It will have been the previous Government's assinine attitude towards this contract that will have caused the problems that will arise in industry in this State. I trust that this particular matter will get the same attention from the press as the previous stupid little problem raised by the Leader of the Opposition did. I support the Bill.

The Hon. R. J. RITSON secured the adjournment of the debate.

SURVIVAL OF CAUSES OF ACTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Returned from the House of Assembly without amendment.

ROYAL COMMISSIONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Returned from the House of Assembly without amendment.

PRISONERS (INTERSTATE TRANSFER) BILL

Returned from the House of Assembly without amendment.

PUBLIC FINANCE ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 15 September. Page 1064.)

The Hon. ANNE LEVY: The Opposition supports this measure, which deals with new credit guarantee arrangements in the area of public finance. As detailed in the second reading explanation, currently the Treasurer approves all borrowings by statutory authorities but does not have to approve any other financial arrangements that those statutory authorities enter into, such as leverage leasing. Leverage leasing, of course, may have very large effects on the finances of the State.

While these have not needed Treasury approval, I have no doubt that the Treasurer has been aware of such arrangements and has, in fact, approved its use. But, it seems to the Opposition entirely reasonable that there should be a statutory provision for the Treasurer to approve any financial arrangements into which statutory authorities may enter. This is obviously desirable for overall financial planning and co-ordination in the State.

A second point raised in this legislation, which again seems to the Opposition to be entirely reasonable, is that the Treasurer should be able to give guarantees for other financial arrangements of statutory authorities in the same way that he is now empowered to give guarantees on the normal borrowings of statutory authorities.

The second reading explanation gave examples of financial arrangements being undertaken by bodies such as the Housing Trust, and it would certainly seem eminently reasonable to ask that the Treasurer should both approve such arrangements and have the power to give guarantees in relation to them. This legislation is necessary because it arises from decisions of the last Loan Council meeting, whereby financial arrangements, such as leverage leasing, were to be prohibited for statutory authorities. That is the situation today.

Such a decision by the Loan Council was, of course, of great concern to statutory authorities such as the Electricity Trust of South Australia and the State Transport Authority, as both those authorities had leverage leasing arrangements in the pipeline, almost ready to be signed. I understand that some fast work on the part of the Minister of Transport resulted in the leverage leasing arrangement, which was almost finalised by the State Transport Authority, being able to be concluded before the ban on such arrangements was applied.

But, this was not the situation with the Electricity Trust of South Australia. It might be of interest to remind the Council that, at the time of this decision by the Loan Council, the Premier clearly stated that this would not affect South Australia. On 21 December 1981 the Premier said:

> A Federal Government clampdown on Government borrowing outside the Loan Council would not hit South Australia. South Australia was well adapted to State Government borrowing being subject to Loan Council approval.

It may be that the Premier was unaware of the leverage leasing arrangements which the Electricity Trust of South Australia and the State Transport Authority were in the process of negotiating. But, after the Leader of the Opposition in another place clearly indicated the grave effects that such a prohibition on leverage leasing could have in South Australia, the Treasurer at last had to admit that there could be serious effects on South Australia. On 13 January this year the Premier did back-track and admit that the Loan Council decision could have very serious effects on South Australia. The Premier indicated that he wanted to contact the Prime Minister about it.

In fact, there is a public document which clearly indicates that the Electricity Trust of South Australia leased, in the 1980-81 financial year, equipment to the value of $9 300 000, and that in 1981-82 it was expected to arrange further amounts of about $7 400 000, under a leverage leasing scheme. The State Transport Authority, in 1980-81, had arrangements to the value of $15 200 000, and for 1981-82 expected to have further leverage leasing arrangements for $8 500 000. These are certainly not negligible amounts, and why the Premier said that such a decision by the Loan Council would not affect South Australia is certainly beyond comprehension.

However, it is certainly expected that now leverage leasing arrangements will reduce considerably and become far less important, but there are still other financial arrangements that statutory authorities may wish to undertake, and they should be able to do so.

While considering the leverage leasing arrangement of the Electricity Trust of South Australia, the Treasurer was asked to give information as to just how much the Electricity Trust of South Australia had spent in almost finalising the leverage leasing that it was organising for the new Northern Power Station. The Treasurer did not give that information in the other House. Perhaps the Leader in this Chamber could do so, as he may, in the intervening time, have been able to determine just what this change in Loan Council policy has cost the Electricity Trust of South Australia.

A third aspect of the Bill before us gives the Treasury the ability to charge fees to statutory authorities in respect of any guarantees that it gives for their borrowings or other financial arrangements. It is certainly true that such fees are common in the commercial world, and the second reading explanation justifies their application to statutory authorities by quoting from the Campbell Committee Report. The Labor Party view has been that the Campbell Committee report is a very mixed bag or, to mix metaphors, it can be

described as a 'curate's egg', with some good, but many bad aspects to it.

It is based on a free market monetarist approach, which we regard as being totally inappropriate in a mixed economy. In many ways one could say that it is irrelevant whether or not such charges on guarantees are applied. Statutory authorities occur in the public sector, so charging fees for guarantees is a bookkeeping exercise within that sector. However, we are not opposed to such a provision, because in certain cases it could certainly be useful in making clear what subsidies are being provided by the taxpayer for a particular public enterprise.

What is not clear is just which statutory authorities or in which situations the Treasurer intends to charge for the guarantees that are given. The Bill does not make such fees or imposts mandatory but merely provides that they may be charged. The Minister's second reading explanation does not make clear in which situations such fees are to be charged. In his reply I hope that the Minister will provide some information about the statutory authorities that may be charged fees for guarantees given by the Treasurer. The Opposition welcomes the two major provisions contained in the Bill and queries only the application of the third major provision. I support the second reading.

The Hon. L. H. DAVIS secured the adjournment of the debate.

PASTORAL ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second reading.

The Hon. K. L. MILNE: I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

To the people of South Australia as a whole, it is something of a mystery why about 280 individuals, partnerships, or limited companies are lessees of about two-thirds of the State. In fact many in the country, and most in the city, think that the lessees are owners. As members of the general public see it, about .03 per cent of the population controls over 66 per cent of the area of the State. Most of the lessees, on the other hand, believe that they have an unanswerable case for perpetual leases and simply cannot understand why there should be any doubt about, or opposition to, it. Most city people, other than the lessees, cannot possibly comprehend what life is like on the northern pastoral lands. They cannot experience, and therefore cannot visualise or understand, the problems created by distance, isolation, fluctuating markets, kangaroos, emus and feral animals, thoughtless tourists and campers, four-wheel drive clubs, deliberate vandalism, and more.

The lessees seem unable to accept that these northern lands are not 'out-back' any more, are accessible to more and more people, and really belong to the State; that the lands have not been administered as well as they could have been; that much of the land may not be suitable for continued pasturing; and that administration of it should be under tighter and more representative control.

So, never the twain shall meet, unless a compromise can be found and agreed to. It sounds presumptuous, but I believe that I can understand the attitudes of both sides. Members of my family have been connected with those lands for as long as I can remember. I have been up the Kingoonya-Mount Willoughby track to Alice Springs. I have stayed on outlying stations many times, in dust storms and floods. I can also see the changed attitudes of the population to those lands. Consequently, I have tried to work out an answer to the dilemma which will remove the whole problem as far as possible from politicians and pressure groups, giving time and authority to a new body, called the Northern Lands Commission, to solve the problems properly. I will discuss the Bill in detail, and also one way in which a new commission could be structured. It could involve two pastoralists or lessees, three specialists, three public servants (of the relevant departments), or something of that sort. It could comprise three pastoralists in a commission of nine. One might say that the Department of Agriculture should be represented, and so it should be, I suppose. Perhaps the commission could be reduced to three—one pastoralists, one specialist and one public servant representing all Government departments. The New South Wales Western Lands Commission has only one commissioner, but I believe that that defeats the object of sharing the responsibility.

Actually, from my discussions with representatives of the pastoralists, the conservationists, the tourists, the Aboriginal people and others, I know that they are not very far apart. All it needs is a little patience from an independent statutory body such as I am suggesting, unfettered by being part of the Public Service or the Party-political system. This body would be interposed between the staff who have to do the inspecting and make some unpleasant recommendations and successive Ministers who, in the past, have apparently not always faced the required decisions.

It is no good trying to make a Party-political issue out of this, because both the Labor Party when in office, and the Liberal Party before that, had many opportunities to strengthen the administration of these lands and the leases, but neither did so until, in the previous session of Parliament, the Government introduced an amending Bill, in rather a hurry and with very little consultation with all the various interested parties concerned. That Bill was debated and rejected, so I will not go over it all again. However, I take my share of responsibility for its defeat in that form.

What should be recorded, however, is the manner in which the Bill was handled. During my negotiations with the Hon. Martin Cameron, I was encouraged to introduce amendments to the Government Bill creating a Northern Lands Commission. In fact, the Hon. Mr Cameron had them prepared for me; that is to say, the Government agreed in principle with the idea of taking the control from the Lands Department and placing it in the hands of a statutory authority.

The trade-off, or condition of agreeing to it, was that the lessees would get perpetual leases—meaning on-going or continuous covenant, review leases. In other words, the Government rather liked the idea of a statutory authority but would agree to it only in return for something else. And now it has told me that it does not agree with it and will oppose it. I would like to hear what other solution the Government thinks it has found.

It is quite certain that the action announced by the Minister on Tuesday is quite misguided and of little help. The whole State is astonished at the action that the Government has taken regarding the Pastoral Board. As I and as most people see it, it has abruptly discontinued the services of one member of the board, explaining that his appointment was only temporary anyway; it has demoted the Chairman, but left him a member of the board while the investigation takes place on what he alleged was wrong with the administration; and it has appointed the Director of Lands to the Pastoral Board as Chairman to conduct an investigation into allegations of mismanagement by his own department. Surely, this is a very bad case of 'Caesar unto Caesar'. The Minister himself has said:

> In his capacity as Chairman, Mr Taeuber will be in a better position to report to the Government in due course on measures that may be necessary.

Mr Ken Taeuber is probably one of the most able and reliable public servants in South Australia, but to put him in a position like this is not only unwise but also unfair.

After all, the accusations of mismanagement or lack of management have occurred in his department. How on earth can Mr Taeuber look dispassionately on the matters that he is probably about to uncover? The Minister went on to state:

I want to stress that the purpose of this investigation is solely to clear the air over the whole matter of the allegations that have been made against the administration of the Pastoral Board, and the pastoral industry in general.

This is precisely what successive Governments have done over the past 100 years, namely, avoid the real issue that the Pastoral Board is and has for a long time been inadequate for the task that it is supposed to fulfill. No Government has tackled this problem at its source and at the right level, and this Government is not doing it now. The demotion of Mr Vickery, who has had the courage to speak out in this vexed and complicated area, is not a gentlemanly way of handling the situation. In fact, it will place him in an invidious position, as he will probably no longer have access to all the information that he will need to justify what he and others have said. It is the kind of farce to which we are becoming accustomed when a Government (any Government) will not face the real issue and clear it up in a proper manner: the Government should face it and get rid of it.

The real responsibility for the performance of the Pastoral Board lies fairly and squarely with the Director of Lands and the Minister of Lands who are in control of department and no-one else, yet both are performing as if the blame was somewhere else, and they are not prepared to share it.

When the report and necessary changes have been made, and perhaps punishment meted out, the problem will remain that the Pastoral Board is inappropriate for administering the northern pastoral lands, which comprise two-thirds of the State in area, and in the conditions which have changed over the years, particularly over the past 10 years or so.

Pastoralists say that what they have done was approved by the Pastoral Board. Of course, it would be approved. The Pastoral Board can now carry out an inquiry by itself and have a great old time. Really, it is not a proper situation.

In the Bill, I am also proposing that the terms and conditions of leases be made far better from the lessees point of view. I will explain those improvements when discussing the clauses concerned. In negotiations regarding the Government's original Bill, which was defeated, a misunderstanding arose between the United Farmers and Stockowners of South Australia Incorporated, and myself. As all members know, the Democrats and the United Farmers and Stockowners of South Australia Incorporated have been holding discussions, as that body has been holding discussions with the Government and the Opposition. When the Government Bill was defeated, the United Farmers and Stockowners Association of South Australia Incorporated very wisely went to the Minister to ask whether he would introduce it again. I freely admit that some of it had great merit.

Apparently, the Minister refused, but said that he had no objection to my or any other Parliamentarian introducing a private member's Bill. So, representatives from the United Farmers and Stockowners of South Australia Incorporated came to see me and, subsequently, wrote asking me to introduce a Bill that was suitable to them, of course, which was natural enough.

For some reason, when I was addressing a recent conference of the United Farmers and Stockowners of South Australia Incorporated, at its invitation—and unwisely as it turned out, but that is now history—and I referred to its letter, the chairman of the meeting denied that I had received such a letter. Unfortunately, I did not have the letter with me, and I do not think that the meeting believed that there was such a letter. So, I will read the letter and the reply now; both help to explain one reason why I am introducing the Bill now. The letter from the United Farmers and Stockowners of South Australia Incorporated, dated 14 July 1982, states:

Dear Lance,

Re: Private Member's Bill—Pastoral Act Amendments

At the suggestion of Mr Chip Sawers, I am writing to you subsequent to a conversation with the Minister of Lands, the Hon. Peter Arnold, this afternoon.

Quite frankly, the purpose of our talk with Peter was to obtain the up-to-date attitude of the Government towards the Pastoral Act Amendment Bill.

The Minister is of the opinion that the Government would simply be wasting its time if they were to continue or entertain re-presentation of the amendments unless there was a change in attitude on either your behalf or that of the Labor Party.

In pressing the Hon. Mr Arnold further on this point, he indicated that he would not object to you, or any other Parliamentarian for that matter, introducing a private member's Bill which had the support of the United Farmers and Stockowners and was not too far removed from the original intentions of the Government Bill, which passed the Assembly but was subsequently defeated in the Upper House.

Both the President of United Farmers and Stockowners, Mr Ralph James, and Mr Chip Sawers, after their meeting with you last Monday, indicated that you were still willing to see the subject re-introduced, and in view of categorical assurances you gave to both men, would you take the initiative to introduce a private member's Bill, as aforementioned?

As Mr Arnold has suggested, there would virtually be no Government opposition, if indeed the United Farmers and Stockowners was satisfied major issues were covered. This being the case, and as something would need to be done within the next two or three weeks, could we now meet again with you to enable progress to be made in drafting a private member's Bill as soon as possible? Please give me a ring when convenient, for it does seem time is of the essence at this stage. Thanking you for your anticipated consideration along these lines. Kind regards. Yours sincerely, G. E. Andrews, General Secretary.

I was away when that letter came, but subsequently, on 27 July 1982, I replied to Mr G. E. Andrews, General Secretary of the United Farmers and Stockowners of South Australia Incorporated, as follows:

Re: Private Member's Bill—Pastoral Act Amendments.

I am now in the position to reply to your letter of 14 July 1982 asking me to introduce a private member's Bill for amendments to the Pastoral Act. In the last paragraph on page 1 of your letter, you mention 'categorical assurances', but I can only recall one assurance, and that was that if the Government would not re-introduce a Bill that I would do so.

Neither your President, Mr Ralph James, nor I were in a position to commit the United Farmers and Stockowners, in his case, or the Australian Democrats, in my case, on the other matters which were discussed. However, the discussion was fruitful and helpful, to my mind, and I am very glad that I had the opportunity of a further discussion with Mr James before your conference.

As you now know, I had anticipated this situation, or something like it, and was already working on a Bill, which, as you know, has been drafted; copies have been given today to you, Mr Ralph James, the Attorney-General, and Parliamentary Counsel for official drafting. I told Mr Trevor Griffin that it is not secret, and he is going to have the draft Bill copied and circulated to his colleagues, particularly Mr Peter Arnold, the Minister most concerned; this has my full approval and I trust will have the approval of the United Farmers and Stockowners. As we discussed on the telephone, there are two main matters, and only two, with which the amending Bill is concerned at present. Firstly, the appointment of a Northern Lands Commission, in place of the Pastoral Board and substantial improvements to the tenure for lessees, which in our view should overcome all, or nearly all, of the lessees' fears. The intention of this is to keep the Bill simple (though the number of amendments look alarming), and that other matters such as access, control of wildlife and feral animals, land acquisition, and more, can be referred to the commission where it will be relatively isolated from party politics. I believe this to be essential, and therefore do not wish to support the suggestion of a select committee if I can possibly avoid it. That would simply be yet another inquiry on another inquiry, without an organisation such as the Northern Lands Commission taking control immediately.

I have already been notified that there will be one or two minor alterations to the Bill, but when it has been drafted by Parliamentary Counsel, I shall make it available at once to you and the Government for discussion. Please realise that the next draft

which you receive will be slightly different from the one which you now have, but the principles will remain, and it is not in any sense an ultimatum; that is not how good legislation is made. It contains our views, particularly my own views, but in view of the circumstances I believe that neither side can afford to be adamant in a matter as important, and controversial, as this. Yours sincerely . . .

The problem now is that I am introducing a private member's Bill which I am reasonably certain does not have the approval of the United Farmers and Stockowners. I want to be honest about it: I do not know, because I have not spoken to anyone from the United Farmers and Stockowners since the exchange of letters. Trying to discuss the matter with those involved has proved to be very difficult, and in the end, impossible, I am afraid. They say that the perpetual lease question is one that is simply not negotiable with the United Farmers and Stockowners and the lessees concerned—so, that is that.

They also want the question of public access dealt with as a matter of urgency. So do we. So do you, Sir, and so does everyone. The Australian Democrats believe (and I think the Opposition believes) that a better answer will be arrived at if this matter is dealt with by an independent body such as the Northern Lands Commission. Perhaps I should not commit the Opposition to that; I am sorry. In fact, I am hoping that the Council will see the value of a permanent Northern Lands Commission, because such an authority could make an immediate detailed inquiry into the whole question of dry land pasturing, including public access, trespassing, wildlife control, feral animal control, leasing conditions, tenure and rents. That is why I am introducing this Bill.

Although it may be unusual not to now ask that the explanation of the clauses be inserted in *Hansard* without my reading it, I wish to explain some of them in detail, because they are a new concept and I want to avoid further misunderstanding if I can. Clause 1 is formal. Clause 2 provides for the commencement of the Act. Clause 3 amends the arrangement of the Act. Clause 4 provides a transitional provision that preserves the validity of existing leases granted under provisions to be repealed. Clause 5 amends the definition section as there are some new definitions. Clause 6 establishes an independent statutory commission to be known as the Northern Lands Commission. This commission is intended to replace the Pastoral Board and to exercise the powers of the board and most of those of the Minister under the existing Act. The constitution of the commission is such as to ensure representation of the relevant interests together with the availability of expert pastoralist, scientific, legal and administrative expertise. Clause 7 sets out the general functions of the commission and the matters to which it should have regard in exercising those functions.

Clause 8 is a standard clause included in all statutory authorities legislation. In fact, the Minister is accountable in the end. Incidentally, I think it is worth considering whether the Minister in this case should be the Minister of Agriculture, and not the Minister of Lands. Clause 38 deals with the renewal of leases. Clause 39 strikes out a redundant provision and inserts a provision dealing with surrender of existing leases and the granting of new leases, which is a different matter. What I am proposing is that, if a lessee is required to spend money, say, for improvements, for restocking, or something of that nature, he may apply at any time during his 50-year lease for a renewal of that lease to bring it up to 50 years again. I cannot see anybody borrowing money, or a bank lending money and requiring the term of a lease to be any more than 50 years.

The Hon. Anne Levy: You can't get that on a house.

The Hon. K. L. MILNE: No.

The Hon. J. A. CARNIE secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADJOURNMENT

At 5.38 p.m. the Council adjourned until Tuesday 5 October at 2.15 p.m.