LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, September 5, 1944.

The PRESIDENT (**the Hon. C. H. A. Eager**) took the chair at 4.54 p.m., and read the prayer.

RAILWAY DEPARTMENT.

SUPERNUMERARY OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES.

The Hon. W. H. EDGAR (*East Yarra Province*) asked the Minister of Transport—

(*a*) How many supernumerary officers and employees are on the staff of the Victorian Railways?

(*b*) What is the average total length of service of these officers and employees?

(*c*) What is the longest total period at present for which a supernumerary has been employed continuously or discontinuously?

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY (Minister of Transport).—The answers are as follow:—

(*a*) Approximately 10,500.

(*b*) To ascertain the average length of service of approximately 10,500 employees would involve a huge amount of work, and in view of the man-power situation, this is not practicable at the present juncture.

(*c*) There are some supernumeraries with over 20 years' service, but to ascertain the longest total period of service would involve searching approximately 10,500 cards and this would also necessarily involve considerable work. It is unlikely that the longest service supernumeraries would be appointed to the permanent staff under proposed new legislation, as they either were ineligible for permanent appointment or were refused appointment in 1939, when the last appointments were being made.

CREMORNE BRIDGE BILL.

This Bill was received from the Assembly and, on the motion of the Hon. J. A. KENNEDY (Minister of Transport), was read a first time.

MELBOURNE HARBOR TRUST BILL.

This Bill was received from the Assembly and, on the motion of the Hon. G. J. TUCKETT (Honorary Minister), was read a first time.

OUTER CIRCLE RAILWAY (PARTIAL DISMANTLING) BILL.

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY (Minister of Transport).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this measure is to provide for the dismantling of a certain section of the Outer Circle railway, and for other purposes. I have here a map showing the position of the line, which originally commenced at Fairfield Park, on the Heidelberg line, and, after traversing various districts for a distance of approximately 10¼ miles, terminated at Hughesdale. It was one of the large number of railways authorized for construction by the famous "Octopus" Act—the Railway Construction Act 1884 (No. 821). This line, however, has not had a happy history. It was opened for traffic during 1890 and 1891, but owing to the financial stringency which soon after developed, and to the very poor results obtained, various sections were closed in 1893 and 1895, leaving in operation only the sections from Ashburton to Riversdale and the connection to Camberwell. In 1900 the section from Riversdale to Deepdene was reopened and trains were operated between Deepdene and Ashburton, connecting with the main suburban line at East Camberwell. Since then various changes have been made and at present an electric service is operating between Ashburton and Riversdale and thence to Camberwell. In recent years there has been a gratifying increase in traffic on this route because the areas it serves have become densely populated.

In 1938, Parliament, by Act No. 4558, authorized the dismantling of the sections from Fairfield Park to East Kew and from Ashburton to Oakleigh. At the northern end of this line an interesting result has been achieved. The portion from East Kew to Willsmere-street has been dismantled and much of the land sold. The section from Willsmere-street to the Outer Circle bridge and beyond to Fairfield Park is now a main public road. The section of the line north of the Yarra still remains. As honorable members are aware, Australian Paper Manufacturers Limited have a mill at Fairfield; at their premises a siding has been erected, and the length of the line remaining is used to convey goods to and from that

centre. That firm has purchased certain land and leased an additional area for the purpose of its mill. At the southern end of the line the section from Ashburton to East Malvern has been dismantled, but the land has been retained. The Railways Commissioners feel that there are great possibilities in that area, which is developing rapidly. The land on which the line was constructed from East Malvern to Hughesdale has been sold, or is under offer for sale.

The portion of the line proposed to be dismantled, and to which this Bill relates, is between Riversdale and East Kew, a distance of 2 miles 29 chains. It was being used for a goods service when the previous Act was passed, and was retained. There have been no passengers carried on that section since 1927 and the railway omnibus service which was instituted is meeting public requirements much more satisfactorily than the former passenger train service. Other omnibus services operate along Burke-road, and in surrounding areas there is a full system of public transport. The goods traffic, which consisted mainly of firewood and agricultural produce, diminished in recent years to almost negligible proportions. Since September, 1943, it has ceased, because of the coal shortage.

From the point of view of the Department the section is not worth retaining, especially as any business offering could be conducted, with little inconvenience, at Kew or Camberwell, which stations are both within about 2 miles of the East Kew siding. In view of this, and the fact that the Kew City Council concurs in the proposed dismantling, and the urgent demand for second-hand rails which exists at the moment, this measure is now introduced. The Department of the Army intimated in June last—following suggestions that the line might serve some national purpose—that it had no objection to the abandonment of the section.

Turning now to the terms of the Bill, the preamble recites the authority for the construction of the line, and refers to the authorization and validation of the dismantling of certain sections, which has already been carried out. Clause 1 is the citation. Clause 2 embodies the authority to dismantle and dispose of the materials and lands. It provides for the net proceeds from the sale of any materials or property to be paid into the Railway Renewals and Replacements Fund in accordance with section 7 of the Railways (Finances Adjustment) Acts; and, in accordance with section 9 of the same Act, for the net proceeds from the sale of any lands to be paid into the State Loans Repayment Fund. Under subclause (4) of this clause, the land, as regards leasing, will fall into the same category as other railway lands.

Clause 3 provides that any liability by the Railways Commissioners in respect of the maintenance of any bridge carrying any road over this section of the Outer Circle line shall cease. A number of substantial bridges have been constructed over the portion of the line proposed to be dismantled. They carry some of the main streets in the Camberwell city area, such as Canterbury-road and Mont Albert-road. The question of maintaining the bridges was raised by the Camberwell City Council, and the Railways Commissioners pointed out that when the land was sold the rates derived from it would outweigh any costs incurred in maintaining the bridges. The Commissioners also stated, however, that they would be prepared to pay to the Camberwell City Council a sum equal to the average cost of maintenance over ten years. When the cost was ascertained, it was found that since their construction the maintenance of the bridges involved a sum of approximately £432—an average of £8 10s. a year. The Commissioners then suggested that the contribution they should make to the council should be about £100, but the council considered this was negligible and stated it was quite happy to be responsible for the maintenance of the bridges.

Sir GEORGE GOUDIE.—Are the bridges leased to the council by the Railways Commissioners?

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY.—The Railways Commissioners have been maintaining the bridges ever since the line was constructed, but the Camberwell City Council was rather fearful that, because the Commissioners were being freed from the responsibility of that maintenance, it might be involved in some heavy expense. Having examined the matter with the Railways Commissioners, the council is happy about the position.

The Hon. A. E. McDONALD.—Do the councils become responsible for maintaining the bridges?

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY.—Yes. Four bridges go over the railway line. Under clause 4, the provisions of the Fences Act 1928 will apply, and the Railway Department will be exempted from liability to fence land so long as it is not sold or demised. I have inspected the districts affected by this measure. In certain areas, the back yards of private homes abut on the railway territory, and the owners are responsible for the necessary fences. Other portions of the railway land abut on roads, and it would be dangerous if no fences stood there. The Department will maintain fences in those parts.

Sir GEORGE GOUDIE.—You say that applies to part of the railway route?

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY.—When the land in question is sold, this obligation on the Railway Department to maintain those fences will cease. Some of the land will be acquired by the municipality as an extra recreation reserve. In regard to the "Octopus" Act, I point out that the original cost of constructing the Outer Circle line was £301,962. Honorable members will recall that £30,000,000 was written off the railway accounts some years ago because inadequate provision had been made for depreciation, and this line was probably included at the time. I think experts call that "functional depreciation." This line was built, and portion of it was not used. The total length of the original line was 10¼ miles; the length already authorized to be removed is 4¼ miles; and the length proposed to be dismantled is 2 miles 29 chains. The length operated electrically from East Camberwell to Ashburton is 3¼ miles. No objection to the proposal has been raised by the local councils. The line is not being used, the rails are needed elsewhere, and the area is catered for by adequate street services.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT (*Melbourne Province*).—This measure is a timely reminder that defects can develop even in a national transport system. In this case, the defect has been the expenditure of public money under political pressure. Apparently, the sole object aimed at at the time the expense was incurred was to increase the value of certain private interests. Political pressure was brought to bear on Parliament to authorize the outlay of large sums in that direction. I have vivid recollections of those times. In my own way, I was battling along as a small builder and contractor. When I say that, I go back about 55 years. A land boom was started in which various building societies were primarily interested. They held a large area of building allotments between Fairfield Park, Alphington, and other places along the route of the line under consideration. I recall that the promoters issued their own special newspapers and drags were provided to take purchasers to the scenes of the sales, where marquees and luncheons were made available.

Promises were made that the railway line would be constructed, and would have the effect of advancing the value of the land immensely. The time came when those speculators were called upon to pay. No matter what we do in this life, and no matter what contracts we enter into, the time arrives when we have to pay. Sometimes one pays very dearly. In this case, not only the investors, but also the State had to pay, and a terrible disaster overtook Victoria at that time. Then our population was not so large as it is to-day. Never have such parlous times been experienced in the history of the Commonwealth.

It is true that about twelve years ago hard conditions were suffered. I would not use the word "destitution," but at any rate, we all had to tighten our belts and go without things that we urgently required. Still, those lean times were nothing in comparison with the period after the land boom in which this railway was constructed. For example, in my line of business, tenders were invited for the construction of a four-roomed house, when carpenters' labour only was to be supplied. The price offered for that work was £5. In those days, men were willing to take anything to keep themselves alive. Streets of houses were without tenants. A redeeming feature was that the cost of living fell. Although wages and conditions of labour were lowered, bread cost only 1d. a lb., and a whole side of mutton could be bought for 2s. 6d., or even less. I do not suppose the present generation will ever experience the hardships that we went through in those times. Still, we

lived through it, and people either sank or swam. Some of us swam, and are here to-day.

At that time we had not developed the national habit of leaning on other people; on the contrary, we had to get up and do something for ourselves. It was a bad time, but it developed in Victoria a psychology that bore ample fruit in the next fifteen or twenty years. One could not go to any other part of the Commonwealth without finding Victorian citizens in prominent positions of authority. They had developed a spirit of individual enterprise. This railway is a relic of those days, and we spent more than £300,000 on it. Where was the provision for meeting the interest and sinking fund?

Where was the financial authority to ask the people to pay for the services rendered? That is one of the defects of the national system. Perhaps that was not so important as it is now. Following experiences of this type, Parliament decided to appoint the Railways Standing Committee, which, however, was not altogether a shining success. Despite its operations, lines were recommended to Parliament, although there was no hope of their paying for the greasing of the wheels of the transport. Unfortunately, I must bear some responsibility myself, because I was a member of a Government that was induced to build a line over which I doubt whether a train has ever run. Then the Glen Waverley line was built. We developed a railway conscience, through which certain individuals derived great advantage. No law provided for any of the unearned increment being paid into Consolidated Revenue. There was no provision that people who profited by the expenditure of large sums of public money should pay back a proportion for the benefit of the taxpayers who made the increment possible. Nothing was done then about the matter, and I do not suppose anything will be done.

I do not know how to express my feelings in regard to the enormous waste of public money incurred in undertakings such as this railway. Under the old system, country and suburban lines were recommended by the Railways Standing Committee. Local citizens and expert witnesses solemnly swore that the revenue would amount to about so much. They combined in their efforts to have a line constructed, and promised to send their products for consignment by the national system of railways to the marketing centres. Sometimes, however, even before the railway line had been completed, the Country Roads Board had provided a beautiful road in the district and those who had advocated the line purchased motor trucks for the carriage of their own goods instead of sending them by the new railway in accordance with their promises. The State in all such cases is left to carry the baby. This baby is long since dead, and we are now assisting in the burial service.

The Outer Circle railway was never required, because even when it was constructed there was not the population in the district to justify the facilities provided. Very few passengers were carried on the line, and now we are wiping off a bad debt. The Bill sets out that the proceeds from the sale of land or any materials of value obtained from the dismantling are to be placed in the Railway Renewals and Replacements Fund, as provided in the Railway (Finances Adjustment) Acts. It has been suggested that any proceeds from the sale of the land should be devoted to local purposes, but we must realize that money was borrowed to build the line on the security of an asset. Although the money has never been paid—and any one who thinks the national debt will be paid has another "think" coming to him—it is right and proper that when an asset on which public money has been borrowed is disposed of the proceeds should be paid into a fund that will repay at least portion of the money to the people who loaned it.

The question of fencing the enclosure through which the line passes is of importance to local residents because a fairly considerable section of the line traverses deep cuttings. Once this Bill is passed, the Railway Department will not be legally responsible for the fencing in those cuttings, but I am assured by the Minister that, apart from any legal obligation, the Department will accept responsibility. I approve of what has been done in connection with other portions of the line that were dis-

mantled. One section was laid out as a public highway, and if that road is continued over the portion now to be dismantled no better use could be made of it. The day of short haulage of goods traffic on the railways has gone forever; it must be done by road transport. We are obliged to pass this measure to dispose of this incubus once and for all, and I commend the Bill to the House.

The Hon. W. H. EDGAR (*East Yarra Province*).—The Minister of Transport has given a clear outline of this small but important measure. When the proposed dismantling was considered by the Kew and Camberwell city councils, the first problem that arose was in connection with the existing bridges, but from what I can learn from the Minister and the municipalities that matter has been amicably settled. Substantial bridges were originally constructed, but time takes its toll of the soundest of man's work. I have been trying to imagine how any of the land concerned in this proposal can be sold. It comprises a long series of embankments and cuttings, and in time erosion and breakaways will take their toll. Nature has a habit of eating into ground where man has destroyed the natural foundation by constructing deep excavations. The cutting under Mont Albert-road must be nearly 20 feet in depth and in years to come the weather will have a serious effect on such an open piece of country. It is not long since we were asked by the Commissioners to close that section of the railway line between East Camberwell and Ashburton. It was claimed that the traffic offering did not return sufficient income to repay expenditure. We had a long fight to keep that section of the line open; to-day it is electrified and there is a direct line from Ashburton to Melbourne. But for the vision of local councillors that valuable section of the Outer Circle line would have been closed.

The two contentious matters affecting municipalities in connection with this proposed dismantling have been settled. Doubtless, the Minister of Transport has taken into consideration what will happen in future in regard to the excavations being left open and being worn away by the action of the weather. More than £300,000 of capital expenditure, in addition to interest on the initial outlay, has been lost on this line. It shows that the plans that were made in those days went astray.

The Hon. P. P. INCHBOLD.—There were planners in those days, were there?

The Hon. W. H. EDGAR.—The original planners have long since gone and now we have to legislate for the new order of things. Transport by buses will meet the normal needs of people who would be served by this line. The Bill meets with the approval of the municipalities concerned and we are now engaged in the *in memoriam* service usually associated with railway lines that are closed and dismantled.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clause 1 was agreed to.

Clause 2—(Power to Commissioners to dismantle a certain section of Outer Circle railway and to sell, &c., the material and property and to sell or demise the lands thereof).

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY (Minister of Transport).—I have had supplied to me a memorandum regarding the construction of the Outer Circle railway line. It appears that it was originally provided for goods traffic from the Gippsland and Lilydale lines to northern suburbs, thus by-passing heavy traffic through the city. I do not know that that is a fact. Regarding the suggested dangers from the cuttings, apparently one half of the 2 miles 29 chains of the section to be dismantled is level land, particularly that section of the line between Burke-road and East Kew. From Camberwell to East Camberwell the line passes through a deep cutting. I am informed that no erosion has taken place on that section and I imagine that ultimately it will be filled in. Possibly, it will be used as a main road through the district, but I cannot foresee the future. I should not think the Railway Department would be able to sell that portion of the line.

The Hon. W. H. EDGAR.—Do you know the width of the Department's land from fence to fence in that section?

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY.—I cannot give the Committee that information.

The clause was agreed to.

Clause 3—

On the commencement of this Act the liability (if any) of the Commissioners to maintain any bridge bearing any road over the said section of the said railway shall absolutely cease and determine.

Sir GEORGE GOUDIE (*North-Western Province*).—In reply to a question which I directed to him during his second-reading speech, the Minister of Transport said that the Railways Commissioners were maintaining the bridges over the section of the line to be dismantled. When that portion of the Outer Circle railway line which embraced the main bridge over the Yarra was closed, local councils agitated for the retention of that bridge for road traffic purposes. I understand that an arrangement was made whereby the municipalities concerned were to maintain the Outer Circle bridge. The road bridges mentioned in the Bill are important from the point of view of the municipalities concerned, and arrangements should be made for their maintenance.

The Hon. A. E. McDONALD.—The Minister stated that the municipalities would be responsible for the upkeep of those structures.

Sir GEORGE GOUDIE.—I desire to be assured on that point.

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY (Minister of Transport).—An agreement was made between the Railway Department and the Public Works Department for the payment of rent for the use of the railway track on the Outer Circle bridge, and various municipalities pay their share of that amount. The four road-bearing bridges referred to in the Bill will be maintained by the municipalities concerned.

The clause was agreed to, as was clause 4.

The Bill was reported to the House without amendment, and passed through its remaining stages.

MINES (MINERALS) BILL.

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY (Minister of Mines).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The object of the Bill is to enable the issue of mining leases for the purpose of mining certain minerals which were not reserved to the Crown when the land in which they occur was alienated. Under the provisions of the Mines Act, as it stands at present, the Crown is the owner of the gold and silver in all land, whether the land has been alienated or not. It can, therefore, issue leases over private land, as well as Crown land, under certain conditions, authorizing the mining of gold and silver. However, with regard to other minerals, the position is different. Prior to the 2nd of March, 1892, there was no provision in titles to land which had been alienated, reserving any of the minerals in the land to the Crown. Because of this, the legal position was that the Crown, when it alienated the land, parted as well with the rights to any minerals other than gold and silver in the land. Although the Crown was therefore legally no longer the owner of these minerals, mining leases were, for many years, issued by the Crown with the consent of the land owner, enabling them to be mined.

In 1891, the legal position as to the ownership of minerals in private land was altered by the passing of the Mines Act, which provided that on and from the 2nd of March, 1892, all minerals in land not yet alienated were and would remain the property of the Crown, even though the land was subsequently alienated. As a matter of interest, I may here mention that, prior to the 2nd of March, 1892, it was usual to alienate land without restricting the depth below the surface to which it was alienated. As a result, titles to this land extend to the centre of the earth, and the land owner is therefore the owner of all minerals, other than gold and silver, to this depth. The practice of limiting the depth below the earth's surface to which land was sold by the Crown was introduced on the 29th of December, 1891; but it was not until the 2nd of March, 1892, that it was made a general condition in land titles. As honorable members are aware, the depth to which land titles now issued by the Crown usually extend is 50 feet below the surface; but it is not generally known that in certain special cases this depth is reduced to 25 feet.

With the passage of the legislation in 1891 defining the Crown's position in relation to the ownership of minerals, the issue by the Mines Department of leases enabling the mining of the minerals

owned by the land owner was discontinued. Since then, mining for these minerals has only been carried on by private arrangement with the land owner under any conditions imposed by him. In recent years —and particularly during the war period —our dependence on coal, iron, aluminium, and many other lesser-known but equally vital minerals, has brought home the necessity of making the utmost use of the State's mineral resources. Many important minerals do not occur in commercial quantities in Victoria, but there are deposits of brown coal, bauxite, and other minerals, the development of which is essential to the future prosperity of the State. Legislation to enable these minerals to be mined, wherever they may occur, should therefore be provided.

In New South Wales, Tasmania, and Western Australia, the Crown has also parted with the mineral rights in much of the land it has alienated. In these States, legislation has been in force for many years enabling the Crown to issue leases authorizing the mining of any mineral although it was no longer the property of the Crown. Provision is, however, made in the legislation of these States for the payment to the land owner of compensation for the mining of the mineral in addition to the compensation ordinarily payable to a land owner where a mining lease is issued over private land where the Crown does not own the minerals.

The legislation in New South Wales and Tasmania permits any person to make arrangements with the land owner to mine any mineral not reserved to the Crown. Application may also be made to the Mines Department in each of these States for a mining lease of the land, and in this case the lease can be issued by the Department under the same general conditions as any other mining lease, and without the land owner being given an opportunity himself to arrange for the mining of the mineral. The payment to the land owner of compensation for the mining of his minerals is made by the Mines Department out of the rents and royalties received by it under the mining lease.

In the legislation now proposed, the provisions are based on those contained in the Western Australian Act. They may be briefly stated as follows:—Any person wishing to mine for minerals which have been alienated by the Crown with the land may do so by arrangement with the land owner and without the necessity of obtaining a mining lease from the Crown. The land owner may himself also mine for the minerals, without a mining lease. If, however, mining is not being carried on, any person desirous of working the minerals may apply to the Minister of Mines to have an area of not more than 640 acres of the land brought under the Mines Act. A geological survey of the land may then be ordered by the Minister to see whether there is a reasonable possibility of the land containing any mineral in payable quantities. That is to prevent a person with an unpayable proposition spoiling the land without benefiting any one.

Should the geological report be favourable, the owner of the land may then be given notice that, unless he makes arrangements within six months for the mining of the minerals either by himself or some other person, the land may be brought under the Mines Act for the purpose of issuing a mining lease. If these arrangements are not so made, the Governor in Council may, by notice in the *Government Gazette*, declare that the land is now subject to the provisions of the Mines Act in relation to the issue of mineral leases. On the publication of this declaration, leases may be issued by the Crown enabling the minerals in the land to be mined under the usual conditions so far as the holder of the mining lease is concerned. These include the payment to the land owner of compensation on the higher scale prescribed by paragraph (*a*) of sub-section (1) of section 338 of the Mines Act 1928, and also rent and royalty to the Crown. As, however, the minerals being mined had been alienated with the land, provision is made for the payment by the Crown to the land owner of 90 per cent. of the rents and royalties received by it from the mining lessee. The remaining 10 per cent. is to be retained by the Crown to cover administration costs.

The Bill has been prepared for the purpose of enabling the utmost use to be made of the mineral resources of the State, while ensuring that the owners of

the minerals are adequately compensated. Although it represents a departure from previous mining legislation, similar legislation has, as I have said, been in force for many years in other Australian States, in each of which it has been satisfactory. I therefore hope that the Bill will have a speedy passage.

Clause 1 sets out the short title of the Bill. Clause 2 is the definition clause. "Mineral" as defined by the Mines Act 1928, means all metals other than gold and all minerals and mineral ores. Silver and petroleum are omitted from the definition in the Bill as they are already the property of the Crown and can therefore be mined under the present Mines Act. Clause 3 enables any person wishing to mine for minerals in land which has been alienated without reservation of the minerals to apply to the Minister of Mines to make the minerals available for mining under the Mines Act. The land is required to be defined and the area must not exceed 640 acres. The area of 640 acres is in conformity with sub-section (2) of section 75 of the Mines Act, which prescribes that the extent of a mineral lease shall not exceed 640 acres.

Clause 4 enables the Minister of Mines to have any specified land geologically surveyed for the purpose of ascertaining whether it is likely to contain any mineral in payable quantities. Division 12 of Part II. of the Mines Act 1928, to which reference is made, enables any surveyor acting under the authority of the Minister of Mines to enter on any private land for the purpose of making a survey. Clause 5 sets out the procedure to be followed by the Minister of Mines should the geological survey disclose that the land is likely to contain any mineral in payable quantities. Briefly, the owner, and also the occupier, should the owner not be the occupier, are given a period of six months in which themselves to make arrangements for the mining of the minerals. Should arrangements for mining the minerals not be made by the owner and occupier within the period of six months allowed them for this purpose, clause 6 provides that the land may, by declaration of the Governor in Council published in the *Government Gazette,* be brought under Part II. of the Mines Act 1928.

The Hon. J. A. Kennedy.

Upon the publication of the declaration referred to under clause 6, all minerals in the land become and remain the property of the Crown. That is provided for in clause 7. The person, if any, upon whose petition the land has been brought under the Mines Act is given a preferential right for three months to a grant of a mineral lease of the land. However, before any mining lease over private land can be issued, the provisions of the Mines Act 1928, with reference to the payment of compensation to the owner and occupier of the land, must be complied with. Section 338 of the Act provides for two scales of compensation, the higher for land alienated before the passing of the Mining on Private Property Act 1884, and the other for land alienated subsequently. The higher scale is also to apply to land brought under the Mines Act 1928, pursuant to the legislation now proposed. This scale of compensation is defined by section 338 as follows:—

> Compensation for being deprived of the possession of the surface or of any part of the surface of private land as defined by section three hundred and twenty-nine (*a*), and for damage to the surface of the whole or any part thereof (as the case may be) which may arise from the carrying on of mining operations therein or thereon, and for the expense of severing such land or any part thereof from other land of the owner or occupier and for all consequential damages, and the right to compensation in respect to any such damage shall not be abridged or in anywise affected by reason that such damage would not be the subject of an action at law.

In addition to this compensation, paragraph (*c*) of clause 7 of the Bill also provides that the land owner is to be paid 90 per cent. of the rents and royalties paid to the Crown in respect of any mineral lease over the land. The balance of 10 per cent. is to be retained by the Crown to meet the cost of administering the Act. Clause 8 defines the liability of the Crown for any action taken under the Act, and clause 9 gives the power to make regulations.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT (*Melbourne Province*).—I do not desire to comment at any length on this measure, which has been well and fully explained by the Minister in charge of it. I have examined it carefully. It does not make any great amendment or addition to the statute law, and it will operate in the best interests of the State. Let me explain it in a nut-

shell. It aims to give effect to the desire of the Government to put land to its best uses. All natural products should be used to the best advantage, and where an individual or group of individuals has apparently a right to any such products, if they do not place them at the disposal of the people the Government may lease the land for mining, or itself enter into possession of it to make use of the products. It was explained by the Minister of Transport, and I think rightly so, that no owner of land will have his title jeopardized by the passing of the Bill. He will be compensated for any damage done, and where he is the possessor of something of value to the community and it is exploited by a leaseholder or the Crown, he will receive nine-tenths of the total proceeds. Therefore, the legislation will preserve the natural right of an owner to the peaceful possession of his property, and every other facility attached to that possession. The Bill is a proper one, and little if any objection can be taken to it.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clause 1 was agreed to.

Clause 2—(Interpretation).

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT (*Melbourne Province*).—I should like to mention one mineral that has been spoken of in public as a big asset to Melbourne as a commercial centre. I refer to the brown coal deposits near the city. I have had some experience of those deposits. I received some brown coal from Altona forty years ago, and I took particular interest in the bores put down in that locality. The deposits have never been commercially exploited, and for an excellent reason. The bores disclosed that a large extent of country, ranging from Altona Bay across Hobsons Bay to the Red Bluff at St. Kilda, was formerly the delta of a river perhaps larger than the present River Yarra. In different periods there had been deposits of vegetable matter over the area and the bore showed that although there was a reasonable quantity of brown coal right across, it was, so to speak, in small veins; that is to say, there is no huge deposit in one particular section of the bore such as is found at Yallourn and possibly in other parts of the State. For example, there would be two or three feet of brown coal at a depth of about 20 feet to 30 feet; and then 3 or 4 feet of soil or decomposed rock, followed by more coal. But in every case—and more especially at Altona Bay—where a bore has been sunk, the salt water from the bay, working along the various veins, has filled the bores within a comparatively short space of time. Although a scheme was floated on to the market many years ago by a well-known Queen-street solicitor, it was never a commercially payable project.

Sir GEORGE GOUDIE.—I think one of the main troubles was the water.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Also the broken seams. At Yallourn one is filled with amazement at the depth of deposits apparently brought down by the Latrobe river. About 25 years ago I burnt coal from the open-cut and it proved excellent fuel.

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY.—There is a mine at Altona; an open-cut is impossible.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I appreciate that. At Altona there is the problem of intersecting seams of matter other than coal. Although the potentialities have been mentioned on many occasions as being worthy of exploitation, I fear that unless different appliances become available—possibly by the cessation of coal supplies elsewhere—no considerable advantage will accrue. If, however, a portion of the supply is shown by the bores to be capable of exploitation, this measure will allow the coal to be used. When those persons who own property where there is coal will not take appropriate action, the product is lost to the community. After all, the people should reap some benefits from the State's natural resources.

The clause was agreed to.

Clause 3—(Petition to bring land alienated without reservation of minerals under No. 3737, Part II.).

Sir GEORGE GOUDIE (*North-Western Province*).—This clause sets out clearly that any person may petition the Minister of Mines that any specified land—not exceeding 640 acres—alienated from the Crown on or before the 1st of March, 1892, be brought within the operation of Part II. of the principal Act. That appears to be all right on the face of it, but I would point out that in the following clause power is given to the Minister of

Mines to authorize, of his own volition, a geologist to discover what minerals are contained in the land.

The clause was agreed to.

Clause 4—(Geological survey of land and powers of geologist, &c.)

Sir GEORGE GOUDIE (*North-Western Province*).—I shall now quote from the clause itself for the purpose of emphasizing my point—

> The Minister of Mines on receipt of any such petition or at any time of his own motion may by writing authorize a geologist to make a survey of any specified land alienated from the Crown on or before the first day of March eighteen hundred and ninety-two to ascertain whether there is a reasonable probability of the land containing any mineral in payable quantities, . . .

That seems to be wide power to give to the Minister when no request has been made by any person that the survey should be undertaken. Is it proposed to institute a general survey of the supposed mineral deposits throughout the State?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—A departmental officer may report to the Minister that such a survey is feasible.

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY.—The officer could report that there was an area in which an extensive brown coal deposit was possible.

Sir GEORGE GOUDIE.—Suppose that certain land in the vicinity of Melbourne showed from all external appearances that it contained a geological formation in which brown coal was present. Until the scientific test was conducted there could be no certainty on the matter. I have not had much experience as regards mines on private property, although years ago I held an area of land in the Ballarat district. I was surprised on one occasion to find a stranger driving in pegs all over that property. Before I told him, in effect, to get out, I asked him what he was doing, and his reply was "I am pegging out a gold mine." The area he was treating in that way was about 400 acres. When I inquired the reason for his decision to work the land he said, "You know that a man has been boring for water near your property. Well, several specks of gold have been found 200 or 300 feet away." Evidently the miner considered that there was a chance of developing a good alluvial proposition on my property. I advised him, however, that all the surrounding country was alluvial; that a few specks of gold could be found anywhere in the area, and that its discovery in payable quantities was problematical.

The Hon. D. L. MCNAMARA.—Did he take his pegs out?

Sir GEORGE GOUDIE.—Eventually, because he was not courageous enough to invest money in the project. When a miner begins to work on private property the owner is supposed to obtain compensation for any surface damage. The damage arises not so much through sinking a shaft as from what is done with the residue. If the land owner has cattle and sheep, there is probably an area of about 20 chains all round the mine where grass is destroyed. I think we are often too liberal minded in depriving private individuals of their rights.

Sir JOHN HARRIS (*North-Eastern Province*).—In his second-reading speech the Minister said that the Bill contained provision for damages. As he did not mention consequential damage I should like to know whether compensation for that type of damage will be paid. It is proposed to take a lease of, say, 640 acres of land and I should think a prospecting area and a site for a shaft would be contemplated, as well as means of access. The area as a whole would be fenced off. Let us suppose that the miner made a terrible mess of the land by alluvial mining or by causing huge unsightly heaps to appear in the centre of the 640-acre block. There would be considerable depreciation not only of the site of the mine proper, but possibly also of the surrounding land where debris would be deposited. I emphasize that the depreciation would not necessarily be confined to the 640 acres; it might affect a much larger area of valuable property. Is there any provision in this Bill to the effect that the owner of the land would be able to negotiate an agreement, either through the Governor in Council or a Court of Mines, in respect of real damage arising from bringing under Part II. of the Mines Act land that is at present secured? Under the Act it would be unsecured and subject to the Governor in Council and the Mines Department. I contend that full compensation should be payable in such circumstances.

Progress was reported.

The sitting was suspended at 6.28 *p.m. until* 8.25 *p.m.*

CONSOLIDATED REVENUE BILL (No. 2).

The Hon. J. H. LIENHOP (Minister of Public Works.)—(*By leave.*)—Last week, when the House was dealing with Supply, I undertook to see that representations made by enthusiastic members would be brought under the notice of the Ministers concerned with a view to their being immediately attended to. Since then I have taken the promised course, and have had assurances from the Ministers that replies to the questions raised would be forthcoming at the earliest possible moment. Sir John Harris was very definite in asserting his desire to have a letter from the Minister of Health in regard to a matter giving him concern. That Minister has informed me that he regrets his inability to supply the information sought this week but he will furnish it as soon as possible. A similar condition applies to the comments made by Sir William Angliss in regard to pests and supplies of strychnine.

Questions relating to man power in sanatoriums were raised by Mr. McBrien, and Mr. Rodda made inquiries concerning the present drought. Other members raised other matters. I take this opportunity of saying that, while I cannot now furnish the answers asked for, nor reveal the Government's views on those points, they will be made available as soon as possible.

MINES (MINERALS) BILL.

The House went into Committee for the further consideration of this Bill.

Discussion was resumed of clause 4, providing for the geological survey of land and powers of geologist, &c.

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY (Minister of Mines).—Sir John Harris has raised the question whether compensation is provided for the owner of private land on which mining for minerals is undertaken. I shall repeat what I said in my second-reading speech as to the scale of compensation as defined in section 338 of the principal Act—

> Compensation for being deprived of the possession of the surface or of any part of the surface of private land is defined by section 329 (*a*) and for damage to the surface of the whole area or any part thereof (as the case may be) which may arise from the carrying on of mining operations therein or thereon, and for the expense of severing such land or any part thereof from other land of the owner or occupier and for all consequential damages, and the right to compensation in respect to any such damage shall not be abridged or in anywise affected by reason that such damage would not be the subject of an action at law.

Sir JOHN HARRIS.—I think you omitted that portion referring to consequential damage when making your second-reading speech.

The clause was agreed to.

Clause 5—(Notice to owner and occupier of intention to bring land under No. 3737, Part II., unless otherwise mined).

Sir JOHN HARRIS (*North-Eastern Province*).—Does the Minister think the Government is fair in giving a thing and then taking it back? Under early land settlement a full title to the land, right to the centre of the earth, was given. As time went on many people who thought they knew—but very often did not—made a mess of the surface of the earth in the hope that they might find treasure underneath. Part II. of the Mines Act gave the Governor in Council authority, if he thought proper, to take back the right granted to the original holder when the full title was given. This Bill intends that the Government shall take possession not only of silver or gold under the land but in fact of all minerals to be found there. "Mineral" as defined in the Mines Act includes sand and all sorts of more or less invaluable materials. In particular instances ordinary pieces of earth rock become valuable to certain individuals, and so the Bill proposes that the definition of "mineral" shall include almost anything.

Does the Minister think the Government is doing a bit of bush-ranging in this instance? Is it honest to permit the Governor in Council to take back a right without giving compensation? That is what is being done in the Bill. If the Minister owned certain property he would not like the Government to say, "You must give it back; some one else wants it and we wish to transfer it to him." I do not consider this a fair Bill. It is the devil's plaything.

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY (Minister of Mines).—If it is proved that there is a valuable mineral under the land, the owner is given six months in which to determine whether he will act to recover that mineral. If he refuses and claims that he was given a fee-simple title prior to 1892—although there may be millions of tons of brown or black coal under his land—I do not think it reasonable from the community standpoint that his land should not be mined. We accepted the position in 1892 that no further land was to be alienated so far as the minerals in the land were concerned. Although the Government is proposing to take action, it is prepared to provide adequate compensation for the owner being deprived of the possession of the surface of his property.

Sir JOHN HARRIS.—He will be compensated to the extent that the Governor in Council thinks fit, but not to what the owner thinks proper.

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY.—The owner is to be compensated for being deprived of the surface or any part of the surface of private land; for damage to the surface or any part thereof which may arise from carrying on mining operations therein; the expense involved in severing that land or any part of it from other land; and for any consequential damage. In addition—and not as part of the compensation—the Bill provides that the owner shall be paid 90 per cent. of the rents and royalties paid to the Crown. The Governor in Council does not fix compensation. The Court of Mines fixes it, and the owner has adequate protection in that he has the right of appeal to the Supreme Court.

In connection with coal mining at Korumburra, many of the farms above the mines are still in operation because, except as to a very limited area, the mining has not affected the surface. To say that, because a man received a fee-simple title for land alienated prior to 1892 the coal is to remain under his property and not be worked, does not seem reasonable.

The clause was agreed to, as were the remaining clauses.

The Bill was reported to the House without amendment, and passed through its remaining stages.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

The debate (adjourned from August 22) on the motion of the Hon. A. E. McDonald (*South-Western Province*) for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech was resumed.

The Hon. TREVOR HARVEY (*Gippsland Province*).—I join with previous speakers in expressing sentiments of loyalty to His Excellency the Governor. I wish to comment on certain features of His Excellency's Speech. In the first place, I shall discuss the recent disastrous bush fires. In this connection, I must congratulate Mr. Chandler, the Honorary Minister, on the able way in which he handled the problem of rehabilitating sufferers. It was a pleasure to see how quickly Mr. Chandler gained their confidence. He cast aside red tape and restrictive regulations and, in a most unassuming manner, successfully dealt with all issues.

Doubtless, honorable members know that we nearly lost the undertaking of the State Electricity Commission at Yallourn, and we were very close to having to shut down all industries throughout Victoria. I frequently visit Yallourn, and it is very seldom during a summer season that there is not a fire in the surrounding scrub, but, fortunately, in the past, most outbreaks have occurred at times and in places where they have not been driven directly on to the civic centre. However, on this occasion a terrific gale swept the fire right on to Yallourn. The people of Victoria owe a debt of gratitude to the residents and workers for saving the town. The real cause of the fire was neglect and inefficiency on the part of the State Electricity Commission. Mr. Jobbins is the chairman of the authority, and he is paid a high salary, but his inefficiency and neglect almost brought the industries of Victoria to a standstill. We cannot afford to take a similar risk in the future. If the Government did its duty it would deal drastically with Mr. Jobbins; it would dispense with his services. To use a colloquialism, I would "fire" him straight away. I hope that the Government will take strong steps in this matter, because nothing is

being done to prevent a recurrence of fires at Yallourn. I was in the town last week, and found that undergrowth is growing up and that the trees are coming out in leaf, and unless preventive action is taken we shall be faced with the risk of fire again in two years.

The conservative policy of the State Electricity Commission has assisted in bringing about centralization in the metropolis and in driving people from the country. Provision is not being made so that primary producers can obtain supplies of electricity from the Commission. Although transmission lines pass their properties, farmers are not connected with the system unless they are prepared to give exorbitant guarantees. I submit that primary producers should be facilitated in obtaining connection with the scheme so that they may obtain electric current to assist them in their industry. One of the main reasons why we are suffering from a shortage of food to-day is that farmers have not been given sufficient encouragement to increase their production. The Government should take action to ensure that all facilities are made available to primary producers, particularly the supply of electric current.

I now wish to comment on the dairying industry of Victoria. At present we are faced with the loss from the Agriculture Department of the services of Mr. Kerr, the Superintendent of Dairying. He has reached the retiring age, but is remaining on duty to assist the Department during the war. Prior to his appointment to his present office, that section was controlled by the veterinary staff, and during that régime the quality of our dairying production deteriorated rapidly. When Mr. Kerr assumed control, the quality improved considerably, but a movement is now on foot to bring the section again under the control of veterinary officers. They may be able to carry out certain phases of their work quite satisfactorily, but they cannot control dairying. Dairy farmers at present are faced with two diseases which have taken toll of more than one-third of our dairy cattle, and heavy replacements in herds are involved. I refer to contagious abortion and mastitis. Although the veterinary section of the Department is hopelessly unfitted to give any relief in these matters, it is now proposed that it should control the dairying industry, including the pasteurization of milk. Honorable members have heard my opinions on pasteurization.

The Hon. A. M. FRASER.—I understand that we shall discuss that matter again when the report of the committee is submitted.

The Hon. TREVOR HARVEY.—Perhaps we shall. It will be a case of the blind leading the blind, as these officers know nothing about milk; but it is said that they should control the dairying industry! I urge the Government to appoint as head of the dairying branch an officer who knows something about the work. There are many able young men in the Department, but, unfortunately, seniority appears to be the main factor with promotions. It does not matter how great a dud a man is so long as he has seniority! Many young men can see no future in the Service and they seek positions outside, and that is one reason why we are not making the progress we should expect in the State.

The pig industry is also under the control of the Agriculture Department. For many years I implored the ex-Minister of Agriculture to appoint a pig expert. Eventually that was done, and the officer was successful in assisting to have the production figures greatly increased. Since the outbreak of war we have suffered from the bureaucrats of the Commonwealth Public Service, who have taken control. An accountant was appointed head of the meat Commission, and his assistant is a tailor. I presume the tailor was appointed to sew up the body when he had killed the industry! During recent years the production of pork in Victoria has become less and less. To-day, one may obtain a quarter of a lb. of bacon from a grocer, but if the present situation continues in the pork industry, it will not be long before the ration is less than 2 oz. a week. We shall almost forget what bacon tastes like. Now that we have disposed of the referendum, and the bureaucrats have had their wings clipped, I trust that it will not be long before the problems of primary producers are given the attention that they warrant.

Some years ago farmers could take preventive measures in connection with diseases in live stock by purchasing vaccines and vaccinating their stock to give the animals a greater tolerance against contagious abortion. Regulations were passed, however, to prevent farmers from purchasing vaccines, it being thought that their use of them would cause a spread of the disease; but to-day contagious abortion could not be more widespread than it is in the dairying industry. Another ailment, which affects calves, is called blackleg; the first indication of this disease is when a farmer finds that calves have died from it. It travels rapidly among young stock. A farmer must apply to the Department for a permit to purchase vaccine, but by the time the approval is received practically all his calves have died! As I say, legislation was passed to prevent farmers from purchasing these vaccines, but I would break the law and purchase them to save my stock. Primary producers should be allowed to make such purchases as and when they require them.

Nothing has been done by the Government to assist farmers to improve the standard of their herds. Some years ago I played an active part in bringing about the pure-bred bull calf scheme. It worked effectively, the regulations and conditions having been drawn up by representatives of breeding studs and the Minister of Agriculture. In the first year 314 bulls were treated; but then regulations were introduced to strangle the scheme, and in the last year only 46 bulls were treated. I hope that the Government will take steps to have those regulations removed, as they are affecting the progress of the dairying industry. The Cattle Breeding Act was passed in 1938, and it will come into full operation on the 1st of January, 1945, but it was so stupidly drafted that one could drive a truck through its loopholes.

The PRESIDENT (the Hon. C. H. A. Eager).—An honorable member must not use offensive language against an Act which Parliament has passed. He must not refer to an Act passed by both Houses as a stupid Act.

The Hon. TREVOR HARVEY.—I withdraw my remark; but the Act I have mentioned will need to be redrafted before it can be operated successfully. Herd testing is an important feature in the dairying industry, and at present our herds are of a low standard. During the last three years the Government would not allow any pure-bred herds to come under the herd-testing scheme, but legislation was passed to the effect that bulls must not be used unless they are from tested herds. Recently a deputation asked the Minister of Agriculture to permit the testing of herds, and I trust that it will not be long before all herds in Victoria are able to pass the standard tests.

There are many marketing boards in Victoria, and they are too costly. Each of these boards works as a separate unit, with its own staff and offices. I was a member of a board, and it was really like a gift from heaven! One had merely to attend a meeting, and be paid £12 10s. These authorities constitute an unfair charge on primary producers, who have to meet all the costs of the boards. I was a member of the Maize Marketing Board, and although its work was finished in April, and it will not function again until October, its members are paid £3 a week, which is not fair to primary producers. The Government should bring all boards under one administrative centre; that would save many thousands of pounds.

I am pleased to note that it is proposed to make extensive additions to our irrigation schemes. These extensions are very necessary because, I contend, irrigation will be the salvation of the State. Very earnest consideration should be given to the factor of seepage, as that has led to loss of land. It is due, in my opinion, to faulty engineering work in the first place. The leakage of water from the channels is destroying hundreds of acres of land. Any one who takes up the question with the Department concerned is asked to prove that the water comes from the channels, but no one can prove that. We are entitled to some protection against the heavy losses we have to meet. One subject of importance is that of noxious weeds in water channels. Those weeds spread until they cover some properties. The menace is due to neglect in keeping the channels free of weeds.

Very heavy losses are occurring throughout the State because of soil

erosion. The Avon river, in my locality, has destroyed between 3,000 and 4,000 acres of some of the most fertile land in Victoria. No attempt has been made to protect such land. In places the river is a mile wide, but there is little water in it, and it is possible to walk across it at any time except when there is a flood. The Government should try to preserve that valuable soil from destruction. Some of the land that has been lost was worth £50 an acre. Good land in Victoria is limited in quantity.

A general overhaul of the Public Service is needed. The business of the country is largely controlled by bureaucrats, and the time has come when the Government should take charge, and not allow commissions and boards to govern it. Ministers themselves do not have much power where commissions operate. Parliament must, as Mr. McDonald said, regain its power to govern.

We all know that the lives of the employees of the State Electricity Commission at Yallourn are controlled by the Commission. The houses they live in, the work they do, and the food they eat are dictated by the Commission. There is only one thing they have free, and that is the air they breathe, and that is polluted sometimes by the odours from the paper mills. The people of Yallourn have asked for permission to own their own homes, and I hope it will be granted to them. I should like to see the time come when bureaucrats in the Public Service will be abolished. They are not making a good job of governing the country. We are sent to Parliament to govern the country, and if we do not do it we might as well go home.

Sir **WILLIAM ANGLISS** (*Southern Province*).—I am greatly concerned about the housing problem in Victoria. There is no doubt that housing conditions in Melbourne and in many other Victorian towns are very bad. The State Government has done some splendid work in providing houses. The estates that have been built are a credit to it. I refer particularly to the estate on the old racecourse at Richmond, which I pass nearly every day. It is really a picture. The Governor's Speech stated that 300 houses were in the course of construction in the quarter ended the 30th of June, 1944, and it added—

> In succeeding quarters it is expected that the quota of houses to be constructed in Victoria will be progressively increased. The number actually constructed will depend on the release of man power and materials.

I particularly wish to stress questions relating to the supply of man power and materials. The Speech then proceeded:—

> The Government is preparing for an extensive post-war home building programme, and in order that the work of existing Government and private construction agencies may be supplemented, it is proposed to introduce legislation to encourage co-operative building societies.

The building societies of Sydney have done valuable work in providing houses for working people. If a person pays a deposit of 10 per cent. of the value of a house and land, the building societies and the Government provide the balance. Some thousands of houses have been built for the people of Sydney under these conditions. The repayments of principal and interest are considerably less than the rent paid for similar properties. A limit is placed on the value of the houses. The interest charged is 5 per cent. The result is that housing conditions are being more rapidly improved in Sydney than in Melbourne, where very little has been done in that direction for some years.

I direct attention to the increased cost of building houses during the last few years. For a four-roomed or five-roomed timber house of twelve squares, the cost of building for the year ended June, 1937, was £518, excluding provision of sewerage; for 1937-38, £585; for 1938-39, £599; for 1939-40, £620; and for 1940-41, £683. At that period the Government practically prevented people from building houses, but in 1942 a few houses that were started in 1941 were completed. They cost £714. The estimated cost of a similar house at the present time is £785.

Sir GEORGE GOUDIE.—Does that include the cost of the land?

Sir WILLIAM ANGLISS.—No, nor does it include sewerage, because sewerage was not available at that time. Since 1937 there has been an increase from £518 to £785, representing more than 50 per cent. One of the important causes of that increase is sales tax. In 1939

sales tax was 5 per cent., but at present it is 12½ per cent. generally speaking and in some cases more. I have been recently informed that the sales tax on that class of property is now £60 to £80. The time has come when the strongest representations should be made to the Commonwealth Government to remit sales tax on buildings of this description. I would not go so far as to advocate it in respect to all buildings because the Commonwealth Government may need the revenue, but I do assert that it is not right to tax the houses of working people who are anxious to own their own homes. Undoubtedly there are many cases of bad housing at the present time in Melbourne. We read of three or four families living in one house, and many people in search of houses are tramping about the city and suburbs broken hearted.

The Hon. A. M. FRASER.—If your figures are right, sales tax amounts to 25 to 30 per cent. on the cost of materials.

Sir WILLIAM ANGLISS.—The sales tax is not on the cost of labour, but only on the cost of materials. There has been a considerable increase, also, in the cost of materials. I have some interesting figures relating to bricks. The total number of Hoffman kilns in Melbourne and suburbs before the war was 34, but the number now worked is, because of shortage of labour, only five. The maximum average capacity of the kilns is 232,000,000 bricks a year of 49 working weeks. At the outbreak of war 26 kilns were working, and were turning out 170,000,000 bricks a year, whereas to-day five kilns are working turning out about 27,000,000 bricks a year. The total number of men now employed is 190, but the number in November, 1941, was 1,075. The total stocks of bricks are about 1,250,000.

The estimated cost of a five-roomed villa of eleven squares is £950 in brick, including sewers, £884 in brick veneer, and £835 in timber. These figures show an increased cost, as compared with 1939, of from 30 to 60 per cent. The sales tax is particularly heavy on the owner of the house. In 1939 materials for a four-roomed and five-roomed house cost £363, plus 5 per cent. sales tax, and in 1944 the cost would be £485, plus 12½ per cent. sales tax. In 1939 timber houses would cost about £45 a square, and in 1941 £61 a square. At the present day there has been a considerable further increase, which I think amounts to about 50 per cent.

The Hon. P. P. INCHBOLD.—Does the Housing Commission pay sales tax?

Sir WILLIAM ANGLISS.—Neither the Commonwealth nor the State Government pays sales tax, and in my opinion workers ought not to have to pay such a tax on their homes, irrespective of who builds them. It is wrong for this reason: Up to the present, there has been no tendency by Governments to construct houses for ownership by workers. One cannot blame the present Government, which has endeavoured to provide accommodation for those who are the least able to purchase their own dwellings. Workers generally, however, should not be deprived of opportunities to acquire homes for themselves. In many cases they are prepared to pay sums varying from £20 to £100 by way of deposit, and the instalments of principal and interest on a 21-years' basis work out at considerably less than would rent. It is wrong that the workers should be called upon to pay sales tax of 12½ per cent., which mulcts them in an additional payment of £50 or £60. It is all very well to contend that a worker can rent a house from the Government. The endeavour should be to encourage the purchase of houses.

The Hon. D. L. MCNAMARA.—I understand that it is not proposed to charge sales tax on the reconstruction of houses in the burnt-out areas.

Sir WILLIAM ANGLISS.—I know nothing about that, but I cannot understand why a working man should have to pay sales tax of £50 or more.

The Hon. G. L. CHANDLER.—In those cases where the owners have undertaken to replace homes, sales tax is paid on the timber. It is not paid when the material is purchased from the Bush Fires Relief Fund.

The Hon. A. M. FRASER.—Does Sir William Angliss suggest that, provided private enterprise is building a house for the worker, the sales tax should not be part of the contract price?

Sir WILLIAM ANGLISS.—There should be an exemption from sales tax when the house is being built for purchase by the worker.

The Hon. A. M. FRASER.—You would agree that private enterprise should be subject to some regulation, to ensure that there is no exploitation with respect to sales tax?

Sir WILLIAM ANGLISS.—I am not discussing this matter from the point of view of private enterprise. My argument is that the workers should have every facility to purchase homes. I have no personal interest whatever in building societies, but I should like those organizations to launch out on a scheme for the construction of workers' houses. At the present time dwellings are being erected at a cost of, say, £700 or £800, the weekly payment being 24s. or 25s., plus rates. If the occupants happened to walk out, those houses could be let at 30s. to 32s. 6d. weekly. Undoubtedly, the conditions of purchase are attractive.

The Hon. A. E. McDONALD.—What is your definition of the term "worker"?

Sir WILLIAM ANGLISS.—Any one in receipt of a wage or a salary.

The Hon. A. E. McDONALD.—Irrespective of the amount?

Sir WILLIAM ANGLISS.—If a person's income exceeds £500 a year, I should say that he could afford to buy his own home privately. The following extract from the *Co-operative Buildings Societies' Gazette* is particularly interesting, as it deals with the question of birth-rate and housing:—

Dear Sir,

In an article, "Birth-rate and Housing," which appeared in April issue, you state—

> "There is no extravagance in our claim that if we had ample co-operative housing throughout the land, our birth-rate would return to the safe proportions of 40 years ago."

While I certainly believe that the co-operative building society system is the best we have ever had in Australia for providing for home ownership, I would like to point out the fallacy of the statement quoted.

My own experience as a builder is that most people are forced to restrict their families in order to afford decent housing.

Later, the writer cites official statistics, including the following:—

The Australian birth-rate per 1,000 population was—

Year.	Rate.
1860	42.6
1900	35.0
1930	19.9
1939	17.6

It will be seen that the 1939 birth-rate was half that of 1900.

The history of the sales tax on building materials is also of considerable interest. In 1934 a case for abolition of sales tax on building materials was placed by the building industry before the Commonwealth Treasurer, and the Government of the day—realizing the effect of the tax, then only 5 per cent., on capital values and the consequent repressive effect on employment in the largest of the secondary industries in Australia—repealed the tax in so far as concerned materials used in the construction and repair of buildings. It has been authoritatively contended that this greatly assisted recovery from the depression. Again, early in 1940, in view of certain reports that the reimposition of sales tax on building materials was being examined by the Government, a case was put before the Acting Treasurer of the Commonwealth, and again the Government saw the wisdom of the arguments. No sales tax was imposed at that time.

Due to the serious development of the war position, sales tax was reimposed in November, 1940, on building materials at the rate of 5 per cent. Today the minimum sales tax on those materials is 12½ per cent. and on some fittings up to 25 per cent. It cannot be denied that this sales tax is a capital tax. It at once increases the capital cost of a building and remains a capital charge throughout its life. This brings in its train a number of undesirable results, which have been enumerated as follows:—

(*a*) Becomes a permanent handicap to the earning powers of the investment and a discouragement to the investor.
(*b*) Increases rents or rent-purchase repayments; also increases the deposit required on purchase.
(*c*) Increases municipal rates, and consequently water rates.
(*d*) Insurance is more costly.
(*e*) Has a serious deterrent effect on employment in the building industry in normal times.

It is estimated that the sales tax payable in respect of a house valued at £800 to £900 is about £70. I hope that action will be taken by both the State and the Commonwealth Government with the view of facilitating the purchase of homes by workers on conditions similar to those which have been offering in Sydney for

many years. Not for one minute do I think there is any prospect of the ordinary investor constructing houses for rental purposes, because he is faced with innumerable deterrent regulations.

A few days ago I inquired what was being accomplished at the technical schools in the direction of training young men for the building trades. I was informed that there was only one technical school in the State where training in bricklaying was provided; that the average number completing their course every year was ten; and that most of them eventually became foremen bricklayers. That is a tribute to the training received. In this connection I suggest that the Government should take steps to afford greater opportunities for lads to learn the bricklaying trade so that as soon as possible after the war is ended more will be available for home construction purposes.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Do you think it is possible to train lads at technical schools for the bricklaying trade?

Sir WILLIAM ANGLISS.—I was informed by the principal of the Collingwood Technical School that students whose ages vary from 16 to 30 years are taking the course, with the results I have already mentioned. It is to be hoped that the serious shortage of houses in this State will be overtaken in a practical fashion.

The Hon. R. C. RANKIN (*Western Province*).—Since the opening of the session the debate on the Address-in-Reply has, on occasions, given place to the consideration of Bills. I recall that on the 18th of July Sir Frank Clarke, in a brief speech, appealed to the House to continue the debate on this item of business until it was disposed of. I also consider that the attention of honorable members should be devoted, without interruption, to the Address-in-Reply. We are prepared to discuss matters dealt with in His Excellency's Speech, but when Government measures are brought forward continuity of debate is destroyed, and in many cases members are precluded from outlining in a considered manner important questions affecting their electorates. In all the circumstances my remarks on the present occasion will necessarily be rather disjointed.

In the first place I congratulate the Government on the excellent task it has performed in relieving the distress caused by the disastrous fires which swept a large portion of my province early this year. One hundred and sixty-eight houses were destroyed, also a huge number of sheep and cattle, and many miles of fencing. I travelled through that area with the Honorary Minister, Mr. Chandler, who was chairman of the State Bush Fires Relief Committee, and I thank him for the sympathetic and energetic manner in which he worked during those months. Mr. Macgibbon, of the Premier's Department, who was the secretary of the committee, also performed a wonderful job, and the farmers who suffered in the fires have a high regard for his work. The police, the land officers, and other Government officials throughout the area worked very hard, and the people of the State owe them heartfelt thanks for their labours. Since the fires, bush fire brigades have renewed their efforts to build up an organization equipped to prevent the recurrence of fires of such magnitude as those early this year. The State Government has been helpful, and has provided them with grants to purchase equipment.

I appeal to the Government to bring whatever influence it can to bear on the Federal Government with the object of relieving the bush fire brigades from the high sales tax charged on the purchase of motor trucks to be used solely for bush fire suppression. The State Government has granted money to certain brigades to purchase motor trucks, but when a small brigade has to pay sales tax at the rate of £50 or £60 on its truck, it is heavily handicapped. In some districts, brigades have had to get a loan from a bank, and the members have had to sign their joint and several guarantees. In order to clear off this charge, members of the brigade have had to promote social functions to raise money. The Federal Government might be prevailed upon to relieve bush fire brigades of the payment of sales tax in consideration of the valuable work that they will do in the future in the suppression of bush fires.

A most important subject is the settlement on the land of men who have served in the fighting forces. Often we hear it said that soldier settlement has been a

dismal failure in Victoria, and the State lost £30,000,000 on the settlement of soldiers after the last war. I used to believe that story, but I know better now. I claim to possess a wide knowledge of soldier settlement, because for some years I acted as advocate before the Closer Settlement Board for soldier settlers in the western portion of Victoria. When one calculates the added productivity to the State of the vast areas that were subdivided into small holdings for soldier settlers, one can visualize the great volumes of increased production, cartage, railway freight, and additional income for the State that resulted from the work of soldier settlers. There was also a huge increase in labour to grow the products, market them, process them, and sell them. I hope that the State will settle discharged servicemen on the land after this war, and most particularly I want them to be settled satisfactorily.

In my opinion, the first essential is to depart from the freehold tenure and, in its place, adopt the perpetual leasehold system, so that the men will pay rent instead of interest and sinking fund on a huge capital burden. I know settlers who were placed on the land in 1920 and are now paying about £240 a year in interest and sinking fund. They will still pay about £200 a year for the next 20 years. Those men are bled white to pay their interest. If they had been put on the land under the perpetual leasehold system, the difference between their rent and the interest burden under the freehold system could have been put into the land to enable it to produce more. In most cases the settlers placed on the land after the last war started with 100 per cent. mortgages, and from the day they went on the land until the day they got off it, they had to scrape together every penny they could to pay the interest. If it is determined that the men of this war are to be settled on the freehold system, we should be prepared to purchase the land at its present value and give the settlers a 33 per cent. equity. In other words, let the first loss be the last loss, and settle the men under conditions that will give them some prospect of hope instead of the black outlook that faced the settlers of the last war from the time they took up their land.

If settlers are placed in outback districts, they should be provided with transport facilities that will enable them to get their produce to market as cheaply and quickly as possible. I was pleased to read in the Governor's Speech that the Government intended to bring in a co-ordination of transport Bill. I hope that when it is presented to this House it will provide for transport regulation instead of the present transport strangulation. In the Western District, eastern Victoria, and the North-Eastern District, many localities are poorly served by rail transport. Settlers have carved their holdings out of the forests of East Gippsland, out of the Mallee, and out of the scrub in the far west of Victoria, and they have brought the land into a high state of productivity. Some of them still have to transport their goods 40 miles to the nearest railway station, but these men are liable to prosecution if they carry their goods by motor transport farther than the ridiculous radius of 25 miles. People in Melbourne are crying out for coupon-free goods, and housewives try to buy rabbits to eke out the meat ration. One explanation of the shortage of rabbits, for example, is this: The Railway Department will not carry rabbits loose; therefore, unless crates are provided, the Department will not accept consignments. A haulier may obtain from the Transport Regulation Board a permit to carry rabbits to Melbourne, but he is not allowed to take back with him empty crates, egg boxes or packages for the carriage of primary products unless under the iniquitous permit system he pays a fee of £2. I know of many instances in which men have transported rabbits and have had to pay a fee of £2 when they wanted to take back empty cases in their trucks. If the Government decides to settle men in the outback parts of the State it cannot expect them to succeed if they are tied hand and foot by strangling transport regulations.

I regret that the Minister of Transport has not been in the Chamber during the last few minutes because if he had been here probably he would have told me that a haulier may apply to the Transport

Regulation Board for an "E.H." licence. A man who takes out that licence is permitted to travel only from his town to Melbourne, but there might be many months in the year when he could earn money by short hauling around his district. In order to do that he would require to obtain an "E.G." licence, but a man cannot be granted both the "E.H." and the "E.G." licence at the one time.

The Hon. A. M. FRASER.—Did that type of regulation operate before the war?

The Hon. R. C. RANKIN.—It did to a certain degree.

The Hon. A. M. FRASER.—It was not due wholly to wartime conditions.

The Hon. R. C. RANKIN.—No. I expect some honorable members will disagree with me when I say that we should concentrate on the decentralization of this State by opening up the outer ports, and Portland in particular. If we are to progress as a nation we must expand not only the metropolis, but all the country districts. I am gratified that industries are now being developed in country towns; small though they are, they are absorbing youths and girls living in the towns. Only two months ago, a small factory was opened in Horsham employing 32 girls. Now 80 girls are engaged there, and the owner told me on Friday last that he was very pleased with the type of girl available in the district. He finds they are a happier and more contented group than those employed in the city.

The Hon. A. E. MCDONALD.—What type of work is done by that factory?

The Hon. R. C. RANKIN.—The manufacture of canvas goods. If industry can be developed in country towns, it will be found that the ports situated round the coast can be opened up to advantage. People with city interests have often said that it is no use opening up the outer ports because imports cannot be brought to them. I consider that the more the country towns of the State are developed, the greater will be the opportunity for the importation of heavy goods, such as raw materials, iron, and other items through outer ports for manufacture in country towns. The policy of decentralization must be carried out. People must be attracted from the big city areas into the country if the State is to prosper as it should. I hope that the Government will agree with my view and provide assistance for developing the outer ports of Victoria.

The Hon. PAUL JONES (*Doutta Galla Province*).—Next to the winning of the war, the question of paramount importance is the housing of the people. A valuable report was submitted last year by the State Development Committee in which particular reference was made to this subject. Having investigated the position, that committee estimated the shortage of houses in Victoria at 60,000. The conditions under which many people are forced to live in metropolitan areas are simply abominable. I have taken some extracts from the report, which refers, among other things, to the shortage of materials, such as timber, bricks, and roofing tiles, and also to the need for skilled labour to use those materials. I realize that the Forests Commission is now building roads to tap new areas for timber, but I am optimistic enough to believe that the war will probably be over before those roads are completed. Mr. Chippindall, the Director-General of War Organization of Industry, recently drew attention to the shortage of timber, and said—

> To meet the timber shortage, requests would have to be made to overseas nations for heavy imports to enable any appreciable strides to be made in overcoming the present acute shortage of houses.

I was never one to advocate the importation of timber while good timber could be found in Australia, but it would seem that such an expedient will be necessary in order to obtain sufficient supplies. Wives of men who are away fighting for their country cannot find a home in the country for which their husbands are fighting, and, with their children, they are forced to live under disgraceful conditions. Honorable members can visualize the situation that would arise if the war were to end to-morrow and hundreds of thousands of servicemen came back. Where would they find homes?

As to bricks, the State Development Committee stated that before the war 56 brick kilns were operating in Victoria,

capable of producing sufficient bricks to build 10,000 brick houses a year. Only five of those kilns are now in operation. The time is overdue for them all to be working at full production, and men should be released to operate them and have the bricks ready to build the needed homes. The construction of homes should have been commenced long ago. As to roofing tiles, according to the report, before the war there were fourteen factories operating, including two in the country, but now they have all closed down. Those factories were able to provide sufficient tiles to roof 7,000 dwellings a year. They should be re-opened immediately and set working to full capacity. The committee outlined a scheme to build 16,000 houses in Victoria each year for ten years, and I understand that the Commonwealth Government has a scheme to build 50,000 homes a year for ten years—which would be spread throughout Australia. Both projects are most worthy.

The report also refers to skilled labour. It is of no use having material available, if there is no skilled labour to use it, and the committee suggested that full-time pre-apprenticeship classes should be established for boys. That is a commonsense proposal, because owing to the slackness of the building trade numbers of boys who would be serving their apprenticeship are not doing so. If these classes were established they could be receiving their training. A further suggestion is that training should be provided in technical schools, and special schools if necessary. The unofficial Leader questioned whether technical schools could provide the training, and apparently that doubt may have been in the mind of the committee, because it suggested "technical schools or special schools" to train men discharged from the Services or the Civil Construction Corps or from essential industries such as munitions. Close attention should be paid to these factors and action taken to meet the acute need already facing the State and Commonwealth, which will be aggravated as soon as the war ends.

I now wish to deal with water conservation. I have said on previous occasions in this House that water conservation and irrigation are synonymous with prosperity, and shining examples of that statement are to be found in the Shepparton and Mildura districts, which are densely populated and prosperous. The Government proposes to carry out some bold schemes of water conservation. The Hume reservoir—in the construction of which I was interested as a Federal member because it was within my electorate—is proposed to be extended. When it was being built, economic experts, comprising Sir Otto Niemeyer and three others, who were known as the "Big Four," visited Australia and suggested ways and means by which money could be saved so that Australia might be able to pay in full its interest Bill of 6 per cent. on its overseas debts. Without going near the Hume reservoir they recommended that the wall should be finished at the height which it had then reached. That reservoir was designed for a capacity of 2,000,000 acre-feet, but because the building of the wall was then suspended, the capacity is only 1,250,000 acre-feet. It is now proposed to complete the reservoir so that it may have the original capacity intended.

When the proposal of the "Big Four" was being discussed I interviewed the chief engineer on the job, who informed me that if the Government of the day decided to suspend building operations at the reservoir and to complete it in ten years' time, it would cost at least 25 per cent. more than the original estimate. He pointed out that he had at the site a team of chosen men and the necessary equipment to complete the job. The Government, however, followed the recommendation of the "Big Four"; some of the equipment remained there to rust, and the men were dispersed over the Commonwealth. To-day—thirteen or fourteen years later—it is proposed to complete the work, and it will cost probably more than 25 per cent. above the original estimate.

The Eildon weir has a capacity of about 300,000 acre-feet, and the Government proposes to enlarge it to a capacity of 2,000,000 acre-feet—that is equal to the suggested capacity of the Hume reservoir. Some years ago the strength and stability of the wall of the Eildon weir were queried, as it was said to be giving way. Residents below the wall were perturbed—and justifiably so. I

brought the matter up in the Federal Parliament, and the result was that electric bells were installed in the homes of people living close below the wall so that in impending danger they might be warned. Sentries were posted on the wall to keep watch throughout the 24 hours of the day, and to give notice if any sign of the wall collapsing began to develop. About 2 o'clock one morning, on account of some atmospheric disturbance, the bells rang in those homes. Many of the people got away to high ground as quickly as possible, but fortunately it was a false alarm.

It is now proposed to build a new wall, in comparison with which the existing wall will be like a footstool. The new wall will be 100 feet higher and will increase the capacity of the weir to 2,000,000 acre-feet. The residents of Jamieson are greatly perturbed because they do not know whether their township will be submerged. I tried to ascertain to-day from the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission whether that would be so, but until a survey is made the information cannot be given. When the Hume weir was being constructed, residents at Tallangatta lived in a state of suspense for months. Many of them wished to make material alterations to their properties, but they hesitated to do so through fear of the township being submerged. Residents in those areas are now afraid that if the Eildon weir is enlarged their properties will become submerged, and probably their suspense will last for a year or more. I am familiar with the surrounding districts. The weir is fed by three or four rivers—the Big river, the Howqua river, the Jamieson river, and the Goulburn river. Many of the residents in those areas think it would be wise for smaller reservoirs to be built in the upper reaches of those rivers, which are feeders. One beneficial result would be that little or no compensation would have to be paid for land submerged, because it would be mostly Crown land.

The Hon. P. T. BYRNES.—What would be the total capacity of those small reservoirs?

The Hon. PAUL JONES.—I tried to ascertain that information to-day, but could not. The Big river extends for 20 miles and waters some excellent flats. If the reservoirs were made large enough, they could impound a large quantity of water there.

Questions were recently asked in the Legislative Assembly about siltation in the Eildon weir. If smaller reservoirs were constructed, less silt would be brought down into that weir. Honorable members know that in the winter the streams are raging torrents. They tear away the sides of their banks, and that causes erosion. If three or four smaller dams were erected in the rivers I have named, those streams would not be raging torrents in the winter time; they would be more like the Maroondah dam. If reservoirs were constructed in the upper reaches of the Goulburn river and the Big river, they could serve the purpose of developing electric power. There is potential wealth in the hills. Gold is produced there. One of the greatest obstacles to securing the gold is the high cost of production. Firewood alone is a big item. The cost of firewood used in one mine is between £7,000 and £8,000 a year. If the dams were constructed, hydro-electric power could be developed, and it could be used to work the mines. Then many mines which are not now operating could resume working. Gold realizes between £9 and £10 an oz., as compared with £4 an oz. some years ago.

The Hon. P. T. BYRNES.—Engineers say that you cannot use water for both purposes.

The Hon. PAUL JONES.—Water could be used to provide electric power, and it would not deprive farmers lower down of their irrigation supplies. I am pleased that the Minister of Mines is present in the Chamber. His predecessor, Mr. Hogan, was very sympathetic towards mining. In 1942 the Commonwealth Government proposed to close down the gold mines in Australia. We had a hard fight to keep a couple of gold mines working in the Wood's Point district. There is no other industry to which the people living there could turn their hands if gold mining were shut down. Mr. Hogan gave good support to our protests against the Commonwealth suggestion. Local residents argued that they understood that our fighting forces had been sent overseas to help maintain the homes of the nation in safety. If the Commonwealth idea had been put

into effect, the homes at Wood's Point would have been rendered valueless long before the war was over. Two mines were allowed to carry on, as the circumstances were exceptional. Wood's Point is not like Bendigo, where other industries are conducted. Wood's Point is dependent on one mine, and Gaffney's Creek is in a similar position.

There is another reason why weirs should be constructed in the upper reaches of the rivers that I have named. In 1930, the Commonwealth Labour Government brought in legislation to provide for bounties for gold production, but the scheme was abolished with the increased price of gold. In 1939, a non-Labour Commonwealth Government saw fit to tax gold production. I regret very much that the Governor's Speech contained no reference to the gold-mining industry. It was gold mining that put Victoria on the map in the first place. May I quote from the annual report of the Victorian Mines Department for the year 1942?

Gold Discovery and Social Effects.—The highest production, it will be noted, occurred in 1856, when the yield was 3,053,744 gross oz. The two-million oz. mark was exceeded in each year for ten years commencing with 1852. Although it was late in 1851 when the rush to the gold diggings set in, the yield shown of 212,899 oz. was probably much under the correct figure. The exodus of the population of the colony to the gold diggings when the first rush commenced was remarkable. In October, 1851, Governor Latrobe, in a despatch to London, said:—

> "Not only have the idlers and day labourers in town and country . . . thrown up their employment and run off to the workings, but residents, farmers, tradesmen, clerks of every grade . . . . have followed. . . . Cottages are deserted, houses to let, business is at a standstill, and even schools are closed. In some of the suburbs not a man is left . . . The ships are in a great measure deserted and masters of vessels, like farmers, have made up parties of their men to go shares at the diggings."

There is always a ready and profitable market for gold. No country will refuse gold for any commodity that it has to sell. We should give every stimulus to the production of gold, and we should not tax it. Most of Australia's primary industries are subsidized by bounties or bonuses, but a tax is imposed on gold production.

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY.—But this Government did not impose that tax.

The Hon. PAUL JONES.—I have a statement showing the amount of revenue received from the Commonwealth tax on gold—

	£
1939-40	1,214,621
1940-41	1,452,260
1941-42	1,030,425
1942-43	524,694
1943-44	317,720

It is a case of killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. In South Africa, the gold tax yields £12,000,000, and it is more severe than the Australian tax. In the Commonwealth, the Government takes 50 per cent. of whatever is paid over £9 per fine ounce. As the price of gold is now about £10 9s., the Commonwealth receives something like 15s. an ounce. The total amount of gold produced from 1851 to 1939 in Australia was 157,559,000 fine ounces, of which Victoria produced 72,220,000; in other words, nearly 50 per cent. of Australia's gold came from this State. In my opinion, there is still more gold in Victoria than has been taken out of it. With the present price of gold, every encouragement should be given to bigger production.

I had intended to make a number of remarks on education, but as other members may desire to speak, I shall refrain from doing so. However, I have received a copy of the latest report on education from New Zealand, and it is an eye opener. I shall make one or two comparisons to show how far behind we are here. In 1942, the population of Victoria was about 2,000,000, and that of New Zealand was about 300,000 less. In New Zealand, the Government spends annually £5,500,000 on education, whereas our expenditure totals £3,000,000. Of the New Zealand pupils, 69 per cent. go from primary schools to full post-primary education; 60 per cent. of the technical students pay no fees, and 45 per cent. of the university students have free places.

In the year 1938-39, New Zealand spent £120,000 on milk for school children, whereas in Victoria only £2,450 was expended; in other words, the Dominion's outlay was 60 times as great as that of this State. New Zealand spent £84,000 on dental treatment, or nearly five times what Victoria spent—£16,000. In transporting

pupils to schools, New Zealand laid out £280,000, whereas Victoria's contribution was only £24,000. The New Zealand Government has raised the school-leaving age to fifteen years. I regret that the Commonwealth will not control education. Since the Labour Government has been in power, it has brought in a new system affecting those attending universities. In the past, those who were university students came mainly from homes conducted by parents who were able to pay the necessary fees, but the Commonwealth Labour Government appointed a Universities Commission, whose duty it is to select students for the universities. Those students are selected on a test of ability and not on the financial status of the homes from which they come. Any child with brains should have the opportunity of receiving higher education, and lack of finance on the part of the parents should not be a bar to the child's opportunity to receive it.

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY.—That will not be continued after the war.

The Hon. PAUL JONES.—That is why I regret that there will not be power for future Federal control for the purpose. Any boy or girl with ability should be afforded the opportunity of a higher education, and the financial position of the home should be no bar.

The motion for the adoption of the Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech was agreed to, and it was ordered that the Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor by the President and such members of the Council as might wish to accompany him.

ADJOURNMENT.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE: DAYS OF MEETING: PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS.

The Hon. J. H. LIENHOP (Minister of Public Works.—(*By leave.*)—I move—

That the House, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, September 19.

The Hon. G. S. McARTHUR (*South-Western Province*).—I should like the Leader of the House to consider a reversion to the practice previously observed in this House of meeting on two nights a week and then adjourning for a fortnight. That would meet the convenience of country members who, because of the curtailed travelling facilities and the shortage of man power in country districts, find great difficulty in leaving their properties to attend this House on one night each week.

The Hon. J. H. LIENHOP (Minister of Public Works).—I can assure Mr. McArthur that at all times during the session I, with the assistance of my Ministerial colleagues, will endeavour to meet the wishes of country members in respect to meetings of this Chamber. I realize the difficulties experienced by country members in reaching the city because of the curtailed transport facilities. For that reason I have proposed that the House should adjourn for a fortnight, and in future I shall endeavour to meet the convenience of members in calling the House together to discharge the important business that it will be called on to deal with.

The Hon. A. M. FRASER (*Melbourne North Province*).—I should like the Leader of the House to indicate when honorable members who have private members' Bills on the Notice Paper will have the opportunity of submitting them for consideration. Private members' Bills are an important part of our legislative business, and ample opportunity should be given for their consideration. If they are not dealt with in this House until the last fortnight of the session, any Bill passed by this Chamber is relegated to a very low place on the business paper in the Assembly. That has happened on several occasions during the last three years, and I should like an assurance from the Minister of Public Works that an early opportunity will be given for the submission of private members' Bills for the consideration of honorable members.

The Hon. J. H. LIENHOP (Minister of Public Works).—I am not unmindful of the rights of honorable members and I shall keep uppermost in my mind the desire of Mr. Fraser and other members to have an early opportunity of submitting private members' Bills of which notice has been given. I shall endeavour to arrange the business of the House in such a way that members will have an early opportunity of dealing with those measures.

The motion was agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.23 *p.m. until Tuesday, September* 19.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, September 5, 1944.

The SPEAKER (the Hon. G. H. Knox) took the chair at 4.4 p.m., and read the prayer.

DEATH OF LIEUTENANT G. H. LAMB, M.L.A.

The SPEAKER (the Hon. G. H. Knox).—I regret to announce to the House that official notification has been received of the death of Lieutenant George Hamilton Lamb, member for the electoral district of Lowan, while a prisoner of war in Japanese hands.

Mr. DUNSTAN (Premier and Treasurer).—(*By leave.*)—I move—

That this House expresses its sincere sorrow at the death of Lieutenant George Hamilton Lamb in Thailand whilst a prisoner of war in Japanese hands, and places on record its acknowledgment of the valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Lowan from 2nd March, 1935, to 7th December, 1943, and its keen sense of his devoted and loyal service as a member of the Australian Imperial Forces.

In submitting this motion I am sure that I am voicing the sentiments of all honorable members when I say that I was deeply grieved to learn of the death of our esteemed colleague and friend, Lieutenant George Hamilton Lamb. The late honorable member enjoyed the friendship and respect not only of members of his own party, but also of all other parties in this House. He was a man of the highest integrity, and he served his country faithfully and well, both as a legislator, and on the field of battle. He was a keen debater, and was always an earnest advocate of country interests and of the policy of decentralization, and although he held firm convictions, he was always prepared to pay due regard to the views of others. At no time did he allow any statements made in debate to interfere with personal friendships. He was a man of undoubted courage, which was displayed not only in this Parliament but also while he wore the King's uniform. When war broke out, Hamilton Lamb showed his keen sense of duty by joining the Forces. The military authorities soon recognized his courage and ability, for it was not long before he gained his commission. I am confident that his comrades in arms found him to be a loyal and courageous friend both to those he served and to those who served under him.

When the news of his death reached Australia last week, I received a telegram from the Prime Minister asking me to convey to members of this Parliament and to Lieutenant Lamb's constituents his sorrow at the loss the people of Victoria had sustained, and to express to his relatives the sympathy of the Commonwealth Government in their bereavement. I was gratified indeed to receive that personal tribute from the Prime Minister to a member of this Parliament who, as a soldier, had made the supreme sacrifice.

To the sorrowing relatives of our departed friend I offer, on behalf of all honorable members, our heartfelt sympathy. I hope that in their grief they will derive some consolation from the knowledge that he gave his life in defence of his country and of all that we hold dear so that this land might be spared the unspeakable horror and degradation of conquest by a foreign foe. We owe much to such gallant men; may we prove worthy of their sacrifice!

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—On behalf of the Opposition I join with the Premier in extending sympathy to the relatives of the late Lieutenant Lamb, who was a member of this Parliament for the last nine years. He entered this House to represent a constituency in the Wimmera and during the years that he was here he proved beyond doubt that he was a man of courage and ability. The political life of some men sometimes passes without much notice from others, but Lieutenant Lamb displayed rare qualities, one of which was his fearlessness in expressing the firm convictions he held.

This Parliament and State are the poorer because of the death of Lieutenant Lamb. He took upon himself the responsibility—not as a youth, but as a man of mature years and judgment—of joining the

armed forces when war broke out, and participating in the struggle for survival against the enemy. He served his country, not only as a parliamentarian, but also as a teacher and as a soldier. He has made the supreme sacrifice. His parliamentary colleagues, his constituents, and the people of the State generally have suffered a deep loss in the death of one who gave outstanding service to his country. I join in expressing sympathy to his mother and other sorrowing relatives. The friends of the late Hamilton Lamb, both in this Parliament and in the armed forces, will long remember him.

Mr. HOLLWAY (Minister of Public Instruction).—On behalf of the members of the United Australia party, I desire to associate myself with the sentiments of the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition. We deeply regret the death of Lieutenant Lamb, and we appreciate the fact that the war is so far away from us now largely on account of the sacrifices of men of the same calibre as our late fellow member. We join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in expressing our sincere sympathy to his relatives.

Personally, I regret the passing of Mr. Lamb because, above everything else, he was an educationist. He had a wider practical knowledge of education than any other member, and it would have been of inestimable value if his services could have been made available to the Government to implement the desires of many people to improve our education standards. From the first occasion of his addressing the House his main theme always was education, and that was at a time when other members were not saying much on the subject. Now he has gone from us, and I hope, as the Premier said, that we shall prove ourselves worthy of the sacrifices that he and many thousands of his comrades have made.

Mr. SLATER (*Dundas*).—I desire to join with the party leaders in paying tribute to the memory of our departed colleague. From the moment that he entered this House I enjoyed a very real and sincere friendship with the late honorable member for Lowan. We interested ourselves in problems common to our adjoining electorates, and in all the years that we served in the task of representing the neighbouring constituencies I found Hamilton Lamb a man in every sense of the word. Those were years of happy association with him, and the more I got to know him, the more I admired and respected him.

As the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition said, Mr. Lamb had courage to a tremendous degree. I do not think I am doing the House or the memory of the late honorable member any injustice by saying that he was one of the most radical and most progressive men in the House. He never hesitated to say either in Parliament or outside of it what he felt upon political problems of the day. As soon as war broke out—I know of this because I had many talks with him as to what he intended doing—he took the earliest opportunity to volunteer for service, despite his rather mature age and his lack of physical strength. As he saw the path of duty, so he resolutely followed it. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that this House and the community generally are the poorer by the death of a very gallant gentleman.

Mr. CAMERON (*Kara Kara and Borung*).—I wish to associate myself with the expressions of regret that have been uttered on the passing of the late Lieutenant Hamilton Lamb. He and I entered the House at the same time; he was my closest neighbour electorally, and so I saw a good deal of him. At all times I found him to be a scholar and a gentleman. He had a happy disposition, and I shall always have pleasant memories of our association. I was proud of him as a member of the Legislative Assembly, and I was more proud of him when he enlisted in the A.I.F. I join with other speakers in expressing regret at his passing in the execution of a duty which he recognized early in the war and carried out to the best of his ability. To his relatives I extend my sincere sympathy.

Mr. DODGSHUN (*Ouyen*).—I, too, wish to join with other members in expressing my personal sympathy to the relatives of Lieutenant Hamilton Lamb. It is most unfortunate that we, as a State Parliament, should have lost one of our youngest and most virile members. I can speak

with thankful appreciation of many courtesies shown to me by our late colleague when I first entered the House, and it was my pleasure, with other members, to have been able to assist him, while he was overseas on active service, in attending to the requirements of his electorate. Perhaps I was one of the last among his parliamentary colleagues to see him before he left Australia. I had the pleasure of seeing him in the midst of his men, and there was no shadow of doubt that they idolized him.

We have to thank Lieutenant Lamb and the other men who were taken prisoner with him in Java—there was only a small band of Australian troops there, numbering about 2,500—for their gallant efforts to halt the surge of Japanese aggression. With the Netherlands East Indies Forces, they fought an unequal battle, and I think this House and the State cannot yet fully express the great tribute due to those men.

The Minister of Public Instruction said that Mr. Lamb was an ardent educationist; I personally know that one of his highest ideals was to attain to the portfolio of Minister of Public Instruction in this State. If he had been spared to do so I feel certain that we should have seen many valuable reforms introduced in our Education Department. I express my sincere sympathy to his mother, to his sister, and to the young children who have been left.

Mr. HAWORTH (*Albert Park*).—I wish to associate myself with the tributes that have been paid, and to express my deep sympathy with the relatives of our late colleague, Lieutenant Hamilton Lamb. Strangely enough, when I spoke on the last day of meeting in this House, I expressed the desire that it would not be long before we should have the pleasure of welcoming our colleague back to this Assembly. That remark met with the approbation of all members of this Chamber, and although the enemy has robbed us of that honour, it cannot deprive us of the present opportunity of paying our tribute to his memory. The last time I saw Lieutenant Lamb was a few weeks before he was taken a prisoner of war. I had been evacuated with my unit from Tobruk. He had learned that we were resting in Palestine, and he sent a message to me saying that he was pleased at my safe evacuation and would like to see me so that we could spend a few hours together.

I was gratified to receive his message and was glad to be able later to make arrangements for him to come to my unit, where we had lunch together. A few days later his unit left for the Far Eastern war zone, where he was taken prisoner. I had always believed that he was a forthright man, as well as an honorable and honest-thinking man. At the end of the meeting to which I have referred I was confident that that was so, because we had had the kind of heart-to-heart talk which is common to soldiers on active service. We talked of dear ones and of Australia—both very far away, and both then exposed to the threat of the perils of war. At that time Australia had come into a war zone that had been created by Japan.

Lieutenant Lamb had a great regard for his young family, and, what is more, for his country. He fully realized what was expected of him and what might be expected of him if he were put to the test —the greatest test of loyalty and good citizenship that his country could ask of him. I knew, of course, that he would give his own life if need be. I feel deeply for his relatives and especially for his young family, but I trust that they will derive inspiration from the knowledge that he was a highly respected member of this House, admired and honoured for the great sacrifice he made in order to put into practice his belief in his country's cause. I hope that his example will be a continuing influence in their lives, and to the constituents of Lowan, for he has shown what has to be done and the sacrifices that have to be faced to make a country great and free. That being so, his labours will possess a quality of immortality.

Mr. ALEXANDER McDONALD (*Stawell and Ararat*).—Being politically a stable mate of the late Hamilton Lamb, I desire to associate myself with the expressions of great regret already uttered at the sad end of our departed comrade. He came into this House at the same time as I did, in 1935. His electorate adjoins mine, so in that sense we are neighbours. We were also friends from the start. I recognized in him one of those men who possess not only the usual political knowledge, but

also clear mental vision. He cherished great ideals, and he had the courage to express them. We all have recollections of his very pleasant nature when he spoke in this House from the position where I am now standing. We realize that we have lost a man, we have lost a friend, we have lost a politician, and we have lost a man of education—a Bachelor of Arts, whose degree enabled him to pursue perhaps one of the greatest ideals in life, the advancement of education. That ideal was particularly dear to him, and it is sad to think to-day that this Parliament has been deprived of his abilities, which, we have no doubt, would have been inspirational to the young people of this State. It is sad to realize that we shall know him no more; but his memory is dear to us, and will be for ever green. We realize that what he has done was in the interests not only of his country, but also of the cause of freedom and liberty. He is the first member of this Parliament to make the supreme sacrifice in the war.

Greater love hath no man than this, that **he lay down his life for his friends.**
At the going down of the sun and in the **morning**
We will remember **them.**

The SPEAKER (the Hon. G. H. Knox).—I should like to add a tribute and an addition to the expressions of sorrow voiced by the Premier and other speakers regarding the death of the late Lieutenant George Hamilton Lamb. In the years to come these words of appreciation will be read with pride by his relatives, and especially by the three young children he has left behind him. It is the commendable custom of this House to give to those near and dear to any member who departs this life a beautiful brochure containing the tributes spoken in Parliament. It has been the experience of many honorable members to sit here while such speeches have been delivered, but I doubt whether in the long list of men who while serving their country in public life have passed hence, there is one whose death has touched us more poignantly and reached our imaginations and hearts more directly than that of Lieutenant Hamilton Lamb. I add my tribute to the words which have been offered by the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, and other members who have addressed the House on this occasion. I believe that the expression of John Bunyan, "All the trumpets sounded for him on the other side," applies to George Hamilton Lamb.

The motion was agreed to in silence, honorable members standing in their places.

Mr. DUNSTAN (Premier and Treasurer).—I move—

That, as a further mark of respect to the memory of the late Lieutenant George Hamilton Lamb, the House do now adjourn until 7 o'clock this day.

The motion was agreed to.

The House adjourned at 4.31 *p.m.*

The SPEAKER (**the Hon. G. H. Knox**) took the chair at 7.35 p.m.

FORESTS COMMISSION.

RECEIPTS FROM ROYALTIES: TOTAL REVENUE. COLLECTIONS.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*) asked the Minister of Forests—

What was the amount received in royalties by the Forests Commission for each of the last five years?

Mr. LIND (Minister of Forests).—The answer is as follows:—

1939–1940	..	£172,645
1940–1941	..	233,269
1941–1942	..	260,435
1942–1943	..	250,398
1943–1944	..	257,768
Total	..	£1,174,515

With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to submit figures relative to the net revenue collections in the five years referred to. I feel that that information should accompany the answer I have already given, because it will be of assistance to honorable members. The figures are as follows:—

1939–1940	..	£226,535
1940–1941	..	355,016
1941–1942	..	491,479
1942–1943	..	733,270
1943–1944	..	988,014
Total	..	**£2,794,314**

MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN TRAMWAYS BOARD.

VEHICULAR ACCIDENTS.

Mr. MERRIFIELD (*Essendon*) asked Mr. Oldham (Honorary Minister) for the Minister of Public Works—

What was the number of accidents in each of the last five years, in which—(*a*) trams; (*b*) passenger buses; and (*c*) other motor vehicles, operated by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board, were involved?

Mr. OLDHAM (Honorary Minister).—The Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board has furnished the Minister of Public Works with the following information:—

BOARD'S TRAMS, PASSENGER BUSES AND OTHER MOTOR VEHICLES CONCERNED IN ACCIDENTS FOR FIVE-YEAR PERIOD ENDING 30TH JUNE, 1944.

(*a*) Trams, including boarding and alighting, falling from trams, knocked down, collisions motor vehicles, other vehicles, other trams and miscellaneous:—

Year ended—	
June, 1940	5,058
June, 1941	4,560
June, 1942	4,964
June, 1943	5,135
June, 1944	4,224

(*b*) Buses, including boarding and alighting, falling from buses, knocked down, collisions motor vehicles, other vehicles, other buses, and miscellaneous:—

Year ended—	
June, 1940	730
June, 1941	1,325
June, 1942	1,843
June, 1943	1,663
June, 1944	1,364

(*c*) Board's Motor Vehicles — Collisions other motors, other vehicles, knocked down, and miscellaneous:—

June, 1940	10
June, 1941	22
June, 1942	28
June, 1943	19
June, 1944	6

DISCHARGED SERVICEMEN'S PREFERENCE ACT.

APPEALS TO BOARD.

Mr. CREMEAN (*Clifton Hill*) asked the Premier—

1. How many individual appeals against the promotion of non-servicemen have been received by the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board since the coming into operation of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act 1943?

2. How many of such appeals concerned positions in the State Public Service?

Mr. DUNSTAN (Premier and Treasurer).—The answers are—

1. Eighty-nine. (Includes teachers 2; police 10; public service 56; railways 2; others 19).

2. Fifty-six.

PUBLIC SERVICE.

PERMANENT APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY OFFICERS.

Mr. CREMEAN (*Clifton Hill*) asked the Premier—

If he will lay on the table of the Library—(*a*) the recommendation submitted by the Public Service Board to Cabinet on 16th December, 1942, for the permanent appointment of certain temporary officers, with five years or more service, performing work of a permanent nature; and (*b*) the subsequent memorandum on this matter submitted by the Board to Cabinet on 28th February, 1944?

Mr. DUNSTAN (Premier and Treasurer).—The memoranda in question are confidential reports to the Government, and it is not customary to lay such documents on the table of the Library. However, should the honorable member desire to obtain any specific information, I shall endeavour to furnish it to him.

Mr. EVERARD.—Will similar information be available to any honorable member who desires it?

Mr. DUNSTAN.—Yes, there will be no discrimination.

Mr. CREMEAN (*Clifton Hill*).—(*By leave.*)—Does the Premier mean that I shall be permitted to look at the file relating to this subject?

Mr. DUNSTAN.—I do not mind. I shall endeavour to meet the honorable member in any reasonable way.

FISHERIES AND GAME DEPARTMENT.

SUPPLY AND SALE OF FISH.

Mr. CREMEAN (*Clifton Hill*) asked the Chief Secretary—

1. What was the total weight and value of fish sold in the Metropolitan Fish Market during each of the last five financial years?

2. Whether any special measures are adopted by the Fisheries and Game Department or any other State authority to control the sale of fish?

Mr. HYLAND (Chief Secretary).—The following figures supplied by the Inspector of the Melbourne Fish Market

show the total weight and value of fish sold in the market during each of the last five financial years:—

Year.	Fish.	Crayfish.	Total Value.
	lb.	dozen.	£
1939–40 ..	14,665,127	40,339	427,736
1940–41 ..	14,501,007	40,017	548,144
1941–42 ..	15,683,144	31,224	754,042
1942–43 ..	13,382,120	19,554	648,960
1943–44 ..	12,274,580	13,380	587,939

In reply to question No. 2, I would say that the laws of this State do not require fishermen to send their fish to the Melbourne Fish Market, or to any other market. Fish which have been caught legally may be sold or disposed of in any manner the owner chooses. The Melbourne Fish Market is owned and controlled by the Melbourne City Council, which supervises sales therein. Maximum prices for the several species of fish have been fixed pursuant to the Commonwealth National Security (Prices) Regulations, and the responsibility of enforcing the regulations devolves upon the Prices Commissioner. The only control by a State authority incidental to the sale of fish is exercised by—(*a*) the Chief Inspector of Fisheries and Game, to ensure that no close season or undersized fish are offered for sale; and (*b*) the Department of Health, to see that no fish are sold which are not in a fit condition for human consumption.

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS BILL.

Mr. HYLAND (Chief Secretary).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

As the title discloses, this is a Bill "relating to the Redivision of the State of Victoria into Electoral Districts for the Legislative Assembly and for other purposes," and it is submitted as the result of an agreement when the present Ministry was formed. The measure is based on the sacrifice of six country seats. The Government agreed to that arrangement as the best it could obtain at the time, and it is honouring its promise in the matter. The Government wishes to make it clear, however, that it will not do more than surrender six country seats, despite press reports to the effect that the Leader of the Opposition intends to move amendments to the Bill to provide that country people shall lose nine of their representatives in this House. We are anxious to ascertain how country members of the Opposition will vote on the issue of taking more than six seats away from country districts.

I repeat that the Government is honouring its agreement in submitting this Bill. I am no more enthusiastic about a redistribution scheme than other country members, irrespective of whether they belong to the Country party, the Labour party, or the United Australia party. The Country party has protested all through the discussions that the present is not an opportune time to implement a redistribution scheme regarding Assembly seats. We are suffering from the effects of war, and this afternoon we witnessed a ceremony in which tribute was paid to a late member who had died in an enemy prison camp. Another member—the honorable member for Kew—is also a prisoner of war, and what is to become of his seat under the redistribution scheme? Honorable members know that many people are always anxious to unseat a member. If the redistribution affects the Kew electorate—as it must, because the present total of electors is 10,000 above the proposed quota—it is hard to say what will happen. The present member may lose his seat, despite his present unfortunate circumstances.

Mr. HOLLINS.—I think the river boundary on one side will make it all right for him.

Mr. HYLAND.—I hope that something will be done to protect his interests. When the last measure providing for redistribution of Assembly seats was passed in 1926 it was called by many names, and finally it was designated the "Argyle blot." I know of twenty names I could give to any redistribution scheme, and then my vocabulary would not be exhausted. I feel sure that other country members could add to my list of terms!

Mr. CAIN.—You are damning your Bill with faint praise.

Mr. HYLAND.—I am not in favour of this redistribution scheme and so I do not submit the Bill with any degree of enthusiasm. At present there are 39 country seats and 26 metropolitan seats. If the 39 country representatives had banded together there would have been no redistribution scheme to-day; we would have had the necessary numbers against the proposal.

Mr. CAIN.—And you would have cheered democracy!

Mr. HYLAND.—The honorable member for Northcote knows very little about democracy. Why did not the country members of his party stand together with other country members on this issue? I suppose the Leader of the Opposition bluffed or bullied them into doing what he wanted them to do. When this matter is disposed of and six of the present members of this House have lost their seats, it will be too late for them to say, "Why did we not do so and so?" I am anxious to hear country representatives on the Opposition side stating their views on the subject of redistribution.

Mr. CAIN.—We are waiting now to hear your views on the Bill.

Mr. HYLAND.—I am making them known, but apparently members of the Opposition do not like them. I repeat that we are anxious to hear country members of the Opposition speak on this subject; but I think it is safe to assume that they will not have much to say. I do not think it will be of use to traverse the events that led to the want-of-confidence motion which was moved last session or to go into the details of all the happenings at the time of the three-day Ministry which was then sworn in. The story may be read in *Hansard*. However, when the want-of-confidence motion was submitted we heard many different guesses. At first it was stated that there would be a loss of fifteen country seats, then of twelve country seats, and next, as a compromise, a loss of nine. Then the final number was made six country seats, and these are to be sacrificed under the Bill. I wish to refer honorable members to certain planks in the State platform of the Labour party. Item No. 41 reads—

> Realization of principle of one vote one value. Not more than seventy nor less than sixty single State Electorates; quota to be obtained by dividing number of electors by number of electorates, and to be observed with no variation greater or less than 10 per cent.

Mr. CREMEAN.—What is the date of the publication you have?

Mr. HYLAND.—It was published in 1939. I think that item could be made as elastic as item No. 48, which reads—

> That the Leader of the State Parliamentary Labour party be not permitted to accept a commission from the Governor to form a Government unless he has a Labour majority in the Legislative Assembly.

If the principle of one vote one value—without a 10 per cent. deviation up or down—were implemented on enrolments as at the 31st of December, 1939, the result would be 39 metropolitan and 26 country and urban seats, the quota being 17,810 in each instance. If we take the enrolments as at the 30th of June, 1944, there would be 41 metropolitan seats as against 24 country and urban seats. That is what would happen if the Labour party had its way with a ratio of 100 to 100. On the 30th of June, 1944, there would have been a quota of 19,519 for all electorates throughout the State. It is safe to say that to-day no one with any sense could advocate one vote one value, because such a system would be quite unjust. Even in the Federal sphere the principle of one vote one value is not observed. The figures for some of the Federal electorates are staggering. The greatest number of electors is to be found in Kooyong—82,331—as against 45,081 for Wimmera. That is in accordance with the Labour party platform. Much has been said about what the Labour party will do for the country in various ways, but let me quote from the *Argus* regarding the last Australian Labour party conference—

> Mr. M. Bourke, a country delegate, protested when a number of delegates left the council chamber when debate on country interests began. "It is deplorable," he said, "that when matters affecting the country come before conference, speakers are faced with empty seats."

The areas of all the metropolitan electorates, including Dandenong, which is 59 square miles, total 258 square miles. It has been said that Gippsland East contains too few people, but it is 31 times as large as the whole of the metropolitan area. My electorate is only 8½ times as

large as the metropolitan electorates. I recall that the honorable member for Coburg said in this House some time ago that he found it strenuous to look after a sparsely populated electorate of 10 square miles. How much more strenuous is it to represent an electorate of 8,000 square miles? I have the figures for the elections of 1927 and 1943. I suggest that they be printed in *Hansard* without my occupying time in reading them.

Mr. CAIN.—I do not know whether we can agree to the figures being published unless they are read.

Mr. HYLAND.—Then I shall read them. Here they are—

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

ENROLMENT FIGURES.

Electoral District.	Enrolments.		Fluctuations.	
	At 9th April, 1927.	At 12th June, 1943.	Increase.	Decrease.
Albert Park	23,697	28,881	5,184	..
Allandale	9,709	9,486	..	223
Ballaarat	16,521	18,327	1,806	..
Barwon	11,441	13,828	2,387	..
Benalla	9,717	10,872	1,155	..
Benambra	8,066	9,506	1,440	..
Bendigo	15,384	18,507	3,123	..
Boroondara	21,831	39,261	17,430	..
Brighton	22,753	35,993	13,240	..
Brunswick	22,998	29,664	6,666	..
Bulla and Dalhousie	9,971	10,251	280	..
Carlton	22,034	22,723	689	..
Castlemaine and Kyneton	9,928	10,732	804	..
Caulfield	23,388	32,473	9,085	..
Clifton Hill	24,347	25,553	1,206	..
Coburg	20,528	32,906	12,378	..
Collingwood	23,879	24,496	617	..
Dandenong	20,571	39,698	19,127	..
Dundas	10,568	12,385	1,817	..
Essendon	20,677	30,894	10,217	..
Evelyn	9,494	13,259	3,765	..
Flemington	21,687	25,925	4,238	..
Footscray	21,599	34,165	12,566	..
Geelong	17,621	20,395	2,774	..
Gippsland East	7,040	7,443	403	..
Gippsland North	9,962	11,180	1,218	..
Gippsland South	10,042	13,018	2,976	..
Gippsland West	10,060	12,061	2,001	..
Goulburn Valley	10,778	12,712	1,934	..
Grant	9,172	11,708	2,536	..
Gunbower	10,719	10,439	..	280
Hampden	10,358	10,735	377	..
Hawthorn	21,641	28,500	6,859	..
Heidelberg	21,954	37,373	15,419	..
Kara Kara and Borung	10,535	9,620	..	915
Kew	21,610	34,589	12,979	..
Korong and Eaglehawk	10,776	10,124	..	652
Lowan	10,923	11,952	1,029	..
Maryborough and Daylesford	10,515	10,694	179	..
Melbourne	23,045	23,712	667	..
Mildura	9,066	13,187	4,121	..
Mornington	10,520	15,525	5,005	..
Northcote	22,405	26,623	4,218	..
Nunawading	19,012	30,157	11,145	..
Oakleigh	24,730	39,079	14,349	..
Ouyen	10,499	8,888	..	1,611
Polwarth	10,981	11,883	902	..
Port Fairy and Glenelg	10,898	11,945	1,047	..
Port Melbourne	22,076	22,668	592	..
Prahran	25,087	32,947	7,860	..

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY—ENROLMENT FIGURES—*continued.*

Electoral District.	Enrolments.		Fluctuations.	
	At 9th April, 1927.	At 12th June, 1943.	Increase.	Decrease.
Richmond	24,059	26,162	2,103	..
Rodney	10,855	11,678	823	..
St. Kilda	24,958	33,617	8,659	..
Stawell and Ararat	10,881	11,174	293	..
Swan Hill	8,837	8,915	78	..
Toorak	22,193	30,232	8,039	..
Upper Goulburn	9,633	9,987	654	..
Upper Yarra	11,556	18,690	7,134	..
Walhalla	9,296	13,343	4,047	..
Wangaratta and Ovens	9,306	11,327	2,021	..
Waranga	9,349	8,602	..	747
Warrenheip and Grenville	9,743	10,121	378	..
Warrnambool	9,991	12,609	2,618	..
Williamstown	20,379	26,497	6,118	..
Wonthaggi	9,662	9,734	72	..
	993,211	1,261,630		

AREAS OF STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTORAL DISTRICTS.

Metropolitan Districts.	Sq. Miles.
Albert Park	2½
Boroondara	11½
Brighton	8¾
Brunswick	3¼
Carlton	2¼
Caulfield	4½
Clifton Hill	4
Coburg	10
Collingwood	1¾
Dandenong	59½
Essendon	10¼
Flemington	5¼
Footscray	17½
Hawthorn	3½
Heidelberg	26½
Kew	9½
Melbourne	5½
Northcote	4
Nunawading	26
Oakleigh	9½
Port Melbourne	5¼
Prahran	2¾
Richmond	2¼
St. Kilda	3¼
Toorak	3½
Williamstown	15½
Total	258

Urban Districts.	Sq. Miles.
Ballaarat	6
Bendigo	42
Geelong	6
Total	54

Country Districts.	Sq. Miles.
Allandale	1,440
Barwon	390
Benalla	1,977
Benambra	3,610
Bulla and Dalhousie	1,306
Castlemaine and Kyneton	576
Dundas	4,480
Evelyn	750
Gippsland East	8,070
Gippsland North	4,070
Gippsland South	2,214
Gippsland West	896
Goulburn Valley	1,504
Grant	1,383
Gunbower	3,450
Hampden	2,522
Kara Kara and Borung	2,400
Korong and Eaglehawk	2,195
Lowan	3,814
Maryborough and Daylesford	1,030
Mildura	4,929
Mornington	1,024
Ouyen	7,565
Polwarth	1,792
Port Fairy and Glenelg	2,798
Rodney	1,318
Stawell and Ararat	3,350
Swan Hill	3,418
Upper Goulburn	3,608
Upper Yarra	697
Walhalla	1,504
Wangaratta and Ovens	2,457
Waranga	2,457
Warrenheip and Grenville	844
Warrnambool	1,050
Wonthaggi	684
Total	87,572

Total Area of State, 87,884 square miles.

A redistribution on the basis I have suggested would mean that six country electorates would disappear. The members then representing country districts would have much larger areas to traverse and attend to. Consequently they would have to meet much heavier expenditure from their parliamentary allowance.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Could not that difficulty be overcome by increasing the reimbursement?

Mr. HYLAND.—It could be. When one realizes the distances travelled by members representing electorates such as Gippsland East, Mildura, Ouyen, and Port Fairy and Glenelg, and the cost of that representation to those members, one appreciates that their net income for personal purposes does not reach the basic wage standard. Before I entered Parliament I was accustomed to keeping books, and for the first two years of my membership of this House I made a careful note of the cost to me of my electorate. Naturally, I charged to the account every penny of the money that I did not disburse as a private individual. I noted the mileage covered in my motor car, and obtained from the agents the cost per mile. I included in the figures the expense of staying at the Victoria while in the city. When I made the final calculation at the end of two years, I found that the amount left for my own use out of my parliamentary allowance was £1 13s. 7d. a week.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Yet you have been a member of a Government that has permitted such a state of affairs to remain unaltered for a number of years.

Mr. HYLAND.—I admit that. The time has arrived for a revision with respect to those members who will be called upon to bear a much heavier burden in country electorates. It must be remembered that the cost of living has increased considerably since the last adjustment in parliamentary allowances. Although practically all other members of the community have received an additional allowance on that account, parliamentarians have not. In view of the proposed redistribution of seats, I emphasize that it will be difficult for members representing country electorates to carry on with their present remuneration.

Mr. THONEMANN.—In those earlier days to which you have alluded, taxation was light; there was really more money to spend.

Mr. HYLAND.—The taxation was so light that my assessment did not give me much concern. However, the situation has altered in that regard. I propose at this juncture to outline the policy of the Country party on the subject of a redistribution of seats. It was set out in the Premier's speech at the Town Hall, Eaglehawk, on Thursday, the 20th of May, 1943, as follows:—

> The Government believes that anomalies existing at the present time between certain country electorates, and also between city constituencies, should, when circumstances permit, be adjusted. The Government, however, is definitely opposed to any redistribution on the basis of one vote one value, or to the sacrifice of country seats to increase city representation. In addition to population, the area of electorates must be taken into consideration, as well as the undeveloped nature of the country.
>
> The essential requirement is a more equitable distribution of the people, and this cannot be achieved if the country is to be deprived of a portion of its parliamentary representation. Since the commencement of the war there has been an alarming drift of people from the country, due to the enormous expenditure of Commonwealth funds in the city, and to greater opportunities prevailing in the metropolis for more remunerative employment. This accounts to a large extent for the fact that the country is greatly denuded of its population and the city correspondingly inflated. The position has been aggravated by the fact that primary producers, under war time regulations have not received from the Commonwealth the reasonable consideration to which they are entitled.
>
> Country people must be fully represented in Parliament, in order that their viewpoint may be emphasized, and country interests fully protected.
>
> After the war, big developmental works in the country, such as irrigation and land settlement, enabling a large increase in population in rural areas, must be undertaken.
>
> The Government feels that to deal with such a highly contentious subject as redistribution at this critical time, would be most unwise.
>
> The Government, will take steps during the life of the next Parliament to adjust electoral boundaries, in order that anomalies between country electorates and also between city constituencies may be removed.

On the basis of the figures of the 31st of December, 1939—known more familiarly as the 1940 figures—the metropolitan area would have had a quota of 26,771, or an increase of 4,876 electors over the 1927 figures. The urban districts would have had a quota of 18,363

—an increase of 2,134; and the country 11,291, an increase of 1,432. The ratio would have been 100 to 44, as against 100 to 47 in 1927. The Government maintains that the first-mentioned ratio represented a reasonable readjustment. It is considered adequate for the present. Surely we could have waited until after the war before effecting a further redistribution!

I shall now examine the quotas in other States. In New South Wales the metropolitan area has 43 seats and the country 47—a total of 90. The ratio is 100 to 67.3. Queensland—a Labour State—has 20 metropolitan and 42 country seats, and the ratio is 100 to 78.9. In South Australia the metropolitan area has 13 seats and the country 26, the ration being 100 to 31.7.

Mr. HOLLINS.—In Queensland the vote on the Commonwealth referendum seemed to suggest that the people were satisfied with their State Parliament.

Mr. HYLAND.—That may be.

Mr. CREMEAN.—You must remember that the ratio in Queensland is 100 to 78.

Mr. HYLAND.—I am coming to a ratio of 100 to 39.

Mr. CREMEAN.—In the State which you now indicate the people are governed by an Administration similar to that in Victoria.

Mr. HYLAND.—The ratio to which I refer operates in Western Australia, where there is a Labour Government and where the metropolitan area is represented by seventeen members, the country electorates numbering 33. The ratio of quota is 100 to 39.7. I am unable to cite Tasmania for the purposes of my argument.

Mr. CREMEAN.—The ratio there is 100 to 100.

Mr. HYLAND.—Proportional representation operates in Tasmania, and one is unable to compare the numbers of metropolitan and country seats respectively. Under the present proposal the country electorates of Victoria will be at the greatest disadvantage when compared with those of any other State, because the metropolis will have 32 seats as against 33 country seats.

Mr. CREMEAN.—That is about the most specious argument I have ever heard.

Mr. HYLAND.—The contention of the Opposition party may be that if the present distribution were left undisturbed or if the policy of the Country party were put into operation, there would be no gain in the number of Labour seats. To indicate my grave doubts that the Labour party would have any accretion of seats in a redistribution, I propose to quote certain figures, taking the country electorates in alphabetical order. In passing, I should like to make it perfectly clear that this is my own summing-up. Nevertheless, I am certain that when honorable members generally examine the figures, they will arrive at a similar conclusion. No one can foretell the recommendation of the proposed Commission. The three officers who will be appointed for the purpose will act as they think best.

In the first place, there is Allandale, for which the number of electors on the 30th of June, 1944, was 9,504, a decrease of 205 on the 1927 figures. Assuming that under the redistribution scheme Allandale is retained, it may be necessary to allocate an additional 4,300 electors. Could the Labour party carry that? I do not think so. I suggest that the present member for Allandale will be heard singing Gracie Field's popular number, "Wish me luck as you wave me good-bye." The current figure for Castlemaine and Kyneton is 10,475, an increase of 547 since 1927; but there has been a reduction of 257 in the last twelve months. If that electorate were allotted a further 3,500, it also would be impossible to carry on. The number of electors for Dundas is 12,373, and I propose to leave that constituency out of the present argument.

Mr. SLATER.—In that constituency it will not matter whether or where any increase is made.

Mr. HYLAND.—I remember an instance in which a candidate became a member of this House for only one week and lost his seat after a recount.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Is the Minister explaining the provisions of the Bill or is he merely endeavouring to show why the Labour party should not support it?

Mr. CAIN.—He is giving the reasons why certain seats will disappear.

Mr. HYLAND.—In due course, the Leader of the Opposition will show how he would dispose of country seats. On the 30th of June last the number of electors for Maryborough and Daylesford was 10,624, an increase of only 109 on the 1927 figures. That is the seat of the "King of Decentralization." The member for that electorate will be called upon to carry a larger number if it remains in existence. In the case of Warrenheip and Grenville the number of electors was 9,951, a reduction of 208. Can that seat possibly carry that number plus an additional 4,000 electors?

Mr. CAIN.—What about Korong and Eaglehawk?

Mr. HYLAND.—I shall leave the honorable member to examine the situation there.

Mr. CREMEAN.—Will the Minister please explain his use of the term "carry that number"?

The SPEAKER (the Hon. G. H. Knox).—The proceedings have lapsed into a state of disorder in which the remarks of the Chief Secretary cannot be heard owing to interjections from both sides of the House. I urge honorable members to uphold the traditions of this Chamber. The honorable gentleman must take no notice of interjections.

Mr. CREMEAN (to Mr. Hyland).—Please explain what you mean by your question, "Can that seat possibly carry that number?"

Mr. HYLAND.—I have been advised not to take any notice of interjections. In the Labour electorates that I have enumerated the figures are comparable. In those four electorates there are about 40,500 electors, and there will have to be changes made in them. No doubt, Labour will have to scratch in the country, and scratch very hard. Also the people in the electorates affected will resent the loss of their representatives.

Mr. CAIN.—Of course, they won't blame your Government for it!

Mr. HYLAND. — Doubtless, Labour will hope to gain in the metropolitan area. The figures I shall quote are based on the electoral rolls on the 30th of June, 1944—the latest figures available. Boroondara has 39,827 electors and the number of electors is increasing so rapidly that it is very probably the electorate will have to lose about 16,000 electors to bring its number down to the quota. That number of 16,000 should be sufficient to form two-thirds of a new electorate, and Boroondara is not a Labour seat. Caulfield has 32,704 electors, and, for the same reasons, it will have to lose between 7,000 and 8,000 electors. That should represent about one-third of a new electorate made up of portions of Caulfield, which is not a Labour constituency. Brighton has 36,630 electors and about 12,000 electors will have to be transferred to another electorate. That number should represent about half of a new electorate taken out of one which is not Labour. Dandenong has 40,275 electors, and may lose about 16,000 electors. It might be said that Dandenong is no sure Labour seat. At any rate, the present member is popular and is doing a good job for his electorate. Heidelberg has 38,065 electors, and its loss will be between 14,000 and 15,000 electors.

Mr. CAIN.—They are all Labour voters out there!

Mr. HYLAND.—The electorate into which the surplus number of electors is transferred might get a member equal to the present member for Heidelberg whom Labour has tried without success to shift for many years. Prahran may lose about 7,000 electors; St. Kilda, 9,000; Toorak, 5,000; Albert Park, 4,000 ; Essendon, 6,000; Hawthorn, 4,000; Kew, between 9,000 and 10,000; and Nunawading about 6,000. None of those electorates can be classed as Labour seats. Thus a total of 50,000 electors will be transferred to other electorates. Then take four sure Labour electorates—Carlton, Collingwood, Melbourne, and Port Melbourne. Those will have to take in more electors, and the result might make it more difficult for some of the present members to get their pre-selections. There are usually many people looking round for pre-selection. I remember one Labour member told me that there were about 10,000 persons in his electorate wanting his seat, and there were not many more than that number of electors in his constituency. Brunswick will probably lose 5,000 electors; Coburg, 8,000; Footscray, 9,000; and Oakleigh, 14,000 The "Commos" might make it awkward for Labour members in some of those electorates. The result of the redistri-

bution will not be all fruit for the Labour sideboard. It looks more like being fruit for the United Australia party sideboard, and, as the Minister of Public Instruction remarked in an interjection a few minutes ago, he, as Leader of that party, might be able to form a Government in the future.

Mr. BARRY.—What else have the little dicky birds told you?

Mr. HYLAND.—I remember that last session the dicky birds were whispering that the honorable member would be leader of the Labour party.

Mr. BARRY.—I was the leader——

Mr. HYLAND.—I do not mean the leader of the party in the Melbourne City Council, but the leader of the State Labour party. Now it is being whispered that the next leader will be the honorable member for Maryborough and Daylesford. Honorable members will note that clause 5 of the Bill fixes the following quotas—25,000 electors for each metropolitan district, 19,500 for each urban district, and 13,800 for each country district. The clause also provides that the Commissioners may adopt a margin of allowance to be used whenever necessary, but the quota shall not be departed from to a greater extent than 10 per cent. more or 10 per cent. less. The reason for that provision is evident. The Commissioners will try to work, as far as they can, to the subdivisional rolls, and their task will be difficult because it will be hard to judge the future expansion or contraction of a number of electors. The Commissioners will be able to rely only on actual facts.

Mr. BARRY.—Not on what they are told?

Mr. HYLAND.—I resent that remark. It suggests that the Government will tell them what to do. I shall take my own electorate of Gippsland South as an example to show the difficulties that will confront the Commissioners. Adjoining my electorate is that of the honorable member for Wonthaggi. Gippsland South consists of 13,136 electors and Wonthaggi has 9,791 electors. Therefore my electorate has 3,345 more electors than Wonthaggi. Since the last redistribution of seats seventeen years ago, Wonthaggi has gained only 129 electors and the electorate I represent has increased by 3,094. In 1927, when the last redistribution was made, the reverse would have been expected to happen. It would have been thought that with the expansion of the coalfields at Wonthaggi the number of electors would increase. However, the expected expansion has not materialized, and Wonthaggi is just holding its own in numbers compared with the number of electors enrolled for the 1927 election. No new seams of coal have been found at Wonthaggi in the meantime, but it is hoped that they will be discovered at Korumburra, which is in the same electorate. If coal deposits are opened up at Korumburra, there will be an influx of population to that town.

It will therefore be realized how difficult it will be for the Commissioners to make allowance for the 10 per cent. margin up or down, because they will be able to judge the position only on facts. My electorate of Gippsland South has had the opposite experience to Wonthaggi, and its natural features have assisted in its development. Seventeen years ago no one would have thought of the great development that has taken place in the Morwell-Rosedale-Traralgon section of the electorate. The works of Australian Paper Manufacturers Ltd., which have been established there employ 1,250 hands, or 200 more than are engaged at the State Coal Mine. The mill cost £2,000,000, and one machine there £750,000. It can make paper 15 feet wide at the rate of 12 miles an hour. The mill is only in its initial stage, and the directors say that when cellophane and other paper products are manufactured there will be great progress. At Morwell, the La Modes factory has been established at a cost of £100,000 and will eventually employ 600 girls. It is a most up-to-date factory, and, really, when one considers the amenities provided for the employees, it is too good to be called a factory. At Traralgon, a community hospital, to cost £35,000 and a mental hospital, to cost £300,000, are to be erected. The staff engaged at the two institutions must increase the number of electors.

A sum of £1,250,000 is to be expended on the Nambrok irrigation scheme, and the Loan Council has already approved of a first advance of £400,000. A sum of

£46,000 was provided for the snagging of the Latrobe river. Both those works will bring more farmers into the electorate and increase the number of electors. One of the largest decentralization projects in Victoria will be the new Yallourn. It will be located south of Morwell, or south-east of Yallourn, or at Gelliondale, and it is expected that the State Electricity Commission will soon decide on the exact location. The expert committee representing railway, gas, and electrical interests has made certain investigations which point to the possibility of the Railways Commissioners using powdered brown coal for locomotives on the Gippsland line. There is also the prospect of heavy industries being established in other parts of Gippsland. Such industries usually follow the coal seam, and Newcastle is an example. This example, taken from my own electorate, shows how difficult it will be for the electoral Commissioners to gauge how far they can go with the margin of 10 per cent. up or down.

In addition, the Housing Commission is erecting about 50 houses at Morwell and Traralgon; and the Australian Paper Manufacturers Limited, 60 more; the schools are to be enlarged and a new high school is to be established. Honorable members can realize how hard will be the Commissioners' task. The people of Gippsland were annoyed at an incident which occurred during the referendum campaign. It was hoped that the aluminium industry would have been promoted in Gippsland, as it would assist the policy of decentralization. It was felt that it was within the province of the Commonwealth Government to do something in this matter, because proof had been shown that the bauxite deposits in the Latrobe Valley are of the purest quality in Australia and exist in almost unlimited quantities. While Dr. Evatt was visiting Tasmania, however, in an endeavour to persuade the Legislative Council in that State to support the "Yes" case, he signed an agreement with the Tasmanian Government concerning the production and manufacture of aluminium, and Victoria was let down. The bauxite in Tasmania is not to be compared with that in Victoria; it is 20 miles from the railway, whereas in Gippsland it is on the coal bed, easily accessible. In an electorate such as mine and similar electorates, honorable members can realize what a task will be ahead of the Commissioners, particularly with people returning from the war or drifting back from the city, thus increasing the population in country areas.

I now wish to give a history of previous redistribution of seats. Prior to 1926, the Government of the day brought down a Bill incorporating in a schedule the proposed new districts. This Bill was dealt with in the ordinary way. Since the establishment of responsible government in 1855 under the Constitution Act, there have been five redistributions. The changes that have taken place are as follows: In 1855 there were 37 districts and 60 members; that was the original constitution of the Assembly. In 1858 there were 49 districts and 78 members. In 1876 there were 55 districts and 86 members. Honorable members will notice that the number of seats was considerably larger than it is to-day. In 1888 the districts numbered 84 and the members 95. In 1903 there were 65 districts and 65 members; in addition there were three special Public Service members, whose seats were abolished in 1906. In 1926 there were 65 districts and 65 members. Until 1924, the Government of the day relied upon the advice of departmental electoral officers, who prepared plans and details for a Bill; the Government accepted responsibility for the Bill and plan.

In 1924, however, a departure from the former practice was made, and the Government selected an advisory committee of three persons, consisting of the Chief Electoral Officer, an ex-Chief Electoral Officer, and the Surveyor-General. The scheme submitted by this committee was rejected by Parliament. In 1925 the Government introduced a Bill with the purpose of appointing Commissioners to prepare a scheme. After reaching the Committee stage, the Bill was dropped. In 1926, the 1925 Bill was revived and, with amendments made in Committee, was accepted.

This Bill gave full instructions to the Commissioners. The seats were divided into 26 metropolitan, with an appro-

priate quota of 22,000; and 39 seats for country and urban districts, with quotas of 10,000 and 15,000 respectively. The permissible general variation from quotas was to be 15 per cent. above or below. Further variations, exceeding the margin, allowed for the transfer of areas from any urban district, such as Ballarat, Bendigo, or Geelong, to adjoining country districts, and in the case of mountainous and sparsely populated areas. The three Commissioners in 1926 were the Chief Electoral Officer, the ex-Chief Electoral Officer, and the Secretary for Lands. The first report of the Commissioners was referred back, and the second report, proposing minor adjustments of boundaries and changes of the names of several electorates, was passed.

Immediately prior to 1926, when the present distribution of Legislative Assembly seats was adopted, Victoria was divided into 65 districts comprising 21 metropolitan, 5 urban and 39 country electorates, the quotas and enrolments at that time being as follows:—

—	Number of Seats.	Quotas.	Enrolment.	Ratio.
Metropolitan	21	26,310	552,510	100 : 36
Urban	5	10,863	54,315	
Country	39	9,386	366,054	
Total	65		972,879	

Under the Electoral Districts Act 1926, three Commissioners were apointed to prepare a report providing for 26 metropolitan and 39 country and urban districts with the following approximate quotas:—

Metropolitan	22,000
Urban	15,000
Country	10,000

Provision was therefore made for an approximate total enrolment of 977,000, namely—

—	Number of Seats.	Quotas.	Enrolment.	Ratio.
Metropolitan	26	22,000	572,000	100 : 47
Urban	3	15,000	45,000	
Country	36	10,000	360,000	
Total	65		977,000	

The scheme accepted by Parliament was as follows:—

—	Number of Seats.	Quotas.	Enrolment.	Ratio.
Metropolitan	26	21,895	569,272	100 : 47
Urban	3	16,229	48,688	
Country	36	9,859	354,925	
Total	65		972,885	

It will be noted that the enrolment figure existing immediately prior to redistribution was the basis of the revised electoral districts. A comparison of enrolments and quotas for respective periods is shown hereunder:—

—	1926 Redistribution.			1st January, 1940.			30th June, 1944.		
	Enrolment.	Quota.	Ratio.	Enrolment.	Quota.	Ratio.	Enrolment.	Quota.	Ratio.
Metropolitan (26)	569,272	21,895	100	696,048	26,771	100	798,293	30,704	100
Urban (3) ..	48,688	16,229	:	55,089	18,363	:	57,718	19,239	:
Country (36) ..	354,925	9,859	47	406,473	11,291	44	412,732	11,465	39
Total ..	972,885			1,157,610			1,268,743		

Taking 1926 as a base year, the percentage changes in enrolments are—

—	1940.	1944.
Metropolitan	Increase 22 per cent.	Increase 40 per cent.
Urban	„ 13 „	„ 18½ „
Country	„ 14½ „	„ 16 „
Total for the State	„ 19 „	„ 34 „

The trend from 1926 to 1940 has not been uniform during the war years, and it appears that transfers of electors are taking place from the country to the city and also to some extent to urban areas, due principally to the establishment of industries in those centres.

Before I deal with the clauses of the Bill, I wish to state clearly to honorable members that the purpose of the measure is to appoint a Commission to prepare a report for Parliament. That Commission will consist of the Chief Electoral Officer, an ex-Chief Electoral Officer, and the Secretary for Lands. If the Bill is agreed to by both Houses, it will then be the duty of the Commission to proceed to its task. When its report is completed, it will be forwarded to me with a plan of the proposed electoral boundaries, and a copy of each will be made and supplied to each member of Parliament, who will then be able to see what changes are contemplated. When the report is laid on the table of the House, during the next session of Parliament, it will be debated. That report and plan must be accepted as it is laid before the House, and cannot be amended. If the House considers that that report is not acceptable, it can ask for one more redivision, but no more. If the second redivision proposal is accepted by Parliament, an election will be held later. Honorable members will realize that some time will be taken in preparing the rolls.

Mr. HOLLAND.—You need not hurry about that!

Mr. HYLAND.—Very well. I wish to emphasize that this Bill does not fix any electoral boundaries. It sets out the quotas to be taken into consideration by the Commission and other conditions which it must observe.

Mr. HOLLINS.—If the Commission were asked to make a fresh redivision, would that be of the whole State or of one area?

Mr. HYLAND.—It would be a redivision of the whole State. In 1926 the Commission had to be guided by the statements of members as recorded in *Hansard*. The Commission which the Government proposes to appoint will consist of three men of outstanding ability who are fully conversant with the task they will have to perform, and they will be asked to the best of their ability to evolve a scheme most suitable to this State.

Mr. CREMEAN.—They will be the most popular public servants with Parliament for the next six months!

Mr. HYLAND.—I shall now outline the clauses of the Bill. Clause 1 contains the short title, construction and citation. Clause 2 provides that the present number of electoral districts—namely 65—will be retained in the proposed redivision of the State. Sub-clause (1) of clause 3 empowers the Governor in Council to appoint three Commissioners to propose a redivision. Sub-clause (2) of clause 3 provides that the personnel of the Commission shall consist of the Chief Electoral Officer, a former Chief Electoral Officer and the Secretary for Lands. Sub-clause (3) provides for the appointment of one of the Commissioners as chairman.

Clause 4 relates to the proceedings at meetings of the Commissioners and provides that in the absence of the chairman, the members present shall appoint one of their number to preside and that two shall form a quorum. Under sub-clause (1) of clause 5 the Commissioners are required to propose a redivision on the basis of 32 metropolitan and 33 urban and country districts. The country will therefore lose six seats and a corresponding number will be gained by the metropolitan area. Separate quotas are specified for metropolitan, urban, and country electorates, namely, 25,000,

19,500, and 13,800 respectively, and these are based on the enrolment figures as at the 30th of June, 1944. I have here a list of the enrolments of Legislative Assembly electors for all districts as at the 30th of June, 1944, as follows:—

Metropolitan.		Urban.		Country.	
Albert Park	29,133	Ballaarat	18,531	Allandale	9,504
Boroondara	39,827	Bendigo	18,735	Barwon	14,048
Brighton	36,630	Geelong	20,452	Benalla	11,223
Brunswick	29,706			Benambra	9,624
Carlton	22,352			Bulla and Dalhousie	10,159
Caulfield	32,704			Castlemaine and Kyneton	10,475
Clifton Hill	25,759			Dundas	12,373
Coburg	33,273			Evelyn	13,432
Collingwood	23,905			Gippsland East	7,456
Dandenong	40,275			Gippsland North	11,301
Essendon	31,043			Gippsland South	13,136
Flemington	25,731			Gippsland West	12,163
Footscray	34,384			Goulburn Valley	13,054
Hawthorn	29,070			Grant	11,780
Heidelberg	38,065			Gunbower	10,503
Kew	34,736			Hampden	10,877
Melbourne	21,702			Kara Kara and Borung	9,659
Northcote	26,898			Korong and Eaglehawk	10,033
Nunawading	30,441			Lowan	12,009
Oakleigh	39,390			Maryborough and Daylesford	10,624
Port Melbourne	22,984			Mildura	13,506
Prahran	32,614			Mornington	16,026
Richmond	26,578			Ouyen	8,803
St. Kilda	33,976			Polwarth	12,136
Toorak	30,167			Port Fairy and Glenelg	12,066
Williamstown	26,950			Rodney	11,968
				Stawell and Ararat	11,241
				Swan Hill	8,921
				Upper Goulburn	9,806
				Upper Yarra	19,010
				Walhalla	13,328
				Wangaratta and Ovens	11,424
				Waranga	8,615
				Warrenheip and Grenville	9,951
				Warrnambool	12,707
				Wonthaggi	9,791
Totals	798,293		57,718		412,732

Grand total—1,268,743.

The approximate quotas having been determined, as already mentioned, the first proviso to sub-clause (1) of clause 5 enables the Commissioners to depart from those quotas to the extent of not more than 10 per cent. more or 10 per cent. less than the numbers prescribed. The maximum and minimum numbers of electors that the Commissioners could allocate to the three classes of districts are as follows:—

—	Metropolitan.	Urban.	Country.
Maximum	27,500	21,450	15,180
Minimum	22,500	17,550	12,420

The second proviso, however, empowers the Commissioners to adopt a margin of 15 per cent. less in the case only of a mountainous and sparsely populated country district. In such a case a quota as low as 11,730 would be permissible. Most of the clauses, with one or two exceptions, are identical with those contained in the 1926 Electoral Districts Bill. Sub-clause (2) of clause 5 sets out the matters to be taken into consideration by the Commissioners, and is similar in all respects to the appropriate provision in the 1926 Act. The Commissioners being men of wide experience of electoral boundaries and geographical features, will have regard to these matters in the course of their deliberations. Those matters are set out in the Bill.

Sub-clause (3) provides, in effect, that there shall be no alteration in the area comprising existing metropolitan districts; that is to say, there can be no transfer of metropolitan electors to proposed country districts, nor can any country electors be absorbed into proposed metropolitan electorates. Subject to the adjustments authorized in the proviso to sub-clause (4) of this clause, each proposed urban district must correspond with an existing urban district while the total area comprising proposed country districts must be the same as the total area comprising the present country districts. The proviso, however, empowers the Commissioners to include part of any urban district in any proposed country district and conversely to include part of any country electorate in any proposed urban constituency, but should this power be exercised the Commissioners will not be permitted to depart from the appropriate quota by more than 10 per cent. more or 10 per cent. less.

Clause 6 permits the Commissioners to visit various places should they consider it desirable. Under clause 7 the Commissioners must forward to the Minister a report on the redivision showing the approximate number of electors in each proposed new district, together with a map showing the name and boundaries of each proposed district. According to clause 8, the report and map are to be laid before Parliament within seven days after their receipt by the Minister, and a copy of each document is to be forwarded to each member of the Assembly.

Mr. CAIN.—When are the Commissioners to submit their report to the Minister?

Mr. HYLAND.—As soon as they can get the job done.

Mr. CAIN.—Is that whether or not Parliament is sitting?

Mr. HYLAND.—Yes. If, for any reason, the redivision proposed by the Commissioners is disapproved by either House, the Minister must, under sub-clause (1) of clause 9, direct the Commissioners to propose a fresh subdivision.

Mr. HOLLINS.—In the second redivision, would the Commissioners consider the arguments used in the debate?

Mr. HYLAND.—Yes; the report on the second redivision made in 1926 indicated that the Commissioners had considered the statements reported in *Hansard*. Sub-clause (2) provides that there can be only one fresh redivision so that if the original redivision and the fresh redivision are both rejected, there can be no further consideration by the Commissioners. In such a case the existing electoral boundaries will not be altered. This provision is similar to that included in The Constitution Act Amendment Act 1936 which brought about the Legislative Council redistribution of that year. It is essential to achieve finality.

Sub-clause (3) directs that the names and boundaries of proposed electorates are deemed to be part of any proposed redivision. It will not, therefore, be competent for either House to amend the report nor to alter names or boundaries. In short, the proposal of the Commissioners must be accepted as a whole or rejected. If we were to provide otherwise, one member might say that he wished the name Gippsland East or Hawthorn retained.

Mr. MUTTON.—It means that the Bill can be so dealt with that the Premier will be able to say, "We will have an election on the old boundaries."

Mr. HYLAND.—If the original redivision and a fresh redivision are rejected, the election must take place on the old boundaries.

Mr. HOLLAND.—Some of the names of the districts could well be changed.

Mr. HYLAND.—Under sub-clause (1) of clause 10, when the scheme is approved the names and boundaries of the new districts will be proclaimed by the Governor in Council. Sub-clause (2) provides that the new districts shall become operative on the day of the dissolution or other lawful determination of the Assembly, referred to as the "appointed day." The proviso, however, requires that any by-election that may be necessary at any time between the proclamation of new boundaries and the appointed day shall be held on the boundaries of the present districts.

Sub-clause (1) of clause 11 contains provision to print new rolls for the new districts and subdivisions. Sub-clause (2) provides that the new rolls shall be prepared on the basis of existing rolls,

that is to say, new rolls will be compiled from the official records of the electoral registrars. Sub-clause (3) empowers the Governor in Council to divide the new districts into subdivisions, to specify names and boundaries of subdivisions and to alter the boundaries and name of any subdivision. The Governor in Council has had this power since the passing of the Electoral Act 1923. A similar provision was included in the 1926 redistribution Act and also in the 1936 legislation relating to the redivision of the State into Legislative Council provinces. Sub-clause (4) is simply machinery to bring into force the new rolls and the new subdivisions on and from the appointed day—that is the date of dissolution.

Relative to clause 12, I would point out that under section 6 of the Licensing Act 1928, each electoral district becomes a licensing district. Under section 288 of the same Act, the number of licences is fixed at the number existing on the 1st of January, 1917. Clause 12 of the Bill is a machinery clause to enable the existing number to be allotted to their proper licensing districts consequent upon any alterations of present boundaries. During the months from July until the February in the following year, the court is busy in the assessment of fees and the issue of licences, and consequently the adjustments entailed by the alteration of districts can be undertaken only during the months from March to June. The clause is drafted to meet this position.

As the State-wide licensing poll, which is due to be held in 1946, will be conducted by returning officers for the various electoral districts, provision is made to ensure that the poll will be taken on the new electoral districts proclaimed under this Bill. Any other plan would completely disrupt the organization as the whole electoral machinery is organized on the basis of electoral districts. However, as the poll is State-wide, and is not determined in separate districts as in the case of an election, the final result will not be affected in any way. Clause 13 gives power to the Governor in Council to give such directions as may be necessary to give effect to the Act and to make any amendment of any existing proclamation, order, or regulation.

I have set out the clauses for honorable members to read. Figures in regard to the elections of 1927 and 1943 will be made available. I have endeavoured to supply all the particulars necessary, because honorable members will be anxious to know the position in relation to their electorates. I have here a skeleton map of the electorates; it has been prepared by the Lands Department from which copies may be obtained on payment of 1s. each. The map shows the present boundaries of the 39 country electorates. The metropolitan areas are shown on another map.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Did Cabinet consider the incorporation in the Bill of a redivision on a proportional representation basis?

Mr. HYLAND.—No.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Would the Government be prepared to accept an amendment to provide for proportional representation?

Mr. HYLAND.—No, but if the honorable member managed to get such an amendment agreed to, I suppose it would be all right.

On the motion of Mr. CREMEAN (*Clifton Hill*), the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, September 19.

WATER BILL.

The debate (adjourned from August 22) on the motion of Mr. J. G. B. McDonald (Minister of Water Supply) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—This measure, which deals with the problem of water supply, is much more modest than the Minister's second-reading speech would lead honorable members to believe. The Minister made much ado about water, its virtues and its advantages, but when I read the Bill I was surprised to find very little in it. It contains thirteen clauses, and it does about as much as the Chief Secretary desires that the Electoral Districts Bill will do.

I propose to address myself seriously to the most important question at present confronting the State. If there was ever a time in the history of this country when the advantages of water conservation should be appreciated, it is the present. In the last 30 odd years the State has expended nearly £30,000,000 on water

supply undertakings, and if ever it could be proved that that expenditure was justified the present is that time, because the State is passing through one of the most difficult periods, from the point of view of agricultural and pastoral pursuits, ever experienced in Victoria. With the possible exception of parts of Gippsland, the State is in need of rain, and the existing conditions should impress on our minds the vast importance of having available an adequate water supply. I do not propose to trace the historical development of water conservation, and the activities of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, as was done by the Minister in his second-reading speech, but we must pay tribute to our predecessors in this Parliament who had sufficient foresight to realize the value of water to this country.

My first association with an irrigation area was in the Rodney district more than 30 years ago. One has only to look at the tremendous strides made in intense culture in irrigation districts over the years to appreciate the value of water to the community. There is more justification for the expenditure of large sums of public money on water supply than on any other project. At the base of every problem which confronts the State, and every step that we must take in developing country districts, there is the need of supplying water for irrigation and town supply purposes. There has been much talk about decentralization; about establishing industries in country districts; of dividing up lands for settlement purposes; and of adopting intense culture to a greater extent than formally, but underlying each proposal of that kind is the important problem—particularly in northern Victoria, and to a lesser extent in Gippsland —of providing water. That is essential before we ever consider increasing the agricultural population in dry areas.

Mr. HOLLAND.—Are you not outlining the purpose of the Bill?

Mr. CAIN.—I am recapitulating what has been done in legislative enactments in the last 30 years. This Bill really amends certain sections of the principal Act, and makes one or two other minor alterations.

Mr. HOLLAND.—Then I must have read it wrongly.

Mr. CAIN.—The State has spent approximately £30,000,000 on water conservation. Of that amount it has transferred to what is known as a trust fund in the Treasury approximately £21,800,000 of the total investment, thus relieving water users of a great proportion of their financial responsibilities.

Mr. HOLLINS.—The Government has merely transferred that amount to the consolidated public debt.

Mr. CAIN.—That is so, but when we realize the value of water we should understand that the public should make a contribution to the cost of water supply. It pays dearly for many things not nearly as serviceable or as profitable as water conservation. Clause 10 provides for the transfer of an additional amount of £1,700,000 to the Country Water Supply —State Development Account making the total obligation on water supply works to be borne by the general taxpayer approximately £24,000,000. That transfer will relieve water users from the responsibility of the cost of headworks and the construction of channels in some cases, not only for works carried out by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission but also for works undertaken by waterworks trusts in country districts.

As a result of the foresight of our predecessors in Parliament the State has established about twenty major reservoirs in Victoria and I now propose to direct attention briefly to the present unfavourable position of the levels in many of those storages. At this period of the year we would normally anticipate the storages to be more or less filled, but from our experiences over the last few months we find that the amount of water stored in the majority is far from satisfactory.

Mr. CAMERON.—The storages cannot be filled if the rain does not come.

Mr. CAIN.—That is freely admitted. As the result of the lack of rain in the last few months many of our storages are not in a favourable position. On the River Murray, at the Hume, Yarrawonga, and Kow swamp storages, we have approximately 1,000,000 acre-feet of water whereas the capacity of the storages is 1,385,000 acre-feet. In the Eildon, Waranga, and the Goulburn weirs, which have a total capacity of approximately

660,000 acre-feet, we have 558,000 acre-feet of water. On the Loddon river storages, which includes the Kerang lakes, Laanecoorie weir, and Lake Boga, we have 97,000 acre-feet of water whereas the total capacity is 105,700 acre-feet. The figures disclose that the position is fairly good in those districts. On the Wimmera and Glenelg rivers, however, which include Lake Lonsdale, Wartook reservoir, Taylor's lake, Pine lake, Fyan's lake, Green lake, Dock lake, and Moora, out of a total capacity of 192,000 acre-feet we have only 50,000 acre-feet of water in the reservoirs at the moment.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—It is less than that now.

Mr. CAIN.—I do not agree that the storage is less than the figure I have given, because the figures I have quoted are fairly accurate.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—I doubt the accuracy of those figures, for two reasons.

Mr CAIN.—The honorable member is entitled to doubt anything, but the facts are that it is estimated by those who are in a position to know that there is approximately 50,000 acre-feet of water available in those storages.

Mr. CAMERON.—Since the figures were compiled, a lot of water has run in there.

Mr. CAIN.—The figures were compiled as at the 1st of September, 1944.

Mr. SLATER.—Any one who has recently seen the storages will agree that the figures are very accurate.

Mr. CAIN.—In the Werribee river there is a storage capacity in Pyke's Creek of 40,000 acre-feet. That is to supply Bacchus Marsh and Werribee, but at present there is less than 8,000 acre-feet available there.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Can you say how much water is conserved on the catchment areas?

Mr. CAIN.—I have not that information; but I suggest that the honorable member should read the reports of the Commission, from which he will gain much information. The Coliban system supplies Castlemaine and Bendigo, and other towns in that district, and the total capacity of the reservoirs is approximately 58,000 acre-feet, but to-day the storage is only 23,900 acre-feet. The prospects there are not bright. We find the best situation in Gippsland in the Glenmaggie reservoir. That is an area where the rainfall is heavier, and the catchment area makes for greater storage capacity. As a matter of fact, the total capacity of the Glenmaggie, Wurdee Boluc, and Lysterfield reservoirs is 117,000 acre-feet, and the present storage amounts to 115,000 acre-feet.

The statistics disclose that we are faced with a shortage of water, particularly as we have a very dry season in front of us, and certain grave difficulties are confronting the Government and the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission. I know that that authority has endeavoured to make water available to persons who have water rights. In the northern parts of the State there is no fodder available, and there are no prospects of crops being grown for next year. Certain areas in the south are in a much better position, but no one can foretell what is likely to happen there. I understand that the Minister of Agriculture is now endeavouring to obtain agistment for horses and cattle, but the Government should seriously consider a proposal that was recently submitted to the Minister by a deputation of returned soldier settlers. The following motion was agreed to by experienced practical farmers who know the problems that have to be solved:—

> That the Government make an immediate survey of all irrigation land that could be made available to grow fodder for drought areas, and that good teams from drought areas within reasonable distance of irrigation be utilized for growing the fodder for the use of the horses to be returned later to the drought areas.

The suggestion is that certain private lands are not being used to full capacity. The owner may be well off, or the person in possession may be too old to work the land. Such areas are used for grazing purposes, and the water rights are not being utilized. The suggestion is that these settlers or their sons should work these properties, and that seed should be provided by the Government. It is proposed that a crop of oats should be sown; but I understand there is a dispute as to whether it is too late now to sow oats this year.

Mr. J. G. B. MCDONALD.—The Minister of Agriculture is concentrating on that matter.

Mr. CAIN.—It requires an immediate decision. The men are anxious to make their teams available to do the work.

Mr. SLATER.—They have made a practical suggestion.

Mr. CAIN.—They have. They want the Government to pay the wages of their employees, and to provide feed for their horses, manure, seed, and water. The costs will be pooled, and the crop will be used by settlers. Possibly it may be described as a revolutionary proposal, but it will ensure certain land being used to its full capacity. It could not be done by private owners or settlers; the Government must take action under national security and other legislation to provide that a farmer shall utilize his irrigable land to its maximum capacity or make it available to be used for the good of the community. After all, it seems to be a matter of the greatest good for the greatest number; and that policy should appeal to a Government that is seeking agistment for horses that will die if fodder is not found for them. Even if agistment is obtained in Victoria, or in New South Wales, the Government must not forget that when the stock is returned to the north next year there will be no fodder available in that area. The settlers there have said, "Let us try this scheme. We merely want the Government to pay for wages and the price of horse feed. We will sow the crop and make it available from a common pool." It will be a co-operative effort on the part of these people. Probably it will be difficult to make contact between those who will do the work and the owners of suitable land. It may be too late to sow crops in southern districts; they could not be sown in the north now in places where water is not available.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—They might be able to sow maize and millet.

Mr. CAIN.—That is true. The scheme was submitted to the honorable member for Dundas, the honorable member for Allandale and myself at Millewa, where there is a plant that pumped more than 12,000 acre-feet of water last year. Wood is now available there to work the plant. I am not an expert, but I consider that land in the district could be used to grow maize or millet to feed stock. In these times we must be prepared to take extraordinary action. In a national crisis during wartime we are forced to do many things; when a crisis arises in peacetime we should also be prepared to do many things, as we have the necessary power. The responsibility to take action lies upon this Parliament. It is of no use for us to say, "What is the Commonwealth going to do?" The Commonwealth has vacated the field as a result of the referendum, and the State now is responsible. In that matter I accept the verdict of the people for the time being. This Government pretends to represent the interests of the country; the party in office has the numbers—in this matter it will be supported by the Opposition—and the necessary money is available. But what is the Government intending to do? Country representatives know something of the problems I have mentioned. The honorable member for Swan Hill, I am sure, will agree that the present circumstances demand immediate action on the part of the Government. Water can be made available in certain areas. I know that supplies must be rationed carefully, but if steps are taken to encourage the growing of fodder crops for next year the Government will have done a great service for the State.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Is there any indication as to how many men would be available to carry out the scheme you have mentioned?

Mr. CAIN.—I venture to say that if the matter was mooted in the Swan Hill district to-morrow 30 or 40 teams would be made available. The men have no fodder for their horses, which would be utilized to sow feed in the way I have described. We cannot afford in these circumstances to allow any opportunity to pass without exploring every avenue of producing fodder. If no rain comes every one knows what the consequences must be. The wheat crop cannot reach 20,000,000 bushels—half the normal harvest—unless rain falls soon. I fear that it will not reach 10,000,000 bushels. Without rain the Government is committed—any Government would be committed—to the expenditure of hundreds of thousands of pounds to keep the people and their stock alive. The Government did not ask the Loan Council for £500,000 in order to keep it in the purse. The

application was made for the money because the expenditure of it would be necessary. My opinion is that unless the weather breaks more than that will be required. All I am doing at this stage is to submit a suggestion by competent settlers who offer to carry out the scheme. The responsibility of the Government is to bring land and water in contact with the people who can do the work.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—The Minister of Agriculture has the problem in hand, and he discussed it with me last week.

Mr. CAIN.—The difficulty cannot be overcome unless the Government acts immediately. The longer the delay the worse the problem becomes. The work should have been started a month ago, but I suppose the Government, like the settlers, has been hoping for rain which has not fallen. Dealing now with the terms of the Bill, clause 3 makes provision for the arrangement of certain waterworks districts, &c., into divisions, including a "fourth division" of non-rated lands. It is an amendment of section 62 of the principal Act, which provides that the Commission can subdivide land into three divisions. Now a fourth division is provided for. All the clause does is to put into clear and unmistakeable language section 62 of the Act, and it states that the Commission must make water available in the first and second divisions, but if the third and fourth divisions are outside the area the same rates will not be charged. Clause 4 states—

> (1) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in section sixty-six of the principal Act as amended by any Act, the Commission shall during the present war and the period of twelve months thereafter be empowered and shall as from the thirtieth day of June One thousand nine hundred and forty be deemed to have been empowered to determine to what extent (if any) the water rights apportioned after the said thirtieth day of June to lands in any irrigation and water supply district should be deemed to be limited in respect of any year, having regard to the difficulties of development of such lands by reason of circumstances attributable to the war.

By that sub-clause the Government is proposing to do two things—legalize what has been done by the Commission for the last five years, and, for the duration of the war and for twelve months afterwards, empower the Commission to continue to do it. I understand that the provision applies only in the Murray valley, where development is taking place. Clause 5 is unimportant. Clause 6 will give power to the Governor in Council to determine certain leases subject to compensation. What is really behind this proposal? At present the Commission has power to lease unused lands, but now it is proposed that the Governor in Council shall have power to terminate a lease and pay compensation up to the equivalent of twelve months' rent. Has the Commission been leasing land that it should not lease, or has it been leasing it on too long terms? I do not ask the Minister to answer that question now, but I shall look for an answer when the Bill is in Committee.

As to clause 7, the Act provides that the Government can sue for an amount up to £150 in a court of petty sessions and obtain a verdict with interest added, but above that amount it must apply to the County Court. It is now proposed that action may be taken either in the County Court or the petty sessions. Clause 8 provides for subdivisions. The President of the Council said some time ago that the Commission could now accept work from private persons, and that the system was socialism par excellence. The Commission can give estimates and carry out work.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—That is only where surveyors and other technicians are not available to do the work.

Mr. CAIN.—The Commission can do almost anything for a farmer. I am not complaining about that, but it is now proposed to extend the power to cover a survey of a district prior to subdivision taking place. I think that is probably the best proposal of all, because the Commission thoroughly understands the business. I am surprised that after the long speech the Minister made in moving the second reading of the Bill he has produced only these minor proposals.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—The Bill should be read in conjunction with the Towns Water Supplies Committee's report, the Farm Water Supplies Advances Bill, and the Government's post-war programme.

Mr. CAIN.—There is nothing in the Bill about the Government's post-war programme. All projects for the future

will have to be examined on their merits and approved of by the National Works Council and this Parliament. There is nothing to prevent Parliament from determining the basis on which money shall be spent in the future. The Government has not said that in future all water headworks shall be national; it has dealt only with the past. The future takes care of itself. The Bill, except the last clause of it, is nothing but an amending Bill. The last clause introduces a new principle by giving the privilege to the owner of land to obtain permission to legalize the right to carry water over another man's property. That right can be stated on his title, and he can sell his land and the right. At present neighbours enter into negotiations for a water channel over their properties, but when one of the properties is sold difficulties may arise. That clause is probably the only new departure in the Bill. Clause 10 provides—

(1) Within twelve months after the commencement of this Act the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Treasurer of Victoria after consultation by the Minister with the Commission, may by Order published in the *Government Gazette* further adjust the outstanding liability as on the thirtieth day of June One thousand nine hundred and forty-five for the cost of works (excluding free headworks) under the jurisdiction and control of the Commission serving—

(*a*) each irrigation and water supply district;

(*b*) each waterworks district;

(*c*) each flood protection district; and

(*d*) each drainage district—

by reducing to such extent as he thinks fit the amount of the liability for the cost of such works allotted to each such district pursuant to section four of the Water Act 1937 and by transferring to the State the liability for the amount by which the liability of each such district is so reduced.

On page 90 of the annual report of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission for 1942-43 it will be seen that a sum of £1,797,796 has been allotted to districts, and that amount, which is referred to in clause 10 of the Bill, will be transferred to the fund established in the Treasury. Thus, the aggregate amount transferred will be approximately £24,000,000. If the total amount allotted to districts is added to the sum of £11,678,712, representing capital expenditure borne by the State for headworks and distributary works, the result is £13,476,408—the total loan liability for irrigation and water supply districts.

Apparently, the Government proposes to extend its water supply activities. A new programme has been prepared with that end in view. I suggest that we could with great justification consider whether better use could not be made of existing systems. I may not be sufficiently qualified to express an expert opinion, but I am not satisfied that the best results are being obtained from the open-channel system. There is much to be said in favour of evolving a system by which the present tremendous wastage by evaporation and seepage could be avoided, more particularly in the light sandy country. The wastage is not so considerable in the Goulburn Valley and other districts.

Mr. FULTON.—It is bad in Gippsland.

Mr. CAIN.—And worse in the Mallee. The best indication that waste is occurring is the decision of the Government and the water supply Commissioners to line the channels between Malmsbury and Bendigo, with the object of obviating wastage by seepage. I was deeply disappointed with the Millewa scheme, which is capable of pumping 12,500 acre-feet of water every year. That water is sent off into the sand and by the time it reaches its destination practically 90 per cent. has been lost. Astounding figures are provided on page 23 of the 36th annual report—1940-41—of the Commission. I quote the following:—

During the year 1940-41 the cost to the Commission for cleaning sand drift from channels was £77,168. The schedule which follows sets forth the amounts expended on such cleaning during the past thirteen financial years. . . .

The amount shown for 1928-29 is £119,920; for 1929-30, £98,961; 1930-31, £83,610; 1931-32, £48,504; 1932-33, £41,410; 1933-34, £40,270; 1934-35, £66,085; 1935-36, £66,519; 1936-37, £56,892; 1937-38, £69,597; 1938-39, £77,886; 1939-40, £91,305; and for 1940-41, £77,168. The average cost was £72,164, and for the war period the average was about the same. This expenditure was due exclusively to sand drift, and if that drift could be avoided by the introduction of a pipe system, the cost of cleaning would be obviated and, in addition, that large proportion of water

which is now lost would be saved. In South Australia the maximum loss for scouring, cleaning and other purposes is 25 per cent.

It is admitted by all interested that the loss in the Millewa area of Victoria is more than 90 per cent. I am unable to say what the percentage is in the Wimmera or Gippsland, but it must be high even in the best country. Now that we are reaching a stage when every drop of water ought to be conserved, the Government must—if we are to avoid the effects of dry seasons and the possibility of losing settlers from the land—take immediate remedial action.

Mr. CAMERON.—You will admit that the open channel system provides cheap water.

Mr. CAIN.—I do not admit anything of the kind!

Mr. CAMERON.—You must admit it, if you consider the rates paid by the settlers.

Mr. CAIN.—I do not. No one is complaining on the ground that the State has written off £24,000,000 from a total indebtedness of £28,000,000, although the obligations of the community at large have been correspondingly increased. When well conserved water is provided at a cost to the settlers of nothing more than the working expenses, it is certainly cheap, and confers a distinct benefit to the State as a whole through increased production, revenue from railway freights, and so on. However, it is of no use boasting of cheap water when in some districts more than 90 per cent. of the supply is lost. In those circumstances the water could not be dearer. Probably the Government would be justified in making available a further £10,000,000 to install a pipe line to save that loss. At the same time, a stock and domestic supply must be assured every year. I suggest to the Minister of Water Supply, to Parliament, and to the people that, in the light of the present circumstances and the possibility of continued drought, the State should not permit 90 per cent. of its water supply to run to waste.

Mr. J. G. B. MCDONALD.—That is happening in one particular area.

Mr. CAIN.—What about the Minister's electorate?

Mr. J. G. B. MCDONALD.—The loss there is a little more than 50 per cent.

Mr. CAIN.—In that area the waste and the excess water used were factors responsible for souring and ruining half the country to which it was supplied.

Mr. J. G. B. MCDONALD.—There were many contributory factors.

Mr. CAIN.—I appreciate that grave consequences arise when water breaks through a channel. I am looking forward to the report of the Commonwealth committee, and I consider that it will be incumbent on the State to conserve much more water than in the past. We must do so, if not in the interests of the settlers, then from the point of view of the welfare of the State as a whole.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—Do the figures concerning the cleaning of channels include maintenance?

Mr. CAIN.—No.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—It was the policy of the Commission to remodel as well as clean the channels.

Mr. CAIN.—Remodelling usually lasts until the following season.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—That is not always the case.

Mr. CAIN.—The results are dependent on the season. A few years ago Parliament, at the request of the water Commission, passed an Act preventing settlers from fallowing land within 3 miles of channels. I remember that when I was a member of the State War Advisory Council the Premier was somewhat afraid of what his supporters would think of that particular legislation; but he was forced to proceed with it. The proposed long-range post-war plan of the Commission contemplates an expenditure of about £30,000,000. Why should not the Government give consideration to the question of preserving and utilizing to a greater extent—even to their maximum capacity—the existing systems? What will be the use of spending a further £30,000,000 when, for instance, in the Minister's electorate the loss on the present system is more than 50 per cent. of the water?

Mr. J. G. B. MCDONALD.—The existing system has provided the State with many irrigation areas. If the channels had not been constructed there would be only one-third of the present total.

Mr. CAIN.—That is true; but if the population of this State is to increase, if the Murray Valley is to be developed along the lines suggested at the recent conference, and if thousands of new settlers are to undertake the growing of fruit for canning and citrus fruits, among other products, the solution of the problem of water supply must become paramount. There is a limit to that as there is to dried fruit production. The Premier was opposed to all kinds of food restrictions, but even he had to restrict the production of dried fruits. Probably citrus production will be the next. If the State is to spend £30,000,000 more on the development of its irrigation system we should first examine closely the uses to which our existing schemes are put.

Mr. **EVERARD** (*Evelyn*).—I agree with the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition concerning the wastage of water in the irrigation areas. A few weeks ago I travelled through the Kerang district. The country was almost a desert from Serpentine to Kerang and farther on almost to the South Australian border, and I saw dead cattle and sheep in many paddocks. I maintain that in the event of another £30,000,000 being expended on the extension of the irrigation system, it will be money wisely spent. From the experience that has been gained of the choking of irrigation channels by sand drift, involving enormous expenditure in cleaning out the channels, we must come to the conclusion that pipe lines are preferable to open channels, and though they cost far more than channels, they are the least expensive method in the long run because the first cost is the last. South Australian experience has been that the pipe line system is efficacious.

I commend the Minister of Water Supply for the interest he has shown in the irrigation system, and I feel sure that he will do his utmost to see that irrigation is extended wherever practicable. I would point out, however, that producers living within 50 miles of Melbourne are suffering drought conditions because of the very meagre water supply. Farmers in my district have been carting water for some time. As the Leader of the Opposition said, although the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works sent a flush of water down the Plenty river, it travelled only about a mile, and seepage was extensive. Mr. Kerr, from whose dairy farm milk is supplied to the public hospitals of Melbourne, has been hard put to it to get water for his stock. It is essential that he should have an adequate supply to enable him to water his herd and thereby keep up a pure milk supply for the hospitals. The Minister is to visit the southern districts near Melbourne within the next ten days, and he will see for himself the conditions obtaining there. The farmers propose to ask for the installation of a pipe line to supply water to the Whittlesea, Plenty and Morang districts. The farmers will ask that a start be made by giving them a supply for stock and domestic use. It is no use carrying on farming without an adequate water supply.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to the necessity of conserving green feed, and I agree with him. Every farmer who wants a silo and cannot afford to build one should be assisted by the Government by way of a loan. When I was in the Upper Whittlesea district yesterday a farmer told me he would have been bankrupt to-day but for his two silos. Undoubtedly, a silo is a great asset on a property. I urge the Minister when he sees the plight of settlers in the southern districts near Melbourne to take a sympathetic view. Most of them are dairy farmers, and they and their wives and families have to work hard because it is very difficult to obtain outside labour, and the cost of production is high. Unless they are given a continuous water supply, their state will become desperate. I do not care where the Government spends money on the development of the irrigation system so long as more settlers are given the benefit of an ample water supply. Now that the Minister has seen what a boon irrigation water has been to settlers in the northern part of the State, I hope that he will realize, after his inspection of the southern districts near Melbourne, that the farmers there are entitled to the provision of a continuous water supply.

On the motion of Mr. OLD (*Swan Hill*), the debate was adjourned until next day.

ADJOURNMENT.

POLICE FORCE: HEARING OF CHARGES OF MISCONDUCT.

Mr. DUNSTAN (Premier and Treasurer.)—I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr. SLATER (*Dundas*).—I indicated to the Chief Secretary earlier to-day my intention to bring an important matter to his notice on the formal motion for the adjournment of the House. It concerns the provisions of the Police Regulation Act 1938 and the methods of dealing with charges of indiscipline in the Police Force. Section 13 of the Act provides for these methods. It has been my experience that when serious charges are made against members of the Force, and on their making application under that section for a board to be set up to inquire into the charge, the applications have invariably been granted. That was done in a recent case when a constable was charged. The Board inquired into the accusation, and submitted its recommendation to the Governor in Council. Shortly after the determination of that case another constable had a charge preferred against him of assaulting a prisoner. Nobody can suggest that that is a minor charge. The constable felt so keenly about it—as also did the Police Association—that, exercising his right, he asked for the constitution of a board to hear the case. To his amazement he received a reply from the Department refusing his application. It was said that in the opinion of the Chief Commissioner the charge, if proved, would not involve his dismissal from the Force. The reply has created consternation not only in the mind of this constable, but generally among members of the Force.

Claims were made some years ago for the establishment of boards to hear charges against officers or men of the Force. It is the most desirable means of dealing with charges of indiscipline. The police had become extremely dissatisfied with the reference of such cases to an officer. It is a completely unsatisfactory procedure both from the point of view of the officer who is given the responsibility of hearing the charge and of the man who is charged. Unlike every other State of the Commonwealth, where an independent tribunal exists for the hearing of charges preferred against police officers, this State lags behind. The method here provides for the referring of an inquiry to an officer, and the throwing of an unpleasant burden upon him; frequently it results in serious injustice to the man who is charged.

In the second case to which I have referred a board has been refused on the ground that the Chief Commissioner does not consider the charge one that would mean dismissal of the constable from the Force. But if he is charged before an officer and is found guilty—it is true that he can only be fined up to £3—any penalty which is confirmed by the Chief Commissioner will affect the officer throughout his life in the Force. How much must it affect him if, in the course of his police work in the courts, it is thrown up to him by counsel, "You were charged before a tribunal for belting a prisoner, so what can we expect from you in the evidence you are now giving?" My view is shared by many members of the Force.

Mr. BARRY.—What is the use of having a regulation if it is not carried out?

Mr. SLATER.—The matter is not governed by regulation but by a section of the Police Regulation Act which, I think, entitles a man against whom a serious charge has been preferred to have an independent tribunal inquire into the truth of the accusation. I repeat that I feel that is is unfair to ask a senior officer of the man charged to determine his guilt or innocence.

Mr. HYLAND (Chief Secretary).—The case mentioned by the honorable member for Dundas is governed by section 13 of the Police Regulation Act of 1938, which provides, *inter alia*—

Where—

(*a*) any member of the Police Force . . . is accused of a breach of duty or of any misconduct, the commission of which breach or misconduct would render it unfit that he should remain in the Police Force; or

(*b*) if such member denies the truth of such accusation the Governor in Council may, on the request of the accused or complainant, appoint a Board consisting of a police magistrate . . . and a superintendent of police to inquire as to the truth of the accusation, and thereupon the provisions of the two preceding sections shall not apply with respect to such accusation.

The two preceding sections authorize the Chief Commissioner of Police or superintendent, or any inspector or sub-inspector authorized by a superintendent, to investigate any charge of insubordination or misconduct. The section provides that a board may be appointed only in a case in which a man is likely to be dismissed from the Police Force. In the case of the first man mentioned by the honorable member for Dundas, three charges were preferred. I shall call this officer Constable X——

Mr. SLATER.—Two of the charges were preferred later than the first charge.

Mr. HYLAND.—The three charges were—

(*a*) Failing to make proper entries in his diary from the 27th of March, to the 5th of April, 1944;

(*b*) Misconduct in that he did use for private purposes a departmental car, the property of the Fuel Board;

(*c*) Misconduct in that he was present in company with a convicted person in a reputed gaming house whilst absent from duty through sickness.

A conviction on these three charges would have necessitated consideration of the question of the dismissal of this officer; consequently, he was granted a board.

Mr. CAIN.—Do you think a man who ill-treats a prisoner would be in that position?

Mr. HYLAND.—No.

Mr. SLATER.—The first charge was preferred against the constable and, after the board was granted, the other charges were made.

Mr. HYLAND.—That does not appear on the information before me. I have been informed that a conviction on the three charges would have necessitated his dismissal, and so he was granted a board. In the case of the other constable mentioned by the honorable member—I shall call him Constable Y—the Chief Commissioner has advised that if the policeman is convicted on the charge, his act will not be one as to which it would be unfitting that he should remain in the Force. In the circumstances, there is no power to appoint a board. The Chief Commissioner is not opposed to the appointment of a board, but the law does not permit such an appointment. In a letter dated the 24th of August, the Chief Commissioner states—

. . . . . has been charged with an act of misconduct against the discipline of the Force, but the act with which he is charged is not a breach of duty or misconduct, the commission of which would render it unfit that he should remain in the Police Force, and, therefore, in accordance with section 13 of the Police Regulation Act 1938, No. 4592, his application for a board could not be granted.

Mr. SLATER.—In one instance a constable was present in company with a convicted person in a reputed gaming house. That would involve his dismissal from the Force, but in this case the act would not do so!

Mr. HYLAND.—There were three definite charges against Constable X, and they appear in the information I have read. I shall consult the Chief Commissioner to-morrow to see if it is possible at this late hour to take further action in the matter.

The motion was agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.39 *p.m.*

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, September 6, 1944.

The SPEAKER (**the Hon. G. H. Knox**) took the chair at 2.35 p.m., and read the prayer.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

USE OF SERVICES IN PLANNING HOSPITALS.

Mr. MICHAELIS (*St. Kilda*) asked the Minister of Health—

Whether any change has been made recently in the direction of forcing hospital committees to utilize the services of the Public Works Department for planning new public hospital work which hitherto has been done mainly by private architects; if so, what instructions have been given to hospital committees in this regard?

Mr. MACFARLAN (Minister of Health).—The Government has decided that, inasmuch as a great deal of public money is involved, a proper proportion of all new public hospital work is to be

carried out in the Public Works Department. This will still leave a substantial amount of work of this class to private architects. The decision has been communicated to the Charities Board for the information of the hospital committees concerned.

DISCHARGED SERVICEMEN'S PREFERENCE ACT.

APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL MUSEUM.

Mr. HUGHES (*Caulfield*).—I wish to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, "The failure of the Government to apply the provisions of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act in the appointment of Director of the National Museum."

Mr. MACFARLAN (Attorney-General).—I wish to raise a point of order. I submit that the proposed motion, neither in substance nor form, complies with the Standing Orders, and therefore does not come within the case where an adjournment of the House can be moved. It is suggested that there has been failure by the Government to apply the provisions of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act in a certain case which is named, but there is nothing in the text of the motion to suggest that the duty devolves on the Government to enforce the legislation. We all know that the legislation is of recent date, and that the application of its provisions is entrusted to a board designated as the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board. If the statute is read it will be found that the only case in which the Governor in Council is called upon to enforce the Act is where there is a dispute or a difference of opinion between the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board and the Public Service Board.

If the case in point is of that nature the motion submitted by the honorable member for Caulfield is irrelevant. Only in the circumstances I have outlined has the Government any responsibility. When there is a difference of opinion the question must be presented to the Governor in Council for final decision. My view is that the case that the honorable member has in mind does not come into that category and I am certain that the honorable member must agree with me in that regard. It is futile to suggest that the Government has failed to do something that it has no power to do.

There is no provision in the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act throwing on the Government the responsibility of taking action. If my opinion is correct, the very basis of the proposed motion disappears. As I have already indicated, the administration of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act is practically given to the Board appointed under that legislation, and so long as there is no difference of opinion between that body and the Public Service Board the administration proceeds without any reference to the Government.

The first sub-section of section 4 of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act, shortly stated, applies the provisions of that Act to Crown servants, and the second sub-section sets out that where the Governor in Council is satisfied, upon a report in writing of the Board, that a contravention of or failure to comply with any of the said provisions has occurred or is likely to occur, then the Governor in Council may by order notwithstanding anything in any Act make or cancel any appointment. That refers to an appointment recommended or made by the Public Service Board. If the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board can satisfy the Governor in Council that an appointment made by the Public Service Board or the recommendation of that Board is an infringement of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act, it is the duty of the Governor in Council to decide against the Public Service Board.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—In the case in question the two boards concur.

Mr. MACFARLAN.—I happen to know that that is so; there is unanimity of opinion between the two bodies, but if the honorable member for Caulfield is able successfully to contend against that, I shall be prepared to admit that what I have said is wrong. Rather than that he should waste the time of the House by initiating a long debate on this matter, I would suggest that the honorable member be asked which class of case he proposes to deal with. Is it one in which there was a difference of opinion

between the two boards, or is it one in which those two boards have concurred? If there was a difference of opinion, the motion proposed by the honorable member is in order; if there was concurrence between the boards the motion is out of order. The matter can quickly be determined by the method I suggest.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—We are faced with a remarkable attempt by the Government to evade responsibility for the administration of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act. The Attorney-General, in discussing the question of the relevancy of the motion proposed by the honorable member for Caulfield, has endeavoured to prove to your satisfaction, Mr. Speaker, that the matter involved is not one of public administration. The Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board was established for the specific purpose of administering the Act, but the Attorney-General claims that as the honorable member for Caulfield has not been able to prove that there has been a dispute between that body and the Public Service Board, the case in point does not come within the ambit of Government administration.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—The honorable member has not been given an opportunity of proving the absence of a dispute.

Mr. CAIN.—That is so.

Mr. SLATER.—Surely the administration of the Board is subject to review.

Mr. CAIN.—I should say so. Presumably the very point that the honorable member for Caulfield wishes to emphasize is that the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board is supreme, and if that is so it is contrary to all the arguments presented by the Attorney-General and his Ministerial colleagues in the last few years. We have heard from the Attorney-General, who is a lawyer, that the Government has no control over this Board unless there is a dispute between it and the Public Service Board. The honorable gentleman directed attention to sub-section (2) of section 4 of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act, which reads—

> Where the Governor in Council is satisfied upon a report in writing of the Board that a contravention of or failure to comply with any of the said provisions has occurred or is likely to occur in relation to any employment by or under the Crown in right of the State of Victoria. . . . .

I contend that if the Government has any faith in the legislation for the passage of which it was responsible, a duty devolves upon it—in addition to that attachable to the Board itself—to ensure that the provisions of the Act are given effect. If the administration is solely in the hands of the Board, that state of affairs is wrong. I do not know anything about the merits or demerits of the case mentioned in the text of the motion proposed by the honorable member for Caulfield. I am interested only to the extent that he is a member of this House and is entitled to move the adjournment to discuss a matter of urgent public importance relating to the administration of the Government. I am unable to accept the view of the Attorney-General that the case in question does not come within the administrative purview of the Government. Is the Government absolved of all responsibility for the actions of other boards, such as the Transport Regulation Board, the Milk Board and the Public Service Board?

Mr. DUNSTAN.—You are always criticizing the Government.

Mr. CAIN.—This is not a matter of criticism, but of being honest. The question involves the rights of certain individuals. I may not agree with the case proposed to be presented by the honorable member for Caulfield; nevertheless he should not be prevented from submitting it.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—It is not you who will have to accept the responsibility.

Mr. CAIN.—Never mind about that! I accept full responsibility for anything I say or do, and I take strong exception to the Government raising a point of order regarding the motion submitted by the honorable member for Caulfield for the purpose of discussing what is definitely a matter of administration by the Government. Consequently, I hope that the Government will not persist in this attempt to prevent members of this House from taking advantage of the privileges provided in the direction indicated. The question is not whether the views sought to be expressed by the honorable member for Caulfield are right or otherwise. The main point at the moment is that the case does come within the ambit of Government administration, and I do not think there is any doubt

about the honorable member being able to prove that. For those reasons I maintain that you, Mr. Speaker, should rule that the honorable member for Caulfield can proceed to discuss a matter which vitally affects public administration and members of the Public Service who feel they have a grievance. I do not know whether in this specific case there was an appeal. I presume that one was made by the aggrieved applicant. If so, to whom would it be made? It would have to be to the Public Service Board.

Mr. MACFARLAN.—No, to the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board.

Mr. SLATER.—He could appeal to both boards.

Mr. MACFARLAN. — The Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board agreed with the Public Service Board.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—At any rate, the charge ought to be ventilated in this House.

Mr. CAIN.—In the final analysis, what means have discharged soldiers, or members of the community, or legislators to criticize any decision if it is not here?

Mr. DUNSTAN.—Is that a point of order?

Mr. CAIN.—If your ruling, Mr. Speaker, is in the direction suggested by the Attorney-General, what means will be left to members to submit questions dealing with the administration of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act? Apparently there will be none. I submit that honorable members should have an opportunity to criticize the administration of that Act as well as of any other legislation.

Mr. LEMMON (*Williamstown*).—I am surprised at the attitude adopted by the Attorney-General in trying to prevent for the limited time set out in the Standing Orders discussion on this matter, which is deemed to be one of public importance. In the first place, we must remember that this is a matter affecting an officer of the Crown, a public servant. Whatever this House may have done by legislation, neither the Ministry nor Parliament can forfeit its position under the scheme of responsible government for the care of the whole service of the Crown. Despite any legislation passed, there is an implied responsibility on the Crown. Consequently, your predecessors, Mr. Speaker, have always paid keen regard to the question whether or not the subject proposed to be discussed has the support of a given number of members. It has been stated from the Chair that that has a material effect on the Speaker's judgment. That test has not yet been made. I am inclined to think, with respect, that the Attorney-General was rather premature in submitting his point of order. The first question is whether the honorable member for Caulfield is supported—that is, whether the number of members required under the Standing Orders rise in their places to indicate that the matter raised is deemed by them to be of sufficient public importance to be discussed.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—Have you considered the matter? Do you know anything about it?

Mr. LEMMON.—It affects the Public Service.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—Don't you think there is a responsibility on members rising to support such a motion to acquaint themselves with the position? If you are always going automatically to support a member who submits a motion for the adjournment of the House, we shall get nowhere.

Mr. LEMMON.—The Premier does not wish a discussion on any subject other than those that he and his colleagues submit. That is a nice way to try to run this institution, but members of the Opposition and other members have rights and privileges.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—You have a right to learn, before supporting it, what the motion is about.

Mr. LEMMON.—We accept responsibility in discussing the matter after it has been presented, and in our subsequent vote. I submit that every Minister is sworn to administer the law, and that responsibility is a matter of great weight. Ministers cannot shed their responsibilities. The point now is whether or not the honorable member for Caulfield is supported. In the circumstances, the question should be submitted from the Chair.

Mr. HUGHES (*Caulfield*). — Mr. Speaker——

The SPEAKER (the Hon. G. H. Knox). —It is not competent for me at this stage to hear the honorable member for Caulfield on the general terms of his motion. If he desires to address the Chair he must speak specifically to the point of order.

Mr. HUGHES.—I think I can resolve the whole point by one simple quotation from a letter from the Public Service Board dealing with the matter which I desire to bring before the House—

> The Board, after a careful review of all the facts, considers that, in view of the Crown Solicitor's opinion, a technical contravention of the Act did occur at the time the appointment was actually made.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—Finish the letter!

Mr. SLATER (*Dundas*).—I submit that the issue can be determined by the simple test whether or not the subject affects either a Government Department or an organization governed by the State. This question arises: Is it proposed to deal with the administration of some governmental authority, or with some authority which is not responsible to the Government for its activities and is not paid by the Government? In the latter circumstances, there might be some weight in the submission of the Attorney-General, but so far as we know up to the present the facts are these: Two authorities of the State—the Public Service Board and the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board—have been responsible for a decision which seemingly is the matter upon which the adjournment of the House is sought. That, surely, is a matter of administration. The Government is responsible for the administration of the Public Service Board. Does the Attorney-General challenge that view? The Government is also responsible for the administration of the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board. The money for the servicing of those two bodies is provided by the Government. The Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board could not operate without the money voted to it to carry on its functions. To suggest that the activities of either of these bodies are outside the administrative control of the Government is undoubtedly begging the question.

I submit that on the broad facts the control of the Public Service Board and of the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board, which the Government must of necessity possess, definitely makes both those bodies subject to the administrative control of the Government. For that reason, I contend that the motion proposed by the honorable member for Caulfield is in order.

The SPEAKER (the Hon. G. H. Knox). —The Attorney-General has raised a point of order in regard to the motion proposed by the honorable member for Caulfield, and has submitted it at the proper time in so far that I have not yet taken the required step of ascertaining whether the honorable member for Caulfield is supported by the number of members specified under the Standing Orders. The point submitted by the Attorney-General was whether Government responsibility—in other words, administrative responsibility—is involved in the subject matter of the proposed motion. It is on that point that I have to rule. The Speaker is charged with certain responsibilities in giving a decision when a motion is submitted for the adjournment of the House on a matter of urgent public importance. By interjection, the Premier referred to the personal and collective responsibility of members. That must be left to the consideration and decision of honorable members present.

A motion such as that proposed must comply with certain conditions. First, it must be definite. It must specify the point of alleged governmental administration or responsibility. The second condition is that it must not deal with any subject at the time appearing on the Notice Paper that is under discussion or likely to be discussed in a reasonable period of time. Then there devolves upon the Speaker the responsibility of deciding whether the subject matter of the motion is of public importance and comes within the ambit of Government administration. That is the point now at issue. I rule that the subject matter of the proposed motion is of public importance, and that the honorable member for Caulfield is in order in submitting it.

Approval of the proposed discussion was indicated by the required number of members rising in their places, as specified in the Standing Order.

Mr. HUGHES (*Caulfield*).—I can well understand the Government's desire that this matter should not be aired in the House; but from the point of view of administration, the Government is responsible for the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act and in the capacity of an employer of labour should observe every requirement of the Act, which was passed last year with the unanimous support of this Parliament.

I would point out that in two particulars the Government has failed in its duty in administering the Act: first, in making an appointment which—from the aspect of the qualifications of the appointee—is a strange one, to say the least of it; and, secondly, in refusing to remedy an anomaly, as provided in sub-section (2) of section 4 of the Act, when its attention was drawn to the fact that a contravention had occurred. It is also strange that within a short time of the passing of an Act of this character anomalies should have been discovered. We should like to remedy them, because we do not care to see injustices occurring under such a measure. Some of us may believe that full and complete employment ought to be provided for all, and that preference ought not to be necessary; but so long as present conditions continue we must be prepared for booms and slumps. Within a few days of the proclamation of the Act, the Government —which is one of the chief employing bodies of the State—infringed its terms. What an anomalous situation!

Mr. HYLAND.—Do you honestly believe that?

Mr. HUGHES.—Yes, and I feel sure that every other member will also honestly believe it. On the 13th of October last year applications were called for the position of Director of the National Museum. The qualifications required of applicants were—

> Experience in Museum technique, including scientific work, taxonomy, modern methods of display and preservation and cataloguing of collections. General knowledge of Zoology, Geology, Ethnology with special knowledge of one of these sciences. Ability to supervise original research and to edit scientific publications.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—The Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act was not in operation at that time.

Mr. HUGHES.—That is true. In response to the advertisement, applications were received from a number of candidates in the Public Service, and I am concerned with the man who was appointed —Mr. Pescott—and a man who was not appointed, but who has all the qualifications, both academic and those needed under the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act, Mr. G. Mack. I shall deal first with the qualifications of these two applicants, for the reason that the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act provides that, as between men who are suitable and competent for any particular task, preference shall be given to the one who at the time of his appointment is qualified within the terms of the Act. I wish to show from the point of view of qualification for the appointment that there is no question about the ability and competence of the man who was not appointed but that there is a doubt as to the man who was appointed.

My reasons for that statement are these: In the first place, the man who was appointed had had nine years in the Public Service; but the man who was not appointed had been in the Public Service for 21 years. The man who was appointed was a Master of Agricultural Science of the Melbourne University; I do not know if any honours were taken by him. But the man who was not appointed is a Bachelor of Science of the same university and has taken honours in zoology. He has had special training in the specific subjects mentioned in the advertisement, namely, zoology, and geology. The man who was appointed had had practically no experience in zoology and geology; his knowledge of geology was limited to his course in Agriculture at the university.

The man who was not appointed did Parts I, II, and III in both geology and zoology with honours in zoology, and in ethnology he not only had the advantage of his training in his university course, but he also had experience at the National Museum where he served for 21 years. For two years before going to the museum he was employed in the Hunterian Museum at the Glasgow

University. He was able to edit works of original research, but the man who was appointed has not published any original research, and has merely contributed previously published matter to the publication of the Agricultural Department. The man who has not appointed has had many years of experience in museum research; he has had a number of papers published recording original research, and these have been favourably commented upon both here and abroad. He has undertaken editorial work, and has written reviews of scientific publications. I submit that from the point of view of suitability and competence the man who was not appointed is far ahead of the man who was appointed.

There is another aspect which this House should note. The trustees of the National Museum were not even consulted as to the appointment. I was amazed when I learned that the men to whom we have entrusted the care of a national institution should not have been consulted as to the appointment of a director. It was stated that Sir David Rivett had given it as his considered opinion that Mr. Pescott was the more suitable applicant. Now Sir David Rivett categorically denies that he ever made such a statement. He was not consulted on the matter, and has received a written apology to the effect that the former statement attributed to him was false.

Mr. HYLAND.—From whom did he receive the written apology?

Mr. HUGHES.—From Mr. Chapman.

Mr. HYLAND.—We will check up on that.

Mr. HUGHES.—I would say, "By all means do so." In addition the professors of zoology and geology at the University of Melbourne were asked by the Public Service Board to submit their recommendations for the appointment. Both professors agreed that Mr. Mack was suitable and competent for it. In fact, one professor listed the only men who he considered were qualified; Mr. Mack headed the list, but the name of the man subsequently appointed did not appear on it. Mr. Mack had the academic qualifications, but the appointee was academically unqualified; he had had experience in branches of ethnology but not in zoology or geology. Generally, his training left him unsuited, and he had no experience in museum technique.

Mr. CAIN.—Had he been in the Department of Agriculture?

Mr. HUGHES.—He had.

Mr. CAIN.—That is in accordance with what we would expect this Government to do—appoint a farmer to an important technical position such as this.

Mr. HUGHES.—The man who was not appointed had the academic qualifications, and he was also qualified in accordance with the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act. I propose to submit in sequence a number of dates that are significant. Applications for the position of Director of the National Museum were called for on the 13th of October, 1943. The nomination of the Public Service Board for the appointment, which was made by the Governor in Council, was dated the 6th of March, 1944. with a recommendation that the appointee should take office on the 26th of March. The Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act was proclaimed on the 21st of March, 1943. The vacancy occurred three days later—on the 24th of March. The appointment was approved by the Governor in Council on the 24th of April; therefore, the actual appointment was made one month after the Act was proclaimed. At the time of the appointment the appointee had not the necessary qualifications within the terms of the regulations under the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act, which provides, *inter alia*—

> For the purposes of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act 1943, a "theatre of war" shall be deemed to mean—
>
> (*a*) in the case of a person who was appointed, enlisted, enrolled, or called up for continuous full-time service in the naval, military, or air forces of the Commonwealth or any of the women's services or bodies auxiliary to any of those forces and who has completed his war service—
>
> (1) any area beyond the limits of the Commonwealth; and
>
> (2) any area in the Northern Territory of the Commonwealth north of parallel 14 deg. 50 min. south, on and after 19th February, 1942.

As honorable members are aware, that is a line which cuts across the Northern Territory just north of the Roper River.

At the time of the appointment the appointee had not served outside Australia nor within the area defined in the regulation. He was a captain in the second A.I.F., 5th Australian Mobile Entomological Section, and was serving in Western Australia. On the 10th of May —approximately three weeks after the appointment had been approved by the Governor in Council—the appointee was transferred to New Guinea, where he served for a short period and then returned to Melbourne to take up his appointment on the 1st of August, 1944.

On the 19th of May the Public Service Board was asked by the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board to state its reasons for its recommendation. I propose to read sections of the letter written to the Premier on the subject of this appointment, quoting what had taken place at that date concerning the appointment—

> On 19.5.44 the Board asked the Public Service Board to inform it of the qualifications and experience of the abovementioned applicants, and to state its reasons why preference had not been given to a discharged serviceman within the meaning of the Act.
>
> The Board considers that it should take cognizance of the complaint by reason of the fact that the vacancy in question did not arise until 24.3.44.

Mr. HYLAND.—Why did you miss reading the preceding paragraph in the letter?

Mr. HUGHES.—I quoted it earlier in my remarks.

Mr. CAIN.—The honorable member is entitled to read what he likes. Let the Chief Secretary check up on that, too!

Mr. HUGHES.—The paragraph that I previously read has reference to the position occupied by Mr. Pescott, who, as I have said, was a captain in the 5th Australian Mobile Entomological Section, 2nd A.I.F., serving in Western Australia. He had enlisted for service abroad but had not served in a prescribed theatre of war. The letter continues—

> The Public Service Board, on 25.5.44 stated that Mr. Pescott was nominated by the Board on the 6th March, 1944, being a date prior to the coming into operation of the Act.
>
> The Board, in course of its investigations into the complaint, ascertained that Mr. Pescott was, as from 10th May, 1944, serving with the 2nd A.I.F. in New Guinea.
>
> It was also ascertained that the opinion of the Crown Solicitor was obtained by the Public Service Board as to the effect of subsection 3 of the Act, which reads as follows—
>
> > "Nothing in this Act shall be construed as preventing or affecting the appointment or promotion to any position during his absence on war service of any person who on the completion of his war service would become a discharged serviceman within the meaning of the Act."
>
> The Crown Solicitor stated that he was of the opinion that the sub-section had no regard to potential service, but was concerned only with those persons who have qualified to become discharged servicemen at the time of the appointment or promotion, if their war service at that time had been completed.

That was the ruling of the Crown Solicitor. The letter proceeds—

> The Board is of the opinion that one of the applicants (Mr. G. Mack) for the position, who was a discharged serviceman was, as far as the basic qualifications required for the position—knowledge and experience—are concerned, suitable and competent within the meaning of the Act for promotion to the position in question.
>
> The Public Service Board was again asked to state its reasons why preference had not been given to a discharged serviceman. On 22-6-44 the Public Service Board stated that it had reviewed the applicants in the light of the provisions of the preference Act, and having regard to the fact that Mr. Pescott was serving in New Guinea, and to the provisions of section 3 (3) of the Act, had decided to adhere to its nomination.

That was done in spite of the ruling of the Crown Solicitor.

> This reply was not considered satisfactory, first, as it is not competent for the Public Service Board to review the applications after the Governor in Council has made an appointment; and, secondly, that the Board did not act on the opinion of the Crown Solicitor, which was furnished at its request.
>
> The Board, after a careful review of all the facts, considers that in view of the Crown Solicitor's opinion, a technical contravention of the Act did occur at the time the appointment was actually made.

I shall pause there a moment to ask: When does a technical breach of the law take place, and when does a moral breach of the law occur? Who is to define what is a technical breach of the law?

Mr. MACFARLAN.—You will find out some day. There is a big difference.

Mr. DUNSTAN (to Mr. Hughes).—Say outside of Parliament some of the things you have said inside and you will soon find out where a technical breach comes in.

Mr. HUGHES.—I have never yet had to choose or trim my words to anybody's requirements and I do not propose to do so now. I shall read on—

> However, as the appointee, Mr. Pescott, qualified shortly after the date of his appointment to become a discharged serviceman on the completion of his war service, it would appear that the spirit of the preference Act has been maintained.

If that is the spirit of the Act, it is time it was re-examined. If a man, in addition to satisfying the requirements of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act, has academic qualifications and experience far above those of the man who was appointed, but is refused appointment to the position in question, how can it be said that the spirit of the Act has been observed?

Mr. MACFARLAN.—Because a discharged serviceman was appointed; that is the spirit of the Act.

Mr. HUGHES.—The letter continues—

> The Board, therefore, having regard to all the circumstances, submits this report, and is of the opinion that no further action is necessary or expedient under the provisions of section 4 (2) of the preference Act.

The final authority for the observance of any Act passed by this Parliament is the Parliament itself—not any board appointed by the Government, or even the Government. This Parliament must hold even the Government responsible for appointments that are made, and that is why I consider I was justified in moving the adjournment of the House this afternoon. I did so because I feel that a flagrant act of maladministration has taken place. For the Government to say that the Board alone is responsible is surely another attempt to "pass the buck." The Government should accept its responsibility since it is subject to Parliament and is kept in office by Parliament.

Mr. HYLAND.—You do not keep us in office. If we were depending on you, we should go hungry!

Mr. HUGHES.—That is quite true; there are many other people I would rather feed! For the Government to say that this Board is primarily responsible for the acts of this Parliament both as a legislative authority and an employing authority is surely a matter that needs to be looked at again. The time has arrived when Parliament should say whether or not this Act is being observed in spirit and in letter, and should insist that it be administered in the interests of the community.

Mr. DUNSTAN (Premier and Treasurer).—I have been in Parliament a long while and I have known the adjournment of the House to be moved on many occasions to discuss matters of urgent public importance, but I cannot recall a more flimsy case having been presented than that outlined by the honorable member for Caulfield this afternoon. The text of his motion refers to the failure of the Government to comply with the provisions of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act in the appointment of the director of the National Museum. It is tantamount to a no-confidence motion. It is a censure on the Public Service Board and also on the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board. Both of those bodies are responsible for determining who shall be appointed to certain positions.

On numerous occasions I have been criticized by honorable members for not having observed the recommendations of the Public Service Board. In this case, however, the Public Service Board made a recommendation, which it subsequently reconsidered, after the passage of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act, and it held to its opinion that Mr. Pescott should be appointed to the position. In accordance with the terms of the Act, the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board reviewed the appointment and arrived at the same decision as the Public Service Board. This is one instance, at least, where the Government acted on the recommendation of the Public Service Board and also on that of the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board, but in the opinion of the honorable member it does not matter whether the Government did or did not do so, it is still wrong and therefore open to censure. Apparently, its action does not meet with the approval of either the honorable member or one of his constituents or friends.

I should like to know where the Government has failed in this matter. As the Attorney-General has rightly said,

the Government investigates cases only when there is a dispute between the Public Service Board and the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board. In this case, however, there was no dispute because both Boards agreed that Mr. Pescott was the man for the job. The law provides that the Government shall act upon the report and recommendation of the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board to vary an appointment. That Board has made no recommendation to the Government that there should be any departure from the decision of the Public Service Board, but the honorable member criticizes the Government because it has not done something in accordance with his view.

The gentleman on whose behalf the honorable member has spoken this afternoon has sought legal advice on this matter, and I presume that if he had a case on legal grounds he would test it in the proper place. Evidently he has no case and, therefore, the honorable member has taken the opportunity to move the adjournment of the House to discuss a grievance which, if there were a case, would be more properly ventilated in the courts by the person concerned.

Mr. FIELD.—Parliament is the highest court, after all.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—It may be, but it is not the most competent court to deal with a matter of this kind. The honorable member for Caulfield did not deal with the question of preference to discharged servicemen so much as with the qualifications of Mr. Mack, who, he alleges, should have been appointed. The honorable member has set himself up as a sort of super board—as the highest court of appeal and as a tribunal to determine who should be appointed—notwithstanding recommendations that may have been made by the Public Service Board or the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board.

Mr. COTTER.—He may be right, for all that.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—He may be, and he may also be wrong. The honorable member for Richmond knows that this Parliament, in its wisdom or otherwise, created a Public Service Board and imposed certain duties and obligations upon that body, and it is expected to make recommendations in keeping with its judgment. The Board has carried out its duties in that respect in this case, but, without the slightest evidence to disprove that fact, the honorable member for Caulfield—merely by a wave of the hand—suggests that Mr. Mack ought to have been appointed because he has the necessary qualifications, in spite of the specific judgment of the Public Service Board.

Mr. SLATER.—He had authority for his statement; he communicated with professors at the university.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—One can always find authorities to support one's case. The fact that Mr. Pescott had considerable public service experience as well as having seen military service in New Guinea must be acknowledged; but if the suggestion implied in the letter from the chairman of the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board is strained to the limit, then on a mere technicality—not on the merits of the case—Mr. Pescott should be deprived of the appointment which I feel he was justified in receiving. Every one knows that when the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Bill was debated last session the Attorney-General pointed out that it was legislation of an experimental nature, and that the Act would be administered with common sense, in a reasonable way, and with judgment. In the administration of legislation of this kind the details must be left to the good sense and good judgment of the responsible board.

On the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board there are three returned soldiers, and therefore no one can say that there is any bias on its part against returned soldiers. It has been placed in a very difficult position in administering the law, because if the Act is to be strictly and harshly administered I believe that the legislation for which this Parliament stands, and on which it has placed its hallmark, will fail. The Board has taken all these factors into consideration, and has come to its decision. I have a memorandum from the chairman of the Board. I do not wish to read the whole of it, because it deals in detail with the proceedings leading up to the appointment to this position of Director of the

National Museum, but I shall read only the last three paragraphs of it. The first of them is—

> The Board, after a careful review of all the facts, considers that, in view of the Crown Solicitor's opinion, a technical contravention of the Act did occur at the time that appointment was actually made.

I admit that there are many technical contraventions of Acts from time to time, but I recognize that any Act must be administered with commonsense and sound judgment. In the next two paragraphs the chairman says—

> However, as the appointee, Mr. Pescott, qualified shortly after the date of his appointment to become a discharged serviceman on the completion of his war service, it would appear that the spirit of the preference Act has been maintained.
>
> The Board, therefore, having regard to all the circumstances submits this report, and is of opinion that no further action is necessary or expedient under the provisions of section 4 (2) of the preference Act.

The Board's recommendation to the Government was to the effect that no further action was necessary or expedient, and yet the honorable member for Caulfield has the brazen audacity this afternoon to say in effect to the Government, "You should be censured for not doing something which the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board has never told you to do." There is no recommendation by the Board that Mr. Pescott should not be appointed to the position, nor is there any suggestion that Mr. Mack or any other person should be appointed. There is, however, a definite recommendation that it is not necessary or expedient that any action whatever should be taken by the Government. If we had done otherwise than act on that report the honorable member would have been justified this afternoon in moving the adjournment of the House; but there is no dispute, no difference of opinion, no disagreement between the two Boards. They say that the right action has been taken, and they advise the Government not to interfere. Because the Government has not interfered the honorable member says it is time to turn the Government out. The Board has been appointed in accordance with the Act. The honorable member did not read that portion of the letter which advised the Government not to interfere, but he read only those portions that were in accordance with his own point of view.

Mr. HUGHES.—I read all that section.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—In the first place the honorable member did not do so, but he may have read it later.

Mr. HUGHES.—You will find that *Hansard* has it.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—That is well and good, but even if the honorable member did read it, he skated over it and did not deal with the point contained in it. After all, what concerns the Government is the recommendation of the Board, which was "Do not interfere." The Government has not interfered; it has allowed the Board to carry on its own business in its own way. We have heard much in this House about the independence of boards. This Board is supposed to be independent, but if the Government acted in the way suggested by the honorable member the last vestige of the Board's independence would disappear. If the Government decided to take action, it would not of necessity mean that Mr. Mack would be appointed, because there was another soldier applicant whose claims would have to be reviewed. It is quite possible that the other person might be appointed in the event of Mr. Pescott not being favoured. These, however, are not matters for this Parliament or for me as the head of the Government, which is paying members of the Board fairly large salaries to determine them.

If in fact the Act does not do what the honorable member desires, and if he wishes to place greater responsibilities on the Government, I tell him that he had the opportunity of putting his suggestions forward when the Bill was before the House, but he did not do so. He agreed to place the responsibility on the Board, and it was also the intention of Parliament to do so. Because we have done that, the honorable member now says, "You are still wrong, and if you took the responsibility away from the Board you would still be wrong." There is nothing further I can say, but I consider that the honorable member has rendered a disservice to the person he is

endeavouring to serve, and to this Parliament, which is here to transact important public business, and not to deal with little matters that could be raised on the daily motion for the adjournment of the House, or when Supply Bills are being discussed, or on Grievance Days.

Mr. HUGHES.—Is an injustice to a public servant a little matter?

Mr. DUNSTAN.—Injustice! There is no injustice. The honorable member for Caulfield has not himself been fair to the Public Service, the Public Service Board, or the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board. Each of the Boards has three members, and they are in agreement as to who should be appointed, but the honorable member, with his usual egotism and arrogance, has risen and said, "I am not going to take notice of their recommendation, and I shall not be happy until Mr. Mack has been appointed." The Government has nothing to hide, and I have placed the facts fairly before the House. There is no recommendation from the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board to reconsider or cancel the appointment of Mr. Pescott.

I believe Mr. Mack himself was not eligible for the position at the time when applications were called for, as he was not a discharged serviceman within the meaning of any Act then in operation. I understand that he is a discharged British serviceman, and is now eligible under the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act. The Government did not question his eligibility. I have a good opinion of him from what I have heard of him, but it would be a grave mistake of this Parliament, or of this Government, to interfere with the Board. If the Board had said, "You must cancel the appointment of Mr. Pescott, and appoint Mr. Mack," and if the Government had failed to take notice of such recommendation, the honorable member would have had a legitimate grievance, but he has not alleged anything of the kind. The Board is quite happy, and the Government is quite happy to accept its recommendation and advice in this matter.

Mr. SLATER (*Dundas*).—I propose to address myself to only one phase of this matter, and that is of an indirect character. From time to time the Government has appointed a committee of trustees to undertake the management of the Public Library, Museums and National Gallery. I have not heard any criticism from any section of the community as to the general character of the men who comprise that trusteeship. The trustees were, however, gravely concerned when, without any consultation with them or on their part, the appointment in question was made, and I think they unanimously expressed a protest. They did not feel that they should be responsible for making the appointment, but they were so much concerned that their protest was voiced at a deputation which waited on the Chief Secretary.

The trustees did not for one moment suggest—nor do I proffer such a suggestion now—that they should have the right to make the appointment, but they stressed emphatically the sound view that at least they should have been consulted before an appointment to such a high office as the directorship of the National Museum was made. The deputation to the Chief Secretary followed a protest in writing to that Minister. I do not propose to embark on the controversy. I merely rose to speak because I have knowledge of the aspect to which I have alluded and I do not hesitate to convey the view of the trustees in relation thereto. I hope that when appointments of this character are proposed to be made in the future, the Government will take into its confidence, accept advice from, and give consideration to the views of those men to whom it has entrusted the management and control of the magnificent institution concerned.

Mr. HYLAND (Chief Secretary).—The phase dealt with by the honorable member for Dundas is, again, a matter for the Public Service Board, which has the responsibility of making such appointments. The Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board also comes into the picture. Naturally, the Government desires to co-operate with the trustees of the Public Library, Museums and National Gallery, because they are performing excellent work in an honorary capacity; but there is a limit to the extent of that co-operation. Did I understand

the honorable member for Caulfield to say that Mr. Chapman apologized to Sir David Rivett?

Mr. HUGHES.—Yes, for having stated that Sir David had given it as his opinion that Mr. Pescott was the most suitable applicant.

Mr. HYLAND.—Mr. Chapman did not apologize to Sir David Rivett. There was certainly a misunderstanding between them on the matter, but no apology was sought, tendered, or necessary. Perhaps the honorable member for Caulfield will ask Sir David Rivett to permit him to see a copy of a letter dated the 1st of June, 1944, and marked "confidential." Its contents will bear out what Mr. Chapman and I have said. This affair has been a storm in a tea cup. Both the Public Service Board and the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board have certain duties to perform, and I have no more say in these matters than had any of my predecessors.

The Public Service Board advertises these vacancies, fixes salaries, and interviews applicants personally. The question of the services to be expected for the salary offering is one for decision by the Board. I understand that the Board interviewed Mr. Pescott on three occasions. By virtue of his being Director of the National Museum, Mr. Pescott becomes a member of the Zoological Board. I was present, with the honorable member for Flemington, at the last meeting of the Zoological Board and then met Mr. Pescott for the first time. I think it will be agreed that the Public Service Board and the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board have discharged their obligations to the best of their ability.

As the latter Board approved of the appointment despite a technical breach in relation to the service of the applicant at an operational base, I am unable to appreciate what the honorable member for Caulfield expects to gain by moving the adjournment of the House. I am unable to say, also, whether the honorable member approached the Premier on the matter. I do know, however, that he made no representations to me. He did not, for instance, ask to see the file dealing with the appointment. Apparently, the honorable member seized on a chance of obtaining some publicity in the press. My own view is that he was wrong in moving the adjournment of the House, especially in view of the fact that the two Boards concerned were in agreement.

If it were contended that either I as Chief Secretary, the Premier, or some other Minister should be in a position to direct a board as to the appointment or otherwise of any particular applicant, such a contention would meet with prompt criticism from the Opposition side of the House.

Mr. PATON.—It suggests a line of thought in favour of an independent tribunal.

Mr. HYLAND.—It does. Mr. Pescott must be, so to speak, tried out, and I am certain that if the honorable member for Caulfield will adopt my suggestion that he read the confidential letter from Sir David Rivett, he will be made aware of the true position. The deputation that waited on me was introduced by the honorable member for Flemington on the 6th of June, when various matters relating to the museum and the director were discussed.

Mr. SLATER.—Did that deputation mention the matter of non-consultation with the trustees?

Mr. HYLAND.—It did. From the notes of the deputation I quote the following extract:—

> Sir David said he wished to make it quite clear that he had not recommended the appointment of Mr. Pescott to the directorship of the National Museum. He had not had an opportunity of judging closely enough the question of whether Mr. Pescott was suitable or not and had not given any consideration to the question of a permanent appointment. Sir David had expressed the opinion that Mr. Pescott was the "best of the bunch," but did not want that to be taken as a considered judgment.

That appears to be clear-cut.

Mr. HUGHES.—Sir David denies having made such a statement. He did not even look into the question of the qualifications and had no knowledge of them.

Mr. HYLAND.—I have quoted from the transcript of shorthand notes taken by a disinterested party.

Mr. HUGHES.—Sir David Rivett casually remarked that Mr. Pescott was the best of the bunch.

Mr. HYLAND.—The honorable member denied that Sir David Rivett had said that.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—I do not desire to enter into the merits of the case, but I wish to reply to the Premier, who made a definite statement that the Government always accepted the nominations of the Public Service Board and did not interfere with it. On another occasion, the Public Service Board nominated Mr. Baud for the position of head of the Public Library against the recommendation of the trustees of the Public Library, Museums, and National Gallery, and submitted his name to the Governor in Council for appointment to the position. What happened? Surely the memories of the Premier and his colleagues are not so short that they do not recall that they refused for four or five months to accept the recommendation of the Board. Finally they asked the Board to alter its recommendation. That body did so, and Mr. Cooke was appointed. That case is an illustration of the type of irresponsible statement that the Premier makes.

Mr. MACFARLAN.—The Board found that it was wrong.

Mr. CAIN.—I am not referring to what the Board did, but to the statement of the Premier when he said, "We do not interfere with recommendations of the Board."

Mr. MACFARLAN.—Not when the Board is right.

Mr. CAIN.—In the absence from the Chamber of the Premier I am pleased to have the admission from the Attorney-General that the Government interferes with the Public Service Board only when Ministers think it is wrong. We get back to the position that apparently the Public Service Board is the puppet of the Government of the day. When it suits the Government it accepts the Board's recommendation, and when it does not suit, then the Government does not accept the recommendation. Therefore, I do not think the Premier is entitled to make a statement which is a deliberate lie.

The SPEAKER (**the Hon. G. H. Knox**).—The Leader of the Opposition must withdraw that statement.

Mr. CAIN.—Then I say that it is a deliberate misstatement.

Mr. MACFARLAN.—I ask that those words should also be withdrawn.

The SPEAKER.—I think the Leader of the Opposition should withdraw the words "deliberate misstatement."

Mr. CAIN.—Within the last half an hour the Premier said deliberately that the Government always accepted the decision of the Public Service Board.

Mr. MACFARLAN.—I do not think he said that. If the Board's decision was wrong, it would be wrong for the Government to accept it.

Mr. CAIN.—The Premier made the statement that I repeated. Within the last few months the Government would not accept a decision of the Public Service Board, and it refused to appoint the man nominated for a certain position. The policy of the Government is not to take any notice of the Public Service Board except when it is pleased to do so. I am surprised that the Premier should have said that the Government always accepted the Board's decision.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—I did not say that.

Mr. CAIN.—The Premier said it.

Mr. DUNSTAN (Premier and Treasurer).—I take exception to the statement made by the Leader of the Opposition and I ask for its withdrawal. I did not make the statement he says I did.

The SPEAKER.—The Premier takes grave exception to a statement made by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—The Leader of the Opposition has stated that I said I always act on the recommendation of the Public Service Board. I did not say that. My words were to this effect: "I have been criticized because sometimes I have not acted on the recommendation of the Public Service Board." That is the substance of the words I used this afternoon.

Mr. CAIN.—You used other words.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—The Leader of the Opposition is a disgrace to his party.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—I ask for the withdrawal of the statement just made by the excited Premier. He is not to use that language here.

The SPEAKER.—During the Premier's absence from the Chamber a few minutes ago certain comments were

made by the Leader of the Opposition, but I understand that when the Premier entered the Chamber just now the honorable member made a statement to which the honorable gentleman takes exception. Is the Premier still aggrieved?

Mr. DUNSTAN (Premier and Treasurer).—All I am asking for is the withdrawal of the words which were used by the Leader of the Opposition and which are not true.

Mr. CAIN.—What remark was that?

Mr. DUNSTAN.—The Leader of the Opposition stated that I said I always acted on the recommendation of the Public Service Board. I did not say that.

The SPEAKER.—It is not the interpretation of a remark to which exception is taken, but it is the allegation of the Premier that the Leader of the Opposition attributed words to the honorable gentleman which he did not use.

Mr. CAIN.—I heard the Premier make the statement. I am not deaf.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—Then the Leader of the Opposition is stupid, if he is not deaf.

Mr. CAIN.—The Premier is not to use that language either in this House or outside it. I wish the Premier to withdraw the statement that I am a disgrace to my party.

The SPEAKER.—I did not hear that remark.

Mr. CAIN.—I will withdraw my statement.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—I withdraw any remark I made to which exception is taken.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—I have no feelings in this matter. I would not have risen but for the definite statement which I heard the Premier make. Everybody knows his past record in regard to the Public Service Board. Everybody knows that the Board nominated Mr. Baud and that for five months the Government would not agree to that recommendation. The Government induced the Board to alter its recommendation, and yet the Premier said, "We always accept the Board's recommendations."

Mr. DUNSTAN (Premier and Treasurer).—I ask for a withdrawal of that statement. I did not use those words this afternoon.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—I have withdrawn those words in accordance with parliamentary practice, but I heard what the Premier said. I know what was said by him in justification of his acceptance of the Board's altered proposal. I know his past record. I am aware that he repudiates the Public Service Board when it pleases him to do so, and he accepts its decisions when they suit him. As the Attorney-General said before the Premier returned to the Chamber, "We accept the Board's decision when it is right, and when it is not right, we do not accept it."

Mr. DUNSTAN.—That is what Parliament intended.

Mr. CAIN.—No. The Board consists of a chairman and a representative of the Public Service, both of whom are appointed by the Government, and another representative of the Public Service appointed by the Service itself. That Board was set up under a statute to decide questions of promotions affecting the Public Service. The Government in the past—I am waiting to see what happens in the future—has always been prepared to do what it likes with decisions of the Board. In the case that the honorable member for Caulfield brought under the notice of the House, the Government accepted the Board's decision because it was pleasing to the Government. In those circumstances, whatever may be the merits of the case, I feel that the Government is sheltering behind the Board; actually that was the submission by the Premier.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—There are two boards concerned.

Mr. CAIN.—That is true, and I shall say that the Government is sheltering behind both boards. In the first place, the Attorney-General tried to prevent the motion from being moved on the ground that the Government has no control over the boards, but later he stated that the Government accepts the decisions of the Boards when they are right! If that is so, the Public Service can never expect to receive justice while the present Government remains in office.

The motion for the adjournment of the House was negatived.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING BILL.

For **Mr. OLDHAM** (Honorary Minister), Mr. J. G. B. McDonald (Minister of Water Supply) moved for leave to bring in a Bill relating to town and country planning.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

WATER BILL.

The debate (adjourned from the previous day) on the motion of Mr. J. G. B. McDonald (Minister of Water Supply) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr. OLD (*Swan Hill*).—Before I proceed to discuss the clauses of the Bill, I wish to pay a tribute to the memory of the late Mr. Commissioner Robertson. He was a public servant who performed great service as a member of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission. It was my pleasure, as Minister of Water Supply, to have been associated with him prior to his appointment as a Commissioner, when he was chief engineer of the Commission. Our pleasant relationship continued during his term as Commissioner, and later when he was deputy chairman of the Commission. The State has suffered a great loss by his untimely death.

When I held the portfolio of Water Supply, I recommended that Mr. Robertson should go abroad so that he might become better qualified to carry out his duties as a member of the Commission. I hold the view that Ministers in charge of Departments should be held responsible to see that their leading officers are sent abroad from time to time to become familiar with what is being done in other parts of the world. If we handicap the heads of Departments under the parsimonious policy of keeping them in Australia and forcing them to learn of modern methods from text-books, we shall do both the officers and the State a great disservice. After consultation with Mr. East, the chairman of the Commission, I recommended that Mr. Robertson should be sent abroad to study modern engineering developments, and the report he furnished on his return was a credit both to himself and the Department. Certain recommendations he made as to the construction of the Lauriston reservoir saved more than ten times the cost of his trip abroad.

The State is fortunate in having as chairman of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission a man with the capacity of Mr. East. He is mentally the best equipped person in Australia to cope with water supply problems. He is young and full of enthusiasm for his work.

Mr. McKENZIE.—I agree with your remarks.

Mr. OLD.—When I was first appointed as Minister of Water Supply, about eight years ago, I found that certain conditions in the Department needed to be altered. A Royal Commission was appointed to investigate the matter, and its recommendations were adopted by Parliament. One improvement which has been of great advantage to the people of this State was the appointment of a practical irrigator as a member of the Commission, in the person of Mr. Hanslow. He, too, is giving good service.

In his survey of the State's water supply activities the Leader of the Opposition outlined in a general way a recommendation from a committee of soldier settlers relative to what they consider should be done at once for drought relief purposes. The committee had submitted a proposal to the Government that in certain irrigation areas land should be utilized by settlers whose crops had failed, using their own teams of horses and equipment, to grow fodder for relief purposes instead of transferring the teams and available man power to other districts. The Leader of the Opposition seemed to be of opinion that a national security regulation could be promulgated to take over private lands and make them available for that purpose. I think my view is correct that we cannot associate the existing drought conditions with the war, and therefore cannot take the necessary steps under national security regulations.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Parliament has power to take action.

Mr. OLD.—It cannot be taken apart from the passing of necessary legislation. A Bill could be introduced and passed, to operate for a limited period, to accomplish what the Leader of the Opposition

has suggested should be done by way of a national security regulation. I speak as one possessed of practical knowledge when I say that it is now almost too late in the season to sow oats under irrigation. It is true that oats can be sown up to the middle of September, or possibly a little later, but it is too late in the season from then on.

Mr. McKENZIE.—Oats could be sown in irrigation districts now.

Mr. OLD.—Not with satisfactory results. That does not necessarily mean that the proposition fails, because if oats cannot be sown millet and sudan grass, which make reasonable fodder, could be sown and the fodder could be supplemented by wheat of which there is a certain quantity available. That fodder would meet the requirements of drought-stricken settlers to a considerable degree and I strongly recommend to the Government serious consideration of such a proposal. I have had extensive experience of growing crops under irrigation, particularly summer crops, and I am of opinion that millet and sudan grass, which are the only crops from which hay can be made, could be sown at present. Ambercane could be grown later.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—It may interest the honorable member to know that the divisional engineer for the Murray valley section and the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission are considering the possibility of irrigating some of the crops at present within the area commanded in the Murray valley. They are examining the position in an effort to save some of the crops.

Mr. CAIN.—That is a good proposition.

Mr. OLD.—Districts in which to take action would have to be selected. It would be no use selecting land served from the Goulburn system, because that storage is already overtaxed. Areas in Kerang and other districts could be used, utilizing man power and teams available in that area. If it could not be done in the comprehensive way suggested by the soldier settlers, at least we should encourage groups of settlers to combine and obtain irrigation land for the purpose; but the Government could do it better than individuals. If the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Water Supply were to consult their departmental officers in various irrigation districts to ascertain where areas of land in those districts are not being fully utilized at the moment, I am satisfied that in the event of a proper approach being made the owners of that land would permit groups of three or four settlers from the drier areas to grow fodder. Satisfactory arrangements could be made to grow a considerable quantity of fodder in the districts where the teams are available.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD. — The Minister of Agriculture and the Irrigation Field Officer, Mr. A. Morgan, who is also chairman of the local War Agricultural Committee, are at Cohuna today and they are attempting to get the farmers to organize to undertake a project such as you suggest.

Mr. OLD.—I am pleased to receive that assurance from the Minister because it is a practical way of providing fodder, instead of bringing it from Tasmania or some other part of the Commonwealth. Two weeks ago it was my privilege to attend a meeting at Yarrawonga which considered the further development of the Murray valley. Every one realizes the value of water. It is the life blood of Australia and it is increasingly evident to all that proper use must be made of every available drop of water that can be stored. The Minister of Water Supply was present at that meeting and can vouch for the accuracy of my statement that it was, without doubt, the most representative meeting of persons interested in the development of the Murray valley that I have ever attended. There were present representatives from far beyond Mildura and from across the River Murray, in New South Wales. They disregarded the State boundaries and dealt with the proposition as a whole. An organization was formed to consider specific lines of development in the Murray valley. They envisaged the time—as we all do—when there will be great development in that area by virtue of the additional water to be made available, and by the better utilization of water in the existing storages, which is equally important.

The Murray valley at present is served from the River Murray storages. The Hume reservoir and works associated with the River Murray are controlled by

the River Murray Commission. A proposal has been mooted to store a proportion of the waters of the Snowy river. Instead of allowing the water in that river to run to waste in the sea it is suggested that it should be diverted from the head waters to the Murrumbidgee river. Hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of water would then be made available to irrigate the Deniliquin-Berridale and adjoining areas.

Mr. HOLLAND.—That would have to be done with the consent of the New South Wales Government.

Mr. OLD.—There are three Governments interested. The head waters of the Snowy are somewhere in the Federal Capital Territory. The New South Wales Government and the Victorian Government are vitally interested. The time has arrived when careful consideration should be given to that project. I would go further and say that the activities of the River Murray Commission should be extended to include the control and diversion of the Snowy river waters. If that were done the water could be utilized for the development of the hinterland of Australia, particularly in dry years.

Mr. HOLLINS.—You say that three Governments are interested, but judging by the sparse attendance of Country party members in the Chamber at the moment, I should say that the party does not appear to be interested in your proposal. It is most unfair.

Mr. OLD.—A preliminary survey has been made of the Snowy river and I understand that it is possible to construct a dam at Jindabyne in which a considerable quantity of water could be conserved. Vision, engineering capacity, and money would be needed to do the job and, if the project is worth while, all these necessary attributes will be available.

To carry out this project would require the construction of a tunnel 24 miles long through the range to the headwaters of the Murrumbidgee. The water could then be diverted to that river and utilized in New South Wales. Victoria should be associated in this work because its catchment areas are now being used almost to their limit. The best reservoir sites have been exploited, but that does not mean that less advantageous sites should not be sought. At present reservoirs can be filled practically every year, but that is no reason why reservoirs should not be constructed which could be filled every two or three years, rather than that we should cease water conservation activities. If the proposal I have made is accepted it should be placed under the control of the River Murray Commission. The water could be diverted, and if additional water were made available, New South Wales would get it, although it now runs into Victoria. When the Hume reservoir is extended to its full 2,000,000 acre-feet capacity, however, Victoria should then be given a greater proportion of water from the Hume reservoir as compensation.

The time has arrived when legislative power should be taken to compel a water user to make the best use of his water whether or not he has water rights. In order to do so, his land should be properly graded. Under an Act passed in 1937, a certain financial obligation which had hitherto been resting upon the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission was transferred to the State Development Account. Water users pay about one-fifth of the interest and sinking fund payments on the loans raised for water supply purposes, and since the general public is supplying about four-fifths they have a right to know that the water which they are helping to supply is properly used. There are many striking examples of the success of irrigation in Victoria, and one of the most outstanding is in the Mildura area. Last year the value of the dried fruits crop in the Mildura, Red Cliffs, and Merbein districts was more than £3,250,000. The actual sum debited to irrigation works in Victoria is about £15,000,000. Honorable members can realize from that figure what a substantial investment of public money has been made in water supply undertakings.

Large areas adjacent to the River Murray have been irrigated and three States—Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia—have shared the benefits. But greater things can be accomplished, and in days to come a wider and better use will be made of that water. A proposal is now under consideration to increase the capacity of the Hume reservoir to 2,000,000 acre-feet. The only drawback is that the Commonwealth Government has not yet agreed to it, although representations have been made repeatedly

by Victoria with the view of obtaining its consent. I have no doubt that it will eventually be given.

Mr. HOLLINS.—How much of the River Murray water is being conserved?

Mr. OLD.—The honorable member may be surprised to know that about three years ago, over a period of fifteen months, not a drop of River Murray water reached the sea. Exceedingly dry seasons prevailed, South Australia's quota was placed in Lake Victoria and used later, and the barrages at the mouth of the Murray were completed and put into operation.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Can you give an estimate of how much water from the Murray would be conserved over a period of ten years.

Mr. OLD.—No, but I know that a great volume of that water is conserved and used by irrigators in Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia. The proposal to utilize the waters of the Snowy river by bringing them back to the centre of Australia is most valuable.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Has the 24-mile tunnel, to which you referred, been commenced?

Mr. OLD.—I understand that preliminary surveys have been made. It is possible to divert a certain volume of water by open channel from the extreme headworks on the Snowy river, but that would not be worth while.

Mr. PATON.—Would there be any objection to the use of water from the Murray to supplement Sydney's domestic supply?

Mr. OLD.—I understand that although that suggestion has been made, it has not been favourably received by other States. A proposal has been made, however, to generate electric energy from the waters of the Snowy river. I understand that an investigation was made by Swedish engineers who were engaged to advise the Government regarding the Kiewa hydro-electric scheme. The Government did that because it was dealing with something new—the conservation and utilization of water above the snow line—and there was no one in Australia competent to give advice regarding it. While the engineers were in Australia the New South Wales Government asked them to make a preliminary investigation of the possibility of developing electrical energy on the Snowy river, and their report on that proposal was favourable. We have to look at the matter from the viewpoint of finding either a substitute method of producing electrical energy or another source of water supply. My opinion is that Australia will be better served by transferring most of the water of the Snowy river into the Murrumbidgee country than by generating electrical energy with it.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—Cannot that water be used for both purposes?

Mr. OLD.—Only to a limited extent. I understand that if the water is brought to the most suitable place for the generation of electricity, by the time it has dropped the necessary 600 feet it will be at too low a level to be taken through the mountain range. In Victoria, however, there is an unlimited quantity of brown coal, and from that source enough electricity could be generated to supply the area of New South Wales that could be supplied by a hydro-electric scheme on the Snowy river, as well as the whole of Victoria. We have a substitute for the hydro-generation of electricity, but we cannot find a substitute for water in the dry areas. A master plan is needed.

The meeting held at Yarrawonga was successful because those present disregarded State boundaries entirely. They said, "Let us look at this problem from an Australian point of view. Never mind the New South Wales and Victorian viewpoints; we must find what is best for the development of the Murray valley." The unanimous opinion was that the Hume reservoir should first be completed and the waters thus made available utilized to promote intense culture, and that secondary industries should then be encouraged in the area. There is a shining example of the development of secondary industries in the country at Shepparton, where the canning of peaches and other fruits is done on a large scale. There are in the Cobram district areas that are equal to, if not better than, those around Shepparton, and there are districts in New South Wales eminently suitable for the production of canned fruits and garden produce, and where a greater number of sheep could be carried on the land if more water were available.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—The honorable member realizes, of course, that there has

never been any scarcity of production in Victoria. The whole trouble has been to dispose of the products.

Mr. OLD.—My unfortunate experience as a producer this year is that there is a great shortage of production on my farm, because of want of rain, and it is so with other farmers. Part and parcel of any scheme for increasing production is the opening up and utilization of markets wherever they can be found. There must be balanced production and consumption. If a greater number of people can be encouraged to live in districts where produce is grown and goods are produced, that district will be prosperous. I was pleased to notice the Murray valley outlook of the Yarrawonga meeting. Those present appointed regional committees, and in fixing their areas disregarded entirely State boundaries.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—Is there not a tendency for the level of the land to rise sharply on the north side of the River Murray?

Mr. OLD.—No. There is an abundant supply of irrigable land at suitable levels for all the water that can be made available. The project necessitates, however, a master plan in which the New South Wales section and the Victorian section will dovetail together. The people in the district are determined, whether this Government, the New South Wales Government, or the Commonwealth Government is of this or that political complexion, to see that the Murray valley is developed and that every possible drop of water is conserved.

I now wish to deal with another matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition, namely, the substitution of pipes for open channels in the Mallee area. He instanced the Millewa section, where, out of a total of about 12,000 acre-feet of water, only one-tenth is delivered into the farmers' tanks. When I was Minister of Water Supply this problem was not new to me, because in my district there was serious sand drift with consequent great loss of water. I asked the chairman of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission to investigate the proposal to substitute pipes for open channels in that area. The report, from a financial point of view, was not attractive, but I made available £10,000 to experiment on the worst section. There are sections of sandhill country that are very prone to drift, and where the channels are 3 feet to 4 feet deep. Lengths of 15 to 30 chains of pipes were laid in place of channels. The result was quite satisfactory; in fact, it saved a large amount of money formerly spent on cleaning channels. I am dealing specifically with the stock and domestic supply, in connection with which there are long lines of channels to serve a limited number of people. By legislation power was taken to prevent land holders in specified areas from fallowing their land within three chains of channels, and that action saved a substantial sum of money per annum previously spent in removing sand drift from the open channels.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—That is not the worst aspect. The worst is the loss of water.

Mr. OLD.—Both are serious, especially when £72,000 must be found per annum to remove drift sand.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—The State spends millions of pounds on headworks and in some cases loses 70 per cent. or 80 per cent. of the water supply.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Would a concrete channel be constructed in the drifty area?

Mr. OLD.—The honorable member is referring to irrigation areas. There are no concrete channels for stock and domestic supplies.

Mr. HOLLINS.—A percentage of the water must be lost through seepage.

Mr. OLD.—That is true. Prior to his appointment as deputy chairman of the State Development Committee, the honorable member for Ouyen played an active part in advocating the substitution of pipes for the channel system, wherever that was an economic proposition. Since that appointment he, together with myself and others interested, has been instrumental in having the proposition submitted to the State Development Committee for investigation and report. That body has made the necessary arrangements to take evidence in various districts, with the view of expressing an opinion to the Government as to the feasibility or otherwise of the proposed change. The committee may

decide, for instance, in favour of a complete substitution of the channel system by pipes; or it may recommend the alteration in certain specified drifty areas only.

Mr. HOLLAND.—Is that not a matter more for experts than a lay committee?

Mr. OLD.—The State Development Committee will be able to seek evidence from experts.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—But will not be able to judge that evidence!

Mr. OLD.—I have sufficient faith in the intelligence of those members of Parliament who comprise the committee to know that the report will be satisfactory. Having made a general survey of the situation, I should like to deal with the Bill itself. Although the Leader of the Opposition considered that the measure contained nothing, in point of fact it embodies important principles.

Mr. HOLLAND.—It is revolutionary in its implications and its possible application.

Mr. OLD.—The honorable member for Flemington has devoted close consideration to this subject. I always listen with the greatest of respect to the contributions he makes to the debates in this Chamber, because I know that he undertakes a comprehensive research. Clause 2 alters the present system of compelling the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission to charge the full cost of maintenance of any work rendered necessary by the subdivision of any land in water supply areas. This proposal will enable the Commission to take into consideration any additional revenue that results from such subdivision in assessing the amount to be lodged with the Commission to maintain such works. Under the old order, if any person intended to subdivide an irrigation holding and, incidentally, to install new water plant, outlets and the like, he had to place in the hands of the Commission a sum sufficient to meet the capital cost. In addition, he was compelled to maintain the work for all time. The proposed new provision will effect an alteration by specifying that in the assessment of the amount due regard should be had to additional revenue that may be earned by the Commission as a result of subdivisions.

Clause 3 is important, because it will implement a proposal for which—with becoming modesty, may I say—I was largely responsible, seeing that it was included in the Governor's Speech following the last State election. Under the old conditions, if land was within the first, second, or third division of a water supply channel—whether or not that land could be supplied with water—the settler had, willy-nilly, to be charged. That method was grossly unfair. It is no advantage to a settler to know that over the hill water runs for perhaps three or six weeks every year, but that he must pay 3d. an acre per annum when that supply reaches the dam of another settler. It was decided, therefore, not to charge water rates in any waterworks district unless the land could actually be supplied with water. Clause 3 is the necessary enabling provision. It creates a fourth division in which lands can be placed, whether they are within a half or one mile, or even 10 miles of a channel. No rates will be chargeable.

Clause 9 deals with arrears of interest and losses associated with water supply. Honorable members will recall that a sum of £21,000,000 was transferred from the books of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission either to Consolidated Revenue or to the account of interest to be borne by the State. I was much more concerned with removing the burden from the shoulders of water users and away from the accounts of the Commission than with what would become of it finally. The clause to which I am alluding marks a continuation of the same principle in relation to any particular future work. Incidentally, it also makes provision for giving effect to the policy of reducing water rates in urban districts supplied by the Commission and by water works trusts. When I became Minister of Water Supply, I was astounded to learn that in certain waterworks districts—most of them being in the Mallee—small townships were paying a rate of no less than 5s. in the pound. That was an outrageous state of affairs, the cost being beyond the capacity of the small urban districts. In the first place, the rate was reduced to 3s. 6d. A further reduction was made,

and this Bill will give effect to an agreement negotiated before the last State election, by bringing about a further reduction of 33⅓ per cent., provided that the rate is not reduced below 2s. 4d. in the pound.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Do you not agree that our first responsibility is to survey markets?

Mr. OLD.—Owing to the outbreak of war, I, as the Minister of Water Supply at that time, was precluded from giving effect to one of my proposals. I found that there had been no definite comprehensive survey of the water resources of the State. We created a survey branch within the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission itself, with the idea of having a thorough and comprehensive survey made of the water resources of Victoria. Unfortunately, the war intervened, and much of our equipment and many of the personnel were transferred to the military authorities. I am sure that the present Minister will see that that policy is continued. Some works were begun before a proper survey of the circumstances had been made. At that time, such things as soil mechanics were unknown.

Clause 12 is important because it introduces a new principle. It will enable waterworks trusts to provide superannuation schemes for their employees. Such a proposal has been missing from previous legislation, and it will meet with general approval. An honorable member described some of the proposals as revolutionary. Clause 13 cuts across an established principle, but it is justifiable. Under certain conditions, the Commission will be enabled to grant an easement on one property to enable another land owner to obtain water. It has been found in various irrigation districts that the farmers could not agree on such a matter. It may well be that when a subdivision was effected no proper easement was made; in other words, there was no registered easement. Another sale might be effected, and when the new owner came along, he might decline to allow another man to obtain water through his holding. This Bill provides that on lodging the sum of £25 a man may apply for an Order in Council to enable him to obtain an easement not exceeding a chain wide in a neighbour's property, in order to secure a supply of water. Compensation has to be paid under the Lands Compensation Act.

In travelling about Australia one hears of various disabilities. For instance, in Western Australia there is no such thing as riparian rights. The State authority does not control the rivers there. All the titles include the bed of the river. A man may start an orchard and establish a little irrigation scheme, but later another person may follow suit two miles up a river, and block all the water from going down. Victoria owes a great debt of gratitude to the late Mr. George Swinburne for the steps he took in regard to water supplies.

The SPEAKER (the Hon. G. H. Knox).—The time allowed the honorable member has expired.

On the motion of Mr. HOLLAND (*Flemington*), an extension of ten minutes was granted.

Mr. OLD.—I thank the House for its courtesy. I am not usually so loquacious as at the moment, but this is a subject on which I have had much experience. What made me appreciate the need of a water supply was the fact that at the early age of sixteen years my brother and I took up land fourteen miles from Swan Hill, and I had to cart water over that distance to keep things going. It is not surprising, therefore, that when the subject of water supply is considered I should have an understanding and sympathetic heart. I have dealt with the main proposals in the Bill. In such circumstances as these, it does no harm to make a brief review of what has been done. In 1902, Victoria had 172,000 acre-feet of storage, and in 1941-42 it was raised to 1,975,500 acre-feet—half the storage capacity of the Hume reservoir being credited to Victoria in this total. When the Lauriston weir, Rocklands, and certain slight additions to Glenmaggie weir and the Hume reservoir are completed, there will be a total storage of 2,664,000 acre-feet.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—What happens to the Lauriston water? I know it was put in as a reserve reservoir.

Mr. OLD.—It is now a definite unit in the Coliban scheme. Lauriston does not furnish any new catchment; it simply provides a means of reserving some of the water which in flush seasons would

otherwise run to waste. I have dealt with works completed and in hand, and also the programme to be carried out. Work on the Rocklands reservoir was begun but it had to be discontinued on account of the outbreak of war. When that work is completed, the reservoir will be of immeasurable benefit, particularly to the Goulburn system, which is overtaxed. When a serious drought occurs, the water required for the northern Mallee must be supplemented by obtaining water from the Goulburn system through the Waranga channel. When the Rocklands reservoir is completed, there will be no necessity to do that, and the position in the Goulburn area will be more secure. I am pleased that the Government and the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission intend to increase the Eildon weir substantially. A preliminary investigation was carried out when I was Minister. It was intended to increase the storage capacity of the Eildon weir threefold to ensure supplies to the Goulburn system.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Would that increased storage be possible over the years?

Mr. OLD.—Yes. It might not be filled to capacity each year, but in periods of heavy rainfall a substantial reserve of water could be conserved at Eildon. Australia has not been sufficiently long inhabited by white people for us to be able to foretell with reasonable accuracy what the future rainfall averages are likely to be. We are at present experiencing drought conditions, but it may be that they approach the normal condition of certain large areas of Australia. I trust that the present drought conditions will be remedied in the very near future, but they have emphasized the necessity of conserving water and, in particular, of using it to best advantage.

Mr. **MERRIFIELD** (*Essendon*).—I commend the honorable member for Swan Hill on his excellent speech. The material he has at his command in relation to water supply matters is of extreme value, and one is able to listen to his speeches with the interest that they deserve. The Minister of Water Supply also made an extremely comprehensive speech in explanation of the Bill. Much of the material he used was familiar to honorable members who have read the evidence submitted to the Commonwealth Rural Reconstruction Commission on behalf of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission. The Minister gave the historical background of the Bill. A statement of that nature is fully justified because it enables us to see in what direction we are heading when dealing with these important matters. The discussion of water supply is not the sole prerogative of rural members; it is a matter of interest to all sections of the community.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—It ought to interest all sections because they have to carry the burden.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—Probably some sections carry a greater burden than others; but I feel certain that the need to conserve water commends itself to all members of the community. The greatest reason one can give for that is the fact that it assists to increase our natural potentialities, which will mean a better standard of living for our people. During recent times conferences were convened by the League of Nations at which the nutritional standards of the community were discussed, and the deficiencies and shortcomings of present standards were made known. The specific recommendations by the League ought to have guided all civilized countries before the war. During the war period the Geneva conventions have been supplemented by conferences held in Hot Springs, in the United States of America. At those gatherings the subject has been discussed from its immediate war and post-war points of view. An abundant water supply is definitely wrapped up with a nutritional standard, not only for Australia, but also for other countries. Therefore, on humanitarian grounds alone consideration of Bills of this nature are more than warranted.

When we are discussing the issue as it affects Australia, I submit that we should examine the report of the Commonwealth Rural Reconstruction Commission, in which the following comments relating to irrigation and water supplies appear:—

> As population increases the need for more irrigation will also increase, and it is not too much to say that in the long run water supply will be the limiting factor in Australian expansion.

The honorable member for Swan Hill dealt with that principle which, I submit, we must always keep in mind. In the

pattern of Australia's industries there are certain potentialities. Some of them apply to times of peace; others are strategic and are of value in times of war. In the early stages of a possible Japanese invasion, all stock in the northern parts of the Continent was mobilized ready for a long trek to the south. That policy stresses my contention that we should view our land pattern so as to determine what action should be taken to defend the community from want, not only during a war but also in peace time. Obviously, that demands maximum conservation and also maximum efficiency of distribution of water. The Leader of the Opposition made an excellent contribution on that particular issue, and we must assess which of these works should be given priority.

In addition to need for increased storage and efficiency of distribution, there is need for increased efficiency in the use of water supplies. Doubtless, honorable members realize that the picture of irrigation projects is not pleasant, because only in some districts is water used so that it will yield maximum benefits. The honorable member for Swan Hill suggested that the time may come when we shall have to take legislative action to ensure that being done in all irrigation areas. The English war agricultural committees have given us a lead in that direction. Inefficient farmers, or those who were not prepared to work their areas to the best advantage, particularly for the defence of the country, were forced to toe the line. Perhaps we shall be obliged to take similar action in the future. The general land settlement pattern in Victoria has been evolved over 100 years of occupation by white people. We have not achieved the most efficient form of land pattern. The irrigation system, within its limited sphere, increases the potentialities of the areas served, and the future will show whether districts selected for irrigation purposes were wisely chosen.

In Victoria, we cannot say that in a district the land is put to a single line of production; its uses are manifold. We could broadly describe districts as dairy farming, grazing, agricultural, and fruit growing, but if we are to achieve a more uniform distribution of population we shall have to relate the use of land, particularly in irrigation areas, to a definite pattern. Admittedly, there are natural limitations which provide reasons why we have laid out our districts in their present form. Perhaps the topography of the land has been a limiting factor. Generally speaking, it is more easy to irrigate the gentle sloping lands and flatter regions than it is to irrigate the heavily sloped lands. The major areas supplied by irrigation and the stock and domestic water supply system can be stated broadly as being in land that is 500 feet above sea level. We have recognized that natural limitation under our present system of development.

The greater part of the soil in our developed areas is of recent geological formation, and it is possible that certain forms might not be satisfactory for irrigation practice. Some soils are stiff and are not porous, and when water is applied to them the water either takes a long time to penetrate, because of the caking that follows, or it runs off completely. Soil formation is another natural limitation that must be recognized. Whether it will be a final limitation, in view of the increased practice of soil analysis recently adopted, is another matter. The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research is doing valuable work in that respect, and I was pleased to notice that in the selection of soldier settlement sites under the present scheme, the Lands Department is making full use of those specialized services. As yet the most efficient use of particular classes of soils has not been realized.

Increased pressure is being applied from particular regions for the establishment of additional water supply schemes. Generally speaking, the pressure is the greatest and the noise the loudest from areas in which the annual rainfall is most variable. That is not always so, but the average rainfall, as it is usually called, is generally the determining factor. Sometimes, the rainfall is subject to variation from season to season. With our diminishing water potentialities, we shall be forced to re-assess many areas which possibly have been supplied with water up to the present, and reorientate in a major sense our water policy. The honorable member for Swan

Hill gave an illustration on that point in his comments on the Snowy river scheme. Some Victorians are extremely parochial in their outlook; they demand the maximum from every one else while they are prepared to give only a minimum. We should take a broader view, and possibly we shall have to decide whether the increase of water supply to areas outside Victoria, but within certain geographical districts contiguous to this State, might not be as essential for the well-being of Victoria as it would be if the water were used within our borders.

The distribution of districts to which water supply and irrigation can be supplied is essentially wrapped up with the sites for storage basins. In Victoria, reservoir sites are limited, and that places a limitation on our water conservation activities. Seepage and evaporation have caused great losses of water in the past, and an attempt will have to be made to reduce those losses. In 1938, the Barlow Commission in England reported on certain phases of the distribution of population. Even in the war period that subject was considered by the Scott Commission, which dealt particularly with the question of the best use of land in England to obtain the maximum benefit for the population.

Steps should be taken to ascertain how the necessary work can be done to obtain similar information in Victoria; it should be attempted on a much broader basis than has been attempted hitherto. The report of the Commonwealth Rural Reconstruction Commission contains comments on the lack of rural surveys, and points out that this is a severe hindrance to the development of many rural industries, and, in a wider sense, of the regional areas which it is hoped will be established. If the State is to blunder along in the same way as in the past, there is nothing but trouble ahead. It would be wise to appoint an authority to report on the manner in which lands are being used. I have here a book dealing with land classification in America, and it contains the report of the first national conference on land classification in the United States, which was held in the year 1938. It includes addresses given by prominent men from various parts of America who conferred with the object of laying down certain principles for classifying land in order that it might be used to the best advantage.

In Victoria, land should be more scientifically classified than it has been. The Bill incorporates a system of classification and proposes to redivide irrigation districts into four classes. Even then the system of classification could be improved. Cognizance should be taken not only of topographical features but also of the variations in types of soil. These may be so frequent as to occur even within the limits of a channel. In some cases it may be impossible to use certain land within the range of the water because it would not respond to irrigation and the water would be wasted. In others, areas would flourish with the use of irrigation, and the owners of that land would profit to a greater extent than might be the case with an average farm.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research has made soil surveys of the Murray valley.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—I am pleased to hear that. Such a survey should be one of the first steps taken in the setting up of an irrigation scheme. It is also an essential factor in the proper classification of land.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—The purpose of that survey was to ascertain the productivity of the land.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—In the Columbia basin, and in other areas of the United States of America where reclamation projects have been undertaken, the importance of soil survey has been recognized much more than has been the case in Australia.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—Every land holder in the Murray Valley can have his land classified, and be informed of what crops can be produced to the best advantage on certain areas of his property.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—Will he be rated in accordance with that survey? If not, one land holder may receive benefits to the disadvantage of another. Provision should be made to vary the rating system in accordance with the classification of land. The present system is very rough. The Commonwealth Rural Reconstruction

Commission stressed the need for land capability survey, as this has a great bearing on the economic development of rural areas. The term "economic development" is not confined to finance alone; it also involves social considerations. According to the report of the late Mr. Kelso, who was chief engineer of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, on water supply practices in the United States—

> In determining whether or not projects are justifiable, and in distributing the cost of projects among beneficiaries, a sound Federal policy will take into account all social benefits as well as economic benefits; general benefits as well as special benefits; and potential benefits as well as existing benefits where they are involved.

Those principles are recognized in Victoria to a certain extent, but a much fuller recognition is desirable. Since £21,000,000 out of £28,000,000 has been already devoted to irrigation projects by the State, and it is proposed to transfer a greater proportion of that outlay to the taxpayers, a proper question to ask is: What will the taxpayers gain? The Minister suggested that the irrigators will gain considerably. In his second-reading speech the honorable gentleman made special reference to the Shepparton district and cannery, and said—

> It might appear to some that by carrying the capital liability, the taxpayer will be subsidizing irrigators. This is the generally accepted idea, but it is very far from the truth. The real position is that irrigation has been subsidizing taxpayers to a very marked degree.

The Minister then went on to elaborate the aims of the Government and how certain financial benefits accrue to the State because of the increased income to particular sections of the community in irrigation districts; but the honorable gentleman overlooked the fact that the income is derived from general taxation. It is not used solely for the financing of irrigation projects, but for a multiplicity of social objectives, such as, for example, the improvement of the education system or of the condition of the Police Force.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—That revenue would not be available to the State without the assistance of irrigation.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—I think the Minister meant that by increasing the potentialities of a district the financial return to the State would be increased because of the additional income available to the individual. Of course, that is to a degree true, but it must also be realized that the State has not exactly earned the added income by financing irrigation projects. It has financed other projects besides those concerned with irrigation—for instance, the provision of a greater number of police and schools in a district.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—That is the result of a developmental policy.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—That is true, but it has not been of benefit to the extent suggested by the Minister. The argument that the benefit has come solely from irrigation is not logical. The second reading of a planning Bill will be moved to-morrow by the Honorary Minister. I have read something about such Bills in other States and other countries, and have learned that the principles involved include compensation and betterment, but I cannot see why those principles should be incorporated in one sphere of operation and excluded from other spheres.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—This House rejected the betterment rate for the railways.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—We cannot alter what has been done in the past, but there is no reason why we should not start afresh now. I have drawn up a list of capital values in the municipalities of different districts from 1910 to 1940. I took out those municipalities which are essentially wheat growing, mixed farming, dairying, grazing, and fruit growing. In the non-irrigable areas the highest valuations were for wheat growing, and the lowest for grazing. The increases were greatest in irrigated areas. In the rural parts of the State taken as a whole the average increase was 80 per cent. After making allowances for the increased area occupied in the period under review, the average increase in non-irrigable areas was 50 per cent., but in the irrigation areas it was 144 per cent. If honorable members would run back through the figures and find out what capital values persisted in the municipalities of water districts prior to the benefits conferred by the Water Acts, they would find that roughly the increased value was equivalent to the

capital value which the State had invested in the irrigation works in the districts. Obviously, those land holders who lived there at the time or held land titles there, have secured the benefit of the expenditure by the community.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—You will admit that the whole community derived benefit from the expenditure?

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—I do not admit any such thing. For example, and as an argument, the Minister of Water Supply lives in Shepparton, and I live in Moonee Ponds. If the water scheme at Shepparton were to be undertaken afresh, and, as a result, 50 per cent. was added to the value of the Minister's land, what benefit would that be to me as a land holder—which I am not—in Moonee Ponds?

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—It would help the producer, and that would mean prosperity for the whole community.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—It might mean prosperity, but I should have to pay for it by buying the products of the irrigated farms.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—Alternatively, you might have to pay twice the price for Californian fruit.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—I might have to do that, but for the moment it is definitely the land holder, to the exclusion even of other members of his own family, who secures the benefit.

Mr. MACFARLAN.—You in Moonee Ponds would derive some benefit, although not so much as the land holder.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—I am open to conviction that in the final analysis I might receive something, but it would be likely to be so tenuous that I would not be able to say that I had any more money in my pocket. The Minister, however, with 50 per cent. added to his land values, would have something extra to jingle. It should not be forgotten that the benefits have been paid for to a great extent by the people of the metropolitan area. The Government is nationalizing water projects, but it has not nationalized the undertakings of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. Perhaps when that is done we may agree that the benefits are distributed over all sections of the community. In his second-reading speech the Minister, in referring to the Town Water Supplies Committee, made a statement that was a corollary to the principle the Government is following in respect of water supplies in at least rural communities. He said—

> It will be necessary for substantial financial assistance to be provided to enable many of these towns to receive adequate supplies of water of good quality at a cost which could be met by the water users.

The Minister is a member of a composite Government which, I think he will admit, includes members who represent in a great degree the vested interests of the community. When it comes to the operation of costing by private enterprise in any of its forms, we do not usually find that the social benefit to other people is allowed to determine the issue, for it is determined on what the project is receiving in income as against what is going out in disbursements. Apparently, the principle acceptable to private enterprise is not acceptable where Government expenditure is concerned. Of course, the Government is recognized as the milch cow and is expected to foot the bill. If it is proposed continually to invest money in public enterprises and thus increase the national debt, the time will arive for Parliament to determine the manner in which the obligations should be apportioned among the members of the community.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—As regards the example you gave concerning private enterprise, there are two different considerations affecting primary producers. Private enterprise can obtain cost-plus; the producer must accept what he is given for his product.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—It so happens that the honorable member for Ouyen has alluded to one of the singular disabilities of the rural producer under the system of private enterprise. For the moment, the rural producer has not the determining argument with respect to the price of his commodity, but most manufacturers can determine their prices to an appreciable extent.

Mr. CAIN.—And they do.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—They do, and they assist themselves in various ways by monopolies or agreements in combination to maintain prices.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—Because of that factor, successive Governments have been compelled to nationalize certain headworks for irrigation supplies.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—The honorable member is actually employing better words for the opinion I should like to convey, namely, that it is private enterprise, not rural production, that has failed.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—I do not agree.

Mr. CAIN.—Under free and open competition, private enterprise exploits the primary producers.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—If rural industries were socialized, the Government would have to make much more money available for those industries than has been the case up to the present.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—From time to time members of the Country party have asserted that rural people are always labouring under disabilities. Professor Wadham, who cannot be considered a revolutionary, has stated through the medium of various press reports that the agricultural industry of Australia has been sick for many years.

Mr. CAIN.—It was sick until the Commonwealth Government stabilized the prices.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—I do not propose to enter into that argument. Further comments that I have to make on this measure will more appropriately be made in Committee. As suggested by the the honorable member for Swan Hill, the Bill seeks to establish certain new principles which, I suppose, are in one sense desirable. In the final analysis, however, their implementation will have an effect on the political complexion of the State. During the want-of-confidence debate last session, Ministers declared that the use of power was right. Apart altogether from the merits of the proposals, the Government is determined to ensure that whatever legislation is brought forward will provide opportunities to gain for it increased political power in the rural areas. I contend that that is a fair statement and it represents one of those broad phases of the present measure that we must recognize.

Mr. CAMERON (*Kara Kara and Borung*).—The debate on this measure provides members with an opportunity to express their views concerning the conservation of water and its manifold uses. The first point that occurs to me is that, like practically all other Acts of Parliament, the Water Acts require consolidation. In his second-reading speech, the Minister of Water Supply reminded the House that there had been consolidations in 1890, 1905, 1915, and 1928. Since the last-mentioned year, there have been twelve amending Water Acts, and the time for a further consolidation is long overdue.

Mr. MACFARLAN.—There are also the Local Government Acts.

Mr. CAMERON.—That legislation is in a worse state than the Water Acts. I had expected a consolidation of the Local Government Acts to be proceeded with early this session. It is extremely difficult for parliamentarians, when problems are brought under their notice, to ascertain the actual state of the law. It is first necessary to study the consolidation of 1928 and then to determine the provisions of amending measures since that year. I understand, for instance, that the Police Offences Acts constitute one of the greatest jigsaw puzzles of our statutes.

When one comes to consider the outstanding problem of water conservation, one appreciates that all northern streams have an intermittent flow, the discharge in areas where there is a high rainfall being heavy, while in the sparse rainfall periods, such as the present, the discharge is low. Whenever the storage of water by means of a dam or similar method is contemplated, attention must be paid to the fact that a large storage must be constructed to tide over dry periods. In his second-reading speech, the Minister said that the aggregate of the storages in reservoirs on northern flowing rivers represented in acre-feet only 32 per cent. of the total annual average flow. He stated also that under the projected plans, some of which will operate in the post-war period while others may be put into effect earlier, the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission hopes to dam at least 75 per cent. of the annual total discharge of those rivers. When regard is had to the watersheds of some of the northern flowing rivers—and particularly the watersheds of the Loddon and its tributaries—one

comes to the conclusion that it is necessary to dam and store at least the average annual total discharge. Possibly more than that quantity will be required.

The honorable member for Swan Hill mentioned that when the Rocklands dam was completed it would be of great benefit to the north-western part of the State and would enable an increase to be made in irrigation activities. The Rocklands dam when finished will hold 264,000 acre-feet of water, which will be much more than the annual average discharge of the Glenelg river. It is necessary to have sufficient dams to store more than the annual average discharge of the northern rivers because their flow is so variable. Gauges at Laanecoorie showed that in 1893 the Loddon river and its tributaries had a flow of 593,000 acre-feet, whereas the minimum discharge in 1940 was 6,900 acre-feet. Honorable members will realize the enormous quantity of water that flows in those rivers in a wet season and the meagre flow available in dry seasons. For a period of 51 years the average annual discharge of the Loddon river has been 174,000 acre-feet. The variations of that river are greater than those of the Murray.

The Minister gave us much useful information in his second-reading speech. In the storage and distribution of the water resources of the State, stock and domestic supplies come first. They include town, urban and industrial supplies. After those three sections have been served with water, the balance can be used for irrigation. I am not speaking against irrigation in any way, because I am not conversant with it. I am better acquainted with stock and domestic supplies as they apply to the north-western portion of the State. The honorable member for Swan Hill told us that Goulburn water was being used to supplement the northern rivers supply and particularly the Grampians.

The State Rivers and Water Supply Commission has shown wisdom in interlocking to some extent the rivers from the Goulburn. That is a right thing to do, because those streams are not subject to the same variation, even in dry years. When one stream fails, it is necessary for the other to supplement the supplies of the settlers dependent on the first stream. In that way, the Commission has done a fairly good job. With respect to the extension of channels, it is necessary to point out that while the Goulburn water has been taken as far back west as a few miles of Beulah, it is fair to mention that Grampians water has been taken to Charlton. Only recently the Public Works Committee considered a proposal to extend works to serve another 192 square miles in the Wychitella area with a stock and domestic water supply and to supply the towns of Korong Vale and Wedderburn. Although we get some of the Goulburn water, other areas to the east are receiving Grampians water.

The Leader of the Opposition did not seem to think much of the Bill. I did not hear all his speech, but he made one point with which I disagreed. He described clause 13 as practically the brightest spot in the measure. That provision deals with the power of a farmer to secure an easement where he has to take a channel through a neighbour's land. I am not enamoured of the proposal. I consider that the Commission should take a channel to the boundary of every settler's farm. If that were done, a dual purpose would be served, and water would be saved. The gravitation scheme in the North-west is served by 6,200 miles of Commission channels and 4,000 miles of farmers' channels. We have heard a lot about the wastage of water. I suggest that the major portion of the loss occurs in the farmers' channels.

Mr. McKENZIE.—Why do you make that statement?

Mr. CAMERON.—Because I know what I am talking about. When a farmer constructs channels, he seems to think they will last 8 or 10 years without any cleaning being done, whereas the Commission periodically maintains its channels.

The sitting was suspended at 6 *p.m. until* 7.10 *p.m.*

Mr. CAMERON.—Before the suspension of the sitting I was suggesting that the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission should construct channels to the boundary of every farm to be served, thus obviating the necessity for the farmer to form up to 1 mile of channel to bring the water to his property. If that

were done, it would result in the saving of water because the Commission, with its experienced gang of maintenance men continually at work, is in a position to keep its channels in better condition than are individual farmers. Even if the rate were slightly increased to enable that to be done, I think the majority of farmers would not object, because of the added convenience.

The object of clause 13 is to enable the settler to get the right of easement through his neighbour's property. I have known of cases where a farmer had the verbal sanction of his neighbour to construct a channel from the Commission's main supply to his property, but when the land changed hands the new owner refused to recognize the verbal permission given. On two occasions at least I have known of cases where the private channel has been filled in and the Commission has had to come to the rescue of the farmer to enable him to obtain water. Even with that right granted to him the farmer would not be in the same happy position as he would be if the Commission's channels came to the boundary of his property. Under powers already possessed by the Commission, it would see that proper farming practice was adopted, by limiting fallowing adjacent to a channel, which would reduce the danger of siltation.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to the heavy cost of clearing sand drift from Mallee channels. Over the years the average cost has been £72,000 per annum, but when we realize that the Commission owns 6,000 miles of channels it means that sand drift clearance costs only £12 a mile. Viewed in that light, the cost does not appear excessive. It was said that the cost was mounting each year, but I find that the number of miles of Commission's channels silted up annually is diminishing, thanks to the power given to the Commission to prevent farmers in certain areas from working up the land within 3 chains of an existing channel. Another reason for the increased cost in recent years is the succession of dry seasons experienced. That factor, taken in conjunction with the increased cost of labour, horse feed, and other requirements has made the clearing of channels in certain sections more expensive.

The gravitation supply system in north-western Victoria serves 11,000 square miles of country, 16,000 farms, and 47 towns. Under dry farming practice the farms are widely spaced, and they must have cheap water. Notwithstanding the cost of clearing out channels, and the open channel system that has been adopted, the rates charged are low, ranging from £9 to £13 a 640-acre block. The approximate average water rate for a square mile of land in that part of the State is £10 10s., which is reasonable. The Commission is prepared to fill a dam of any size up to 8,000 yards, without extra cost for excess water above the ordinary annual water rate. That is a valuable asset in the north-west of Victoria, because, under existing seasonal conditions, the settlers could not continue operations if the gravitation channels were not there.

The first essential is cheap water. When dealing with the conservation of water the first factor for the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission to consider is the increase of storages. One important item which is often overlooked is that each year approximately 4 feet of water is unavoidably lost from the reservoirs by means of evaporation and seepage. Honorable members will realize what a great proportion of water has been lost from storages on this account in the last two years. Mention has been made of the better servicing of the north-west portion of the State by pipe lines, but this proposition must be considered in a commonsense manner. At present a cheap water supply system consisting of open channels is in operation, but I am doubtful whether water could be supplied as cheaply by pipe line. Unless it can be supplied cheaply, the north-west settlers will be loaded with a burden they cannot carry. The cost of the water must be ascertained, and in this connection I wish to refer to page 8 of the first progress report of the Town Water Supplies Committee which has made an exhaustive inquiry into water supplies to country towns. It states—

> A reasonable price for water is 1s. per 1,000 gallons, and water could be supplied to consumers at this price if the overall cost to the local authorities does not exceed 9d. per 1,000 gallons, the difference of 3d. per 1,000 gallons being necessary to offset losses on free and concession supplies and unavoidable leakages referred to earlier in this report.

In the earlier passage of the report, the actual cost of supplying water to local authorities works out at 9.12d. per 1,000 gallons by gravitation, and 9.68d. per 1,000 gallons when pumped. That gives some idea of the cost of supplying water to consumers through a pipe system.

The servicing of towns by pipes—where the houses are close together—is different from the servicing of farms on which the dams may be a half a mile or 1½ miles or further apart. The cost of a pipe system of supply under the latter conditions would be high indeed. The average dam or storage on a farm has an area of about 3,000 cubic yards, or approximately 2 acre-feet. One acre-foot of water represents 272,000 gallons, and at 1s. per 1,000 gallons—which is reasonable—the cost would be £13 12s. The cost of supplying 2 acre-feet of water for stock and domestic purposes to the average holding of 640 acres would therefore be £27 4s. That would not be an intolerable burden for stock and domestic requirements, although it would be much more than double the cost now paid by the farmer under the open channel scheme.

Several speakers have suggested that each farmer should have an area of 8 or 10 acres under irrigation. I generally regard such a suggestion as something with which to tickle the ears of the farmers. If water for irrigation was supplied at the rate of 1s. per 1,000 gallons, the cost would be prohibitive. Irrigators in pastoral areas pay from 6s. to 12s. an acre-foot, but if they paid £13 12s. an acre-foot under the pipe system, the proposition for pasture improvements and stock-raising purposes would increase the carrying capacity of the land and result in an increased production worth at least £5 per acre. But because at least 1 acre-foot of water would be required for every acre of land, the farmer would be the loser if he had to pay £13 12s. to have it supplied under the pipe system to produce £5 of new wealth.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—Your figures are misleading.

Mr. CAMERON.—The honorable member for Ouyen can state his case later; I am expressing my views. I know this subject will be referred to the State Development Committee for investigation, but care should be taken that all sides of the question are considered so that there may be no misapprehensions. It is no use talking of grandiose schemes or painting glowing pictures of what benefits will accrue and what will be saved in the cost of water, if the proposal is economically unsound. If my figures are anywhere near correct, it will be seen that the amount of production resulting from irrigation will not half offset the cost of supply. The Bill is a good one, however, and I support it.

Mr. **HOLLAND** (*Flemington*).—My leader, when speaking of this measure, said it was a machinery Bill of no importance.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—He said there was nothing of importance in it, except one item.

Mr. HOLLAND.—That may be his opinion, and he is entitled to it. As a young man I spent some years in the engineering trade, and assisted in manufacturing and running some of the biggest pumping plants in Australia; and I have had periods of two or three days in the engine room of a ship when she was not on an even keel. I always looked upon machinery as something big, and moving, and strong, and potential—something that I thought of in terms of 50,000 and 60,000 horse-power. It was my experience also to be in the implement-making industry, where I manufactured and operated many kinds of implements. I went to Broadmeadows when I was sixteen years of age and participated in a ploughing competition. As far as I am concerned, this is a machinery Bill, full of power and resolve, and I hope to demonstrate before I have finished that it is important to the future of Victoria and Australia.

My leader likewise seemed to be afraid of the statement that £30,000,000 might be spent on a post-war scheme for water conservation. When we look into the effect of four or five years of war, and know that Australia's debt at the end of this year—when £200,000,000 of Treasury bills will be funded, and a big interest bill will have to be met—will be £3,000,000,000, we must realize that we can meet our obligations only by increasing real money. By "real money" I mean commodities. My leader was also worried about the prospect of overproduction, and by the possibility of too

many people going on the land. That fear exercised my mind for a period, but I was reassured by a food convention that met at Hot Springs, in the United States of America, last year. The representatives of 40 nations were assembled to deal with the problem of food production, and they came to the conclusion that, generally speaking, the standard of living of the people of the world, including those of America and Australia, was too low, and that to improve the standard the people must be given increased purchasing power.

I was also interested in another large body that met in Atlantic City. It was the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. It was concerned with making provision, by the accumulation of foodstuffs, for the rehabilitation of stricken Europe at the termination of the war. Although I was worried by the prospect of over-production, I now believe that there will be a big demand after the war for Australian primary products. The demand will come not only from Great Britain, which alone will be prepared for a long period to take all we can deliver. I believe there is enough wisdom and understanding among the Allies to handle this problem successfully. Therefore, I am not worried along these lines, and I think that my leader was a little pessimistic. Production figures in this country are increasing, and 60 per cent. of our products are exported. For a number of years there will be a demand for a higher standard of living in both Australia and New Zealand. As a result of a campaign in New Zealand the consumption of butter in that country was increased to 40 lb. annually for each individual as compared with only 29 lb. or 30 lb. in Victoria.

It is clear that there will be a demand for all classes of goods if people have the essential spending power. I listened with interest to the introductory remarks of the Minister of Water Supply, and I agree that the measure is one of a far-reaching character and of outstanding importance. I cannot recall any Bill of equal significance since I became a member of this House in 1926, and I have not been able to read of one at any previous time. I say that is so because of its implications and practical application. Its possibilities can only be measured by time. History is cutting new grooves every day, and if what the Minister has in mind, and what the Bill implies, is realized, a new page in Victorian rural history will be written, not in blood, as history is usually written, but in water, under the title, "The Salvation of Australia."

I propose to examine the Bill, not in a destructive or critical manner, but constructively, and I have a lingering hope that the ideas and fears I have outlined will be dispelled by this debate. I agree with the Minister's statement that the present and succeeding generations are and will be under a debt of gratitude to men like Alfred Deakin and other stalwarts who graced this very Chamber for their introduction of the 1866 and 1905 measures, which conferred inalienable water rights on the people and instituted proper control of rivers and streams.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—Fortunately, that was accomplished early in our history.

Mr. HOLLAND.—That is true. I do not know whether I am over-optimistic in expressing the hope that some future Ministry will establish for the people similar rights and privileges with respect to increase in values of land created by community effort. I am unable to say what would have been the opinion of the late Mr. Deakin and men of his calibre on that question. Still, when we realize the changes that have occurred in the control and ownership of land in Great Britain, we must inevitably come to the conclusion that the community is entitled to some benefit from enhanced land values. With the claim of the honorable member for Rodney, who interjected when the honorable member for Essendon was speaking, I do not disagree. He declared that a large proportion of the increased value was due to hard work by the owners of the land, often in the face of adverse conditions and considerable hazards. Nevertheless, the element of community effort enters into consideration and it pleases me to do honour to those men who, early in their careers, played an important part in conferring just rights on the people.

My view is that the fate of Victoria as a progressive State is at stake. In his second-reading speech the Minister presented the House with, so to speak, an

eight-point charter, each point being of fundamental importance. Fully applied, those points will lead to the widening of the State's economic policy by the development of the Murray valley scheme and of other waterways. Progress in a democracy is accomplished by actions rather than words and I feel that the present measure, touching, as it will, every aspect of economic life in this State, must have a far-reaching effect. Success with primary products is the condition precedent to the general success of the State. Consequently, living conditions must be made reasonably decent for those who are prepared, in a pioneering spirit, to venture into the vast open spaces.

From time to time in this House the struggles of settlers are poignantly described. It has been emphasized that the safety factor—a water supply—is lacking in innumerable instances. Accounts of the experiences of the early pioneers of land settlement provide one of the brightest pages in the history of the State. We must never forget what they did to grow foodstuffs for both home and overseas consumption. My reference to the Minister's eight-point charter will be comparatively brief, because previous speakers have covered much of the ground that I intended to traverse.

The first point related to proposed increased storages on the Goulburn, the Murray and the Macalister rivers by enlarging existing reservoirs. Large storages on the Glenelg, the Campaspe, the Broken, and other rivers in the State are also contemplated. I heartily support these proposals because I believe that every drop of water should be conserved by the enlargement of reservoirs. In the second place, there is the completion of the Murray valley irrigation district to 300,000 acres, of which 100,000 acres are already supplied. Again, there is the development of about 68,000 acres at Nambrok-Denison in Central Gippsland, as well as the extension of irrigation by about 2,000 acres near Horsham.

During the last State election campaign I visited Horsham and observed what had been accomplished in certain parts of the district by means of irrigation. One settler informed me that he arrived in the district practially penniless about nine years previously, and he demonstrated the advantages of a proper water supply on his walnut plantation. He was apparently of Hebrew extraction and became rather affable with the Leader of the Opposition and myself. We were invited to have a fish supper with him after the election, and I understood his attitude when I discovered that he desired us to press with the Minister his claims for more water.

I have read with considerable interest certain articles in the *Age* newspaper dealing with the Tennessee Valley Association, and also a series of Wednesday and Saturday articles in the *Argus*, accompanied by plans, on the possibilities of further water conservation in the Murray valley. Incidentally, the honorable member for Swan Hill referred to the Snowy river and the proposal to construct a lock at one point. I have seen the Snowy running to waste into the Tasman Sea, and I have also seen places where the water has broken away from the bank, bringing siltation in its wake. I was rather disappointed when I found that I could almost clear the Snowy with a hop, step, and a jump. I do not think the New South Wales Government is as keen to develop electricity supply undertakings as it is to expand water conservation, even to the extent of further exploiting the possibilities at Burrinjuck. If our riparian rights were preserved and Victoria agreed that New South Wales could use the conserved water of the Snowy river, this State ought to have a greater share of the water in the Hume weir. These possibilities should be exploited.

I agreed with the Minister of Water Supply when he pointed out that our opportunities of conserving water are limited. Although the catchment area of the Murray river takes in many thousands of square miles, the difficulty is that the stream goes through too much flat country. There are not sufficient snow-capped mountains to supply the river with water through the snow melting in the summer time. Therefore, ways and means must be devised to conserve every ounce of water, even if we hold it for years. This Bill projects such schemes, and will provide opportunities for the development of the water resources. With

the Minister, I pay tribute to the technical staff of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission. As a member of the Public Works Committee, I toured Victoria with those officers. They are rendering great social service to the community. They are wrapped up in their work, not for any great monetary gain, but in a belief in the future of Australia. They are doing great service by their study and research. I join in the regrets expressed at the death of Mr. W. A. Robertson, one of the Commissioners, shortly after his return from his investigatory tour in the United States of America.

I was recently interested to read special articles in the *Age* on the Tennessee valley. I have been a special student of the Tennessee valley undertaking and have read various books on the undertaking. Only recently I learned from the *Herald* that a volume on this subject for which I had been looking for twelve months had arrived in Melbourne. I communicated with the chief of Melbourne Public Library, and he is endeavouring to obtain a copy for me. Its title is *Democracy on the March*. I have also read Wilson Whitman's *God's Valley*, which deals with the Tennessee undertaking. When I looked at the map and saw the dams that had been constructed in Tennessee, I realized that a tremendous work had been accomplished. Poor whites and negroes did this task in a decade. What they did, we in Victoria can also do. That book convinced me that we are on right lines. I believe that but for the war the Murray valley scheme would have been carried out. I watched with deep interest the proceedings of the River Murray convention, which was recently held at Yarrawonga. State boundaries did not divide its members, all of whom were imbued with the idea of developing the Murray valley.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—The convention set out the boundaries that they were to cover.

Mr. HOLLAND.—As practical men, they realized the possibilities and the limitations of the valley. We are proposing to develop certain water schemes and to try to link up other projects. The Government desires to conserve every ounce of water possible. I was particularly struck by a statement made by President Roosevelt in a message proposing the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority, and that statement can be applied to the Commonwealth—

> It is clear that the Muscle Shoals development is but a small part of the potential public usefulness of the entire Tennessee river. Such use, if envisioned in its entirety, transcends mere power development; it enters the wide fields of flood control, soil erosion, afforestation, elimination from agricultural use of marginal lands, and distribution and diversification of industry. In short, this power development of war days leads logically to national planning for a complete river watershed involving many States and the future lives and welfare of millions. It touches and gives life to all forms of human concerns.

When the Premier returned from Great Britain, a statement appeared in the press that he proposed to make the Murray the Nile of Australia. The honorable gentleman, who is a versatile artist, spoke of thousands of farms to be established here. I was interested in his observations, and I consulted the *Statesman's Year Book*. I found that the fellaheens of the Nile were not of a high type.

Mr. FULTON.—If you saw them in person, your view would be confirmed.

Mr. HOLLAND.—I thought the Premier was taking on a new role. There were visions of Cleopatra, or of soft lights with the Premier appearing as a conjuror, although instead of taking rabbits out of a hat he was to take out farms. However, since I have studied the details of the Tennessee valley undertaking and considered the application to Australia of the theories followed there, I am convinced that the Premier's statement was more than a publicity stunt. One of the latest slogans adopted in the United States of America is, "keep the water in the rivers and the soil on the land." That ideal has been definitely achieved in the Tennessee valley. Dams have been constructed, and they have checked floods, and the people feel that they can keep the Tennessee river to its proper course. I was pleased to learn that in three years farmers in the valley have planted more than 44,000,000 trees to protect the watersheds and to guard against erosion. With the same objectives, tree conservation groups have planted more than 77,000,000 trees, which will create a vast forest cover.

Mr. JAMES.—We should emulate their example in this State.

Mr. HOLLAND.—Yes. They are using the contour ploughing method to conserve soil. The authorities have installed plants for the generation of electric power, and the charges for current are very low. Farmers have the latest electric cooking and heating appliances on their farms. There are 40,000 employees connected with this giant scheme and all are engaged directly on work in the valley. The people follow agricultural pursuits, but they enjoy the amenities of city life. By that means they have solved the problem of keeping young men and women on the land, as they are able to offer them all forms of healthy recreation in the area. I hope that a similar scheme will be carried out in the Murray valley, where soil surveys should be made and investigations carried out to determine what minerals and other latent wealth are available. Industries could then be established to exploit the raw materials. For instance, in the Tennessee valley a crockery-making industry has been established. Research demonstrated that there were large deposits of appropriate clay in the district, and electrical furnaces were erected to burn it. Now a factory is producing household articles which were formerly imported. I am hopeful that a similar scheme will be successful in Victoria, but I admit that it cannot be brought to fruition without the use of vision, courage, and great determination.

Mr. FULTON.—It will also involve much hard work.

Mr. HOLLAND.—That is true, but it will benefit Australia. I was interested to read the publication, *The Geographical Basis of Government,* by Holmes, which is a record of the economic survey made in New South Wales. I am a member of the post-war rehabilitation and town planning committee of the Melbourne City Council, and I have found it necessary to study modern town planning features and other schemes for rehabilitating London. We must extend our activities in this direction within the metropolitan area. We have men with the knowledge necessary to do the work, and they should be given an opportunity to display their ability. I listened with interest to the second-reading speech of the Minister of Water Supply because of its historical background. It emphasized that we should take action on the lines suggested in the interests of our people. I take pride in the ingenuity of Australians, and I know that they will be able to implement the principles of the Bill. I agree with the remark of the Minister that if we can spend millions in destroying life and property we should be able to raise millions to protect life and to develop this country.

Mr. HOLLINS.—You do not suggest that we should raise that money as we are doing to-day?

Mr. HOLLAND.—I am not suggesting that at all. In four years Great Britain made a fiduciary issue of more than £1,200,000,000 for war purposes. When I see the astronomical figures relating to American finance and the war debt of Great Britain, I wonder how much consists of real money, and how much is credit. It has been necessary to use our credit for war purposes and the need to protect the nation was forced upon the Government; but if money can be found to provide instruments of destruction, I submit that it should be as easy to raise the money necessary to give our people a better standard of living. Thousands of our young men are facing death every day, and they have not reached the age of maturity. Unfortunately, many of them will make the supreme sacrifice for their ideals, and others will return maimed. The latter will have to pass the remaining years of their lives suffering from the effects of war, and they deserve all the amenities that we can make available to them.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Do you suggest that that will be possible under the present financial policy of the Federal Government?

Mr. HOLLAND.—The party with which I have the honour to be associated has a definite financial policy embodied in its platform; it is that the financing of all public works and the development of our resources shall be undertaken by the issue of credit. The party now has a majority in both Houses in the Federal

Parliament, and I, for one—having spent 40 years of my life in the political and industrial movement, having assisted to put most of those men into Parliament, and having battled before Wages Boards, the Arbitration Court, and other industrial tribunals for the betterment of the conditions of workers—am waiting with hope and expectation for something to be done.

Mr. LIND.—I trust you will not be disappointed.

Mr. HOLLAND.—I and others will not be voiceless if something is not done along the lines set out in the party's platform.

Mr. FULTON.—Hope springs eternal in the human breast!

Mr. HOLLAND.—Life without hope is not worth having. We all have our dreams and, as Lord Rosebery once said, the dreams of our youth are the actions of the future. I feel confident that the Commonwealth Government will not prove recreant to the trust we have imposed in it. A Labour party Government in New Zealand has demonstrated what can be done for primary producers, for housing, for re-afforestation, and for the preservation of that country's natural resources by the utilization of credit, and I think the Federal Labour Government will be big enough to do the same. There is a new trend of thought in all sections of society to-day. Men who are going through the struggle for the preservation of the country will return with a new vision, with new ideas of values, and with a better heart to bring about more common understanding for the betterment of the community.

Mr. REID.—The people did not show that understanding at the recent referendum.

Mr. MCKENZIE.—The soldiers were all right, but I do not know how the people who turned them down will feel about it.

Mr. HOLLAND.—I think the majority of voters allowed personal grudges to influence them at the ballot-box. When one elector was leaving a polling booth he said to me, "Curtin took my beer away from me, so I voted no." Others had a grievance against the Allied Works Council, while some objected to the 12,000 odd regulations that had been issued under national emergency legislation.

Mr. JAMES.—Many wanted to end the theorists' dream.

Mr. HOLLAND.—I do not think the public were interested. Now we as a Parliament have an opportunity to do something practical and I commend the Bill to the House. Articles on regional planning that have appeared in the *Argus* show the possibilities of future development in this State, and if we continue our researches as we have started I believe we shall achieve something worth while. The Bill is a step in the right direction, touching as it does on water and soil conservation, re-afforestation, prices and values, and other matters. We all want people in country towns to have an adequate water supply, because they are entitled to it. The State has lost money on the development of irrigation.

Mr. JAMES.—The State has lost more money through droughts than it has on the conservation of water and irrigation.

Mr. HOLLAND.—Parliament has transferred to Consolidated Revenue certain losses on water projects; in so doing it has merely accepted the responsibility of making the headworks a national concern. All the money spent on water conservation has not been lost and I am not worried about future expenditure to preserve our assets. In a democracy we profit by making mistakes. I hope the Bill will pass and will be put into effect immediately. I trust that the Minister will have an opportunity of building up the technical staff that he desires to establish. The Commission has done a wonderful job, and if we double the volume of water conserved we must double the technical staff to see that the water is profitably utilized.

Mr. J. G. B. MCDONALD.—The technical staff of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission is six times greater now than it was when I took over the portfolio.

Mr. HOLLAND.—I appreciate that, and further expansion may be necessary. I disagree somewhat with my leader on

this Bill; he may be right and I may be wrong, but time alone will determine the true value of this legislation.

Mr. FULTON (*Gippsland North*).—I commend the Minister of Water Supply on the introduction of this important measure. I was particularly impressed by the following statement in his second-reading speech:—

> While water conservation has developed to the extent I have indicated, it has been, in the main, a haphazard, intermittent process which has not permitted the controlling authority to carry out its work in the way it considers necessary to achieve the greatest efficiency and economy. It has become increasingly obvious in recent years that water conservation and distribution must be handled in a most comprehensive fashion if the best results are to be obtained, and with this end in view the Government and the Commission have evolved a programme which will embrace all features of water supply in every part of the State.

The Minister then proceeded to mention certain rivers, including the Macalister in Gippsland, but I was surprised that he did not mention the Thomson river. That may have been an oversight on his part. Previous speakers have dealt with various matters connected with the Bill, and I propose to direct attention to the deterioration of streams and rivers, also to the loss of valuable soil and river flats by erosion and deposits of gravel and rubbish from eroded rivers. Since I became a member of this House I have repeatedly drawn the attention of the Government to this state of affairs, and I have naturally been concerned with what has been happening in Gippsland. The four principal rivers in my electorate are the Thomson, the Macalister, the Avon, and the Mitchell. Because of past mistakes and the haphazard manner in which the streams have been controlled, erosion has been allowed to develop, and it has been a cause of concern to and comment by officers in various Government Departments.

I have with me a book entitled *Soil Erosion in Victoria,* published by the Lands Department under the authority of the Minister of Lands, containing articles written by highly placed officers in the Lands Department and the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, and other experts in land and water matters. It is one of the finest books published on this subject. The writers have shown what has been happening, and what could be done to prevent further serious losses occurring in our rivers and streams. The proper conservation of water is one of the principal means of developing Australia. Reference may be made to the Tennessee valley, in the United States of America, and other great water schemes in other countries, but consideration should first be given to our own rivers. This problem must be tackled in the light of what has been happening, and attention must be paid to forest lands in the watersheds. If those forests are destroyed, the rivers will automatically cease to flow. As an outcome of representations by the Chief Secretary, the Minister of Lands and myself, the question of the condition and control of rivers and streams in Victoria has been referred by the Government to the Public Works Committee for inquiry. I believe that body will be able to lay before the House in its report much valuable information, and will suggest methods whereby the great losses sustained may be eliminated as far as possible, and also the remedial measures that should be taken to prevent further losses.

I now desire to refer to properties on the River Avon and to what has happened to them since 1928 by way of erosion. Farm A consisted of 160 acres in 1928, but now only 110½ acres remain. In 1929 Farm B had 50 acres; by 1936 the area was reduced to 38 acres, and after the 1942 flood to 33 acres. Since that time, another 4 or 5 acres of that land have been lost by erosion. On Farm C at least 2 acres were lost in the 1942 flood. Of the total area of 116 acres on Farm D only 65 acres are left. That property is in the irrigation district. Farm E is a small property of 42 acres, and in the last flood 2 acres were lost. Another farm, at Boisdale, which was purchased in 1920, comprised 80 acres, but now only 50 acres remain. I have a list of farmers on both sides of the Avon river, between the low-level bridge at Valencia creek and the Stratford bridge on the Prince's Highway. There are 59 farms in that distance, and it is computed that, up to 1936, 2,000 acres of land had been washed away from them. It is country that would carry, with irrigation, one cow to the acre.

From the Stratford bridge to Lake Wellington probably as much more land is lost, and I should say that from erosion of the banks and the spreading of sand and gravel on the flats, 5,000 to 6,000 acres have been put out of cultivation. That soil can never be replaced. An acre of land carrying one dairy cow producing 180 lb. of butter a year at 1s. 6d. a lb., yields approximately £13 10s. an acre. That may be high for some of the land, but it is a fair average. For 2,000 acres that would be £27,000 per annum, and for 5,000 acres, £75,000 per annum. That value has been lost to the State. Only last week a letter was written to me by a returned soldier who is living on the Airly estate. His land runs down to the Avon river, and he informed me that twenty years ago, when he went on it, he was able to milk 80 cows on 207 acres. I propose to read his letter, because I think it is essential for every member to know what is happening. He has given me authority to use his name, so honorable members may be assured that the statement is bona fide. He writes—

Dear Sir,

As you are interested in plans to alleviate damage by flood and erosion, I am writing to ask you will you please inspect my holding on Airly estate? When I came here twenty years ago, there was splendid feed on the river flat—clover, &c. I was able to keep 80 milking cows without extra purchases of chaff. Now I have a struggle to maintain 40 cows, and I have paid over £100 for chaff and bran since the flood period last May.

I hold 200 acres, and the river flat is lower than allotments adjoining. Flood from the Avon river covers 100 acres, and leaves a thick layer of sand erosion.

Another 50 acres is being ruined by seepage from irrigation on higher farms.

Hoping you will consider my request.

In consequence of that letter, I visited the farm and inspected it last Sunday, and, although I knew what had happened on the Avon river generally, I had no idea that I would see such ruin on any man's property. On 100 acres of land there were sand and gravel from 1 foot to 2 ft. 6 in. deep. It is very much worse than anything to be seen on the Snowy river. Another area is being cut off, and the effect of that will be to make the farm practically useless. The original area of 207 acres is now reduced to 40 to 60 acres of farming land. The same sort of thing is happening, but to a less extent, on some of the other rivers. When we Victorians talk about our heritage but forget what is happening to it, and shut our eyes to the fact that production is decreasing every day because of erosion, we are not doing our job. The Minister has mentioned what is in the mind of himself and the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, and I believe he has a good idea of what should be done. His officers have the same idea, but has this Parliament in the past made it possible for those officers to do what they so much desire?

I also wish to speak of what has happened on the same man's property because of seepage, and I do so in order to show that when we introduce irrigation we may cause much damage and put thousands of acres out of production. That is what I do not want to see happen in Gippsland, because there is a great future for irrigation on the Avon river, the Macalister river, the Thomson river, and the Mitchell river. Erosion is not so pronounced on the Mitchell river as it is on the Avon. While soil is being washed into the sea, we in Parliament take very little interest in it. The owner of the land to which I have referred has been for years endeavouring to interest the authorities in the vital problem that confronts him, but he has not been able to obtain any help. I have already mentioned the dairying capabilities of that part of Gippsland. In addition, up to 48 tons of carrots to the acre can be grown with irrigation. On the Boisdale flats this year carrots have shown a profit of £225 an acre.

I am pointing out what this State is losing in production by not being prepared to take preventive measures against erosion, no matter what they may cost. Once the land is washed into the sea or lakes, it is gone for ever, and no money can bring it back. On the same farm sugar beet was grown, and sold for £2 a ton. It yielded 25 tons to the acre, so that the value of the crop was £50 an acre. Honorable members can see by the diversity of crops grown that the soil has great potentialities. We are foolish to allow it to be destroyed.

Another matter that affects the city of Melbourne and its people as vitally as it affects the people in Gippsland is the effect of erosion on the Gippsland Lakes. The greater part of the fish sent to Melbourne market is caught in the Gippsland Lakes neighbourhood, but if the rivers are going to pour thousands of tons of silt into the lakes each year, it will be only a matter of time before there will be no fishing industry in that part of Victoria. Siltation in the lakes will destroy all marine life, including weeds and other growth edible for fish. In that way a further link with a successful past will be severed, and the State will retrogress. The fact that crabs are present in such large numbers in the lakes is due to siltation, and if appropriate steps are not taken a prolific source of fish supply at Lakes Entrance will gradually disappear.

I commend the Minister of Water Supply and the officers of his Department for their foresight in welding links between irrigation, water conservation, forest preservation and land settlement. The present measure represents an important step towards the complete achievement of that objective. With other members of this House, I consider that the Minister has a clear vision of future requirements. The earlier clauses of the Bill concern various amendments of the principal Act upon which I do not propose to dilate at the present juncture. I direct attention, however, to sub-clause (1) of clause 10, which reads—

> Within twelve months after the commencement of this Act the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Treasurer of Victoria after consultation by the Minister with the Commission, may by Order published in the *Government Gazette* further adjust the outstanding liability as on the thirtieth day of June, One thousand nine hundred and forty-five for the cost of works (excluding free headworks) under the jurisdiction and control of the Commission serving—
>
> (*a*) each irrigation and water supply district;
> (*b*) each waterworks district;
> (*c*) each flood protection district; and
> (*d*) each drainage district—
>
> by reducing to such extent as he thinks fit the amount of the liability for the cost of such works allotted to each such district pursuant to section four of the Water Act 1937 and by transferring to the State the liability for the amount by which the liability of each such district is so reduced.

Mr. Fulton.

I emphasize that irrigation does not merely consist in damming a river and providing main and subsidiary channels. It is necessary that irrigation and drainage should be treated as one undertaking, and I envisage a time when the Minister of Water Supply and the officers of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission will be prepared to agree that the provision of irrigation and drainage channels should be a charge on the capital cost of the original work.

While I have no desire to be critical of the present methods, it is as well to point out that three different charges under different headings are made in connection with irrigation. When discussing the cost of water, certain members of this House quote only the first charge to the irrigator and tend to regard that as his sole responsibility to the Commission. That is not the correct point of view. I hope that at some future date the Commission will be armed with parliamentary authority to take the cost of irrigation schemes, including drainage, into national works.

It is my opinion that the Commission should complete every irrigation district, and that cannot be done until all necessary drainage channels to serve the area have been provided. As regards drainage, the Government should evolve a policy that will not throw the onus on to a few settlers, expecting them to face disabilities arising from irrigation schemes, particularly by way of seepage. In the Maffra-Sale irrigation area, for instance, where the land is different from that in the Goulburn valley, much damage is caused by seepage. The Commission, however, has no alternative to informing the irrigators that the problem of dealing with the trouble is their concern.

Mr. CAMERON.—Where does the water go?

Mr. FULTON.—It finds its way into depressions in the broken country, sometimes appears on certain properties, and eventually reverts to the river and the sea. The considered view of the officers of the Maffra-Sale Irrigation League, who have been interested in developing their district to the best possible advantage, is that the water Commission should be responsible for completing drainage schemes. In some cases it is difficult to

determine the probable extent of drainage works, because faults may develop in later years, due to water seeping into the land and causing the water table to rise. The water makes its appearance in some portion of the territory and ruins the property there.

The Maffra-Sale Irrigation League suggests that for any subsequent damage caused by seepage and not attributable to wilful neglect on the part of the irrigators the Commission should accept the responsibility of the additional cost involved; also that the cost should be on the capital value of the original work. In the area concerned there are cases in which, after three, four, or five years of irrigation, farmers are gradually being ruined. Seepage water is appearing in depressions on those properties and obviously is coming from the properties of other irrigators or leaking away from the Commission's channels.

When I put a case on behalf of men in my electorate, the Commission stated that it was not its responsibility. That would be all right if there had been a wilful waste of water or bad irrigation, but when a farmer is situated in a part where his land has to receive the natural seepage from several farms, it is not right that he should have to bear the burden of carrying the water off his property. That kind of thing has occurred on many holdings. It happened in the case of Mr. Sanders, on the Airly estate. The trouble is caused by the water finding its way to the lowest depression. Through seepage and erosion on the Avon river, he has between 40 and 60 acres left of his original farm of 207 acres. Yet he is expected to pay all his commitments to the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission and the Lands Department on the 207 acres.

Is it fair and right to expect any man to bear that cost? I believe it is not. I am sure that the House would agree that in such a case a man should be able to obtain the help necessary to put his land in proper order. The seriousness of his position is emphasized when we realize that since May of this year, more than 40 cows that could have been milked have gone out of production altogether. Yet milk has a No. 1 priority. It is clear that land in that area has been neglected and allowed to be destroyed for ever. The Public Works Committee has intimated its intention to inspect the Eaglehawk creek, which is a classic example of erosion. I remind the Minister that a similar tragedy has happened on the Thomson river through mismanagement of that stream. The Thomson is likely to cut another course altogether and ruin many acres of the finest land in Gippsland.

I wish to draw the Minister's attention to the potentialities of the Nambrok-Cowwarr district, which extends from the Thomson river to the Latrobe and includes about 98,000 acres of land. I wish the House to visualize what could happen on the Thomson river if the area were irrigated to its utmost extent. There has been much controversy concerning the use of the Thomson river water and many of the local residents consider that the possibilities have not been thoroughly investigated. There is talk of the hydro-electric scheme on the Snowy river, and I am given to understand that a similar project could be established on the Thomson river. People in the Wood's Point area—among them the management of the two gold mines there—are convinced from reports received that there are great possibilities in the production of electric current from hydro-electric works that could be erected on the Thomson. I should be glad if the Minister would have an inquiry made into the idea of erecting a series of walls on the Thomson river so that its waters could be used in the best possible way. Mr. Kendall, an eminent engineer in the employ of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, considers that if a proper locking system were introduced in that part of Gippsland it could equal the Murray valley in production. Similar steps could be taken with the Avon river. At any rate, an inquiry should be made as to whether it could be locked with a view to preventing the great rush of water that follows heavy rains. A scientific approach must be made to the matter, and a good sum of money will need to be spent. The preservation of our soil is one of our greatest tasks.

In Australia we have the smallest area of fertile land in its rainfall belt of any country in the world. Therefore, we should preserve every acre of soil we

possess. Once such land has gone, it cannot be retrieved. After a heavy fall of rain 75,000 cusecs of water passed under the Valencia bridge; that represented 150,000 acre-feet of water. Land on the east side of the Avon river is crying out for irrigation. Many honorable members think Gippsland is blessed with a plentiful rainfall. Parts are, but others are not. During the last fifty years, the annual average rainfall has been between 22 and 23 inches. If Gippsland is to be preserved and made the great province it should be, water must be conserved and the first step is to protect the rivers and streams.

Having dealt with those matters, I intend to refer to sub-clause (1) of clause 13—

> Where the owner of land in any irrigation and water supply district or waterworks district under the jurisdiction and control of the Commission—
>
> (*a*) obtains or is desirous of obtaining a supply of water to such land (in this section called the "dominant tenement") from any channel or other works of water supply under the jurisdiction and control of the Commission over or through any land (in this section called the "servient tenement") owned by any other person; but
>
> (*b*) is not the owner of an express easement over such servient tenement for that purpose—
>
> he may in the prescribed manner, upon lodging with the Commission the sum of Twenty-five pounds, make application to the Commission for the making of an Order as hereinafter provided.

Members of the Maffra-Sale Irrigation League feel that it is unjust that a person requiring an easement should have to deposit £25 with the Commission. They contend that the work should be carried out by the Commission in its entirety, although they agree that £25 might be lodged with the Commission as proof of good faith and to prevent easement from being requested for vexatious reasons. When it is proved that a bona fide claim has been lodged for irrigation on a particular property the deposit should be refunded. I urge the Minister to consider this matter from the angle that every irrigator should be placed upon an equal footing, and that a property owner should not be called upon to carry the burden of seepage from adjoining areas.

Mr. DODGSHUN (*Ouyen*).—In his speech the Minister of Water Supply has given renewed hope to those of us who are keenly interested in water conservation and distribution. Evidently the Government realizes that we are entering a new era and intends to take the action necessary to meet conditions that will obtain in the future. I do not agree with the Leader of the Opposition that there is nothing in the Bill except provision to transfer some of the cost from the producers to the State. I consider that there is a good deal in the Bill. At one time certain ratepayers under the jurisdiction of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission were called upon to pay rates, but were not supplied with water. By this Bill the Government intends to implement its promise that land will be excised from rating divisions if water cannot be applied to it.

I do not think there is any need for me to traverse happenings in other parts of the world; I submit that when a measure of this description is under discussion it is our duty to keep our remarks within its ambit.

Mr. HOLLINS.—We can learn from what is done in other parts of the world.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—I agree that we can, and I do not imply that we have reached the acme of perfection in water supply matters in Victoria. I know that Victoria is more advanced in the conservation of water than other Australian States, but there is still room for improvement. The Minister said that 32 per cent. of water available is now conserved. We should increase the quantity not only by constructing additional reservoirs, but also by using different methods of distribution.

The honorable member for Kara Kara and Borung gave some figures in regard to which I wish to correct impressions he left upon my mind. He said that the reticulated services were very expensive and that as a State we have based our rating on about 1s. a 1,000 gallons. He then explained that in a farmer's dam there was approximately 2 acre-feet of water, taking the dam to measure 3,000 cubic yards. He next said that irrigation water was charged for at 6s. to 12s. an acre-foot, and that it would not pay to reticulate it. The confusion which arose in my mind was that the honorable member had led the House to believe that stock and domestic water rates are the same as irrigation rates. Throughout

the Mallee and Wimmera areas the minimum rating in fourteen divisions is £9 12s. for a farm of 640 acres; in other divisions it is £10 13s. Honorable members were led astray by the implication that the area of every farm is 640 acres. I would say that the majority of blocks average 960 acres.

I gathered a wrong impression from the remarks of the honorable member for Kara Kara and Borung, and honorable members who are not so conversant with conditions in that part of the State as I am might also have been led astray when he said that through the reticulated services two acre-feet of water, at 1s. a 1,000 gallons. for the supply of 500,000 gallons to each farm would average £25. The minimum rating on many farms is £7 4s. an acre-foot for water in the dam, as against 6s. or 7s. an acre-foot to irrigationists. I have not a 960-acre property, and I pay more than the minimum rate, which on a 960-acre block would be £14 7s.

On the conservation and distribution of water I shall speak guardedly because the Government has referred that subject to a committee of which I am a member. I do not propose to express a definite opinion now, but I consider that methods should be found for adequate conservation and distribution. The honorable member for Kara Kara and Borung told the House that approximately four-fifths of the water is lost in transit between the headworks and the farms. I anticipate that evidence will be submitted to the committee showing that that loss is vastly greater. It behoves us, because of the scarcity of rivers in Victoria, to take every possible step to conserve such water as is available.

There is one important feature of the Bill that Opposition members have not mentioned. Clause 12 provides that water trusts and local governing bodies, in combination or separately, may introduce a superannuation or endowment scheme for their employees. Those employees have, however, never been regarded as public servants, and I appreciate the action of the Government in giving them an opportunity to make provision for their future. In his second-reading speech the Minister stated—

> With respect to town water supplies, during my inspection of country town water supplies I have been extremely disappointed at the complacency of people who accepted, without adequate protest, the state of affairs which exists to-day in far too many of these towns. I refuse to be a party to this position one moment longer than is necessary.

I am surprised that the Minister should have said that; it leads me to believe he has made only a cursory examination of town water supplies. For years there have been complaints in my district as to the quality of water delivered to some towns during summer months. Officials of the water Commission have told me that they have the greatest difficulty in keeping a reasonably pure supply where swamps are used as reservoirs. The Government will have to consider the question of filtration of water supplies in country towns, because pure water is the greatest necessity we can demand for the people.

In regard to the distribution of water the Minister said that the Government has approved of a recommendation for the extension of domestic and stock supply channels to about 192 square miles of country in the Wychitella area.

Mr. FULTON.—That is long overdue.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—I agree, but I do not wish to be parochial. I agree with the Minister that all farms and townships in that area should have an adequate supply, but I stress the point that that supply must be taken from the already poor Grampian storages. Every extra area will cause an additional strain on those reservoirs. I again urge the completion of the Rocklands system as soon as possible because it will relieve the present position and will permit of further extensions without hardship to other areas supplied by those channels.

I support the honorable member for Kara Kara and Borung in his suggestion that the Commission's channels should be extended to the boundaries of all farms served by existing systems; there seems to be no other solution of many difficulties in regard to water supply in north-western Victoria. If that suggestion cannot be adopted some other method must be found to get water to those places. The statement that more water is wasted from farmers' channels than from the Commission's supplies is too futile for words. The Commission has power to stop the supply of water to a farmer's dam if his channel is not in a fit condition to carry the

water. It demands that the channels be kept in good order. Most farmers' dams are filled with a run of water in two or three days, whereas the Commission's channels are running in great volume for many months. Extensive losses occur through seepage and evaporation, and a small breakage from the main channel causes considerable loss; it practically means disaster to those further along the channel.

Generally, I commend the Bill. It represents an endeavour by the Government to alleviate the position of the water user throughout the State and, with other measures of a similar nature, demonstrates the fact that the Government is seized with the importance of extending facilities for water supply to all primary producers.

Mr. PATON (*Benambra*).—I wish to express to the Government and to the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission my appreciation of the fact that there has been included in the Bill—in clause 6—a provision to deal with the determination of leases, subject to compensation. As I was instrumental in having this clause considered for insertion, honorable members may be interested to know the circumstances which led to that happening. Resumptions of land took place, after the Hume reservoir had been built to hold 1,250,000 acre-feet of water. Land was resumed to the 2,000,000 acre-feet level as originally intended. The marginal area between those resumptions was leased to the original owners of the properties at a reasonable rental—3 per cent. of the capital value of the land.

In one instance, the owner leased the frontage and sold to a relative the freehold portion he still held. The relative was under the impression that when the licence for the marginal area expired it would be automatically transferred to him along with the freehold he had bought; and that was the arrangement between the parties. When the time came for the licence to be transferred, however, the owner advised the purchaser of the freehold land that he was not prepared to carry out the agreement and asked him to fence off the freehold portion from the frontage. The purchaser asked me to approach the water Commission on the matter. I was under the impression that the lease of the frontage was part and parcel of the deal and would automatically become included in the freehold land, of which it was originally a part. After submitting the case to the Crown Solicitor, the Commission intimated that that was not so, and the agreement was worded in such a way that it was only possible to overcome the difficulty by cancelling the lease on the payment of a reasonable compensation. In the light of that incident, I approached the Government, and clause 6 was framed and included in the Bill. I believe this provision will prevent injustices from occurring.

The honorable member for Swan Hill has asked the Government to make representations to the Commonwealth Government with a view to its giving a decision concerning the increase of the capacity of the Hume weir to 2,000,000 acre-feet. Irrigation proposals affect my constituents in a different way from any mentioned by previous speakers. They are making a sacrifice in the interests of the irrigation policy of the State because 40,000 acres of their land—the best in Australia—will be lost. At present 32,000 acres are covered by water in the Hume weir, and if the capacity is increased to 2,000,000 acre-feet, a further area of 8,000 acres will be submerged. Similar land is selling at between £40 and £50 an acre; honorable members can therefore appreciate the loss that the owners will sustain. When the land now submerged was resumed, the average compensation paid was about £25 an acre.

Another factor is that the main portion of my home town will be submerged, and residents are desirous of knowing where the future town will be located. The State Rivers and Water Supply Commissioners came to the district and conferred with shire councillors and other interested parties. The council urged the residents to meet and give it an indication of their wishes as it did not desire to take the responsibility of deciding the future of business people and residents of the town. So long as the Commonwealth Government withholds its decision, it is difficult for local residents to decide where the future site of the town will be. If

an announcement were made without further delay residents of the town and district would be relieved of considerable anxiety. I commend the Bill.

Mr. JAMES (*Bulla and Dalhousie*).—I congratulate the Minister of Water Supply and the Government on the introduction of this measure. As the honorable member for Flemington stated, it is one of the most important Bills likely to be introduced during the session. It envisages a broad expansion of irrigation in Victoria and it also proposes to provide water for every town in the State. Action along those lines is long overdue. People in country districts have suffered disabilities that are not common to larger towns or the metropolitan area. A matter of vital importance to the State is the development of country areas so that the people there now will be content to remain and that many others will be attracted from city areas. We must consider matters of this kind from a national point of view, and not merely from the standpoint of a particular electorate or town.

In discussing a Bill of this nature I could justly make representations concerning needs in my own electorate, but I do not propose to do so for the reason already stated in my approach to the subject. A sum of approximately £28,700,000 has been spent in Victoria on water conservation. Of that amount approximately £15,000,000 has been applied to irrigation. For every acre-foot of water used, the production is approximately £48 10s. at Shepparton, and £22 10s. at Mildura. In the Mildura district they use approximately 3 acre-feet of water per annum. The capital figures seem to be of big dimensions, but, nevertheless, I wish to assure the Minister of Water Supply that I will support the Government to the farthest extent it may care to go in the conservation of water and the irrigation of land.

The Bill could not be introduced at a more appropriate time than the present, when we are in the throes of a drought that covers a large part of Victoria. The benefits to be derived will far outweigh the capital cost of providing adequate water for irrigation purposes in this State, including expenditure the Government may envisage or is likely to incur. That is something of outstanding importance. This State has developed irrigation to a greater extent than any other State in the Commonwealth, but notwithstanding that, the Minister of Agriculture is at the present time trying to find agistment for horses from drought-stricken areas. As has been strongly stressed by other speakers, we must conserve water wherever it may fall, and the Minister has stated that it is his intention to conserve every drop that falls from the heavens. That is a wise and statesmanlike utterance.

In Australia there is such an uncertain rainfall, except in limited areas, that we cannot depend on it for the preservation of our primary industries, which form the basis of the financial structure of this country. Therefore, the approach to the subject by this Parliament, I respectfully suggest, must be from the broad national aspect, and with a realization of what the conservation of water means to the State and the Commonwealth. I am sure that members of the Opposition will look at the subject from that angle. Suggestions have been made about the development of large secondary industries in this country, but that is not possible because of the geographical situation of Australia. Secondary industries can be expanded only to the extent that we can increase the consuming population within our own territorial boundaries. Consequently, we are faced with the prospect of accepting the primary industries as the basis of our financial structure, and we must aim at having as much water as possible conserved for their secure development. Because of the limited amount of rainfall and the poor type of river, apart from the River Murray, in Australia, and because irrigation returns big dividends, I urge Parliament to think deeply on the present situation.

I ask members to consider what would have happened to primary industries in Victoria this year if we had not had irrigation. They would be almost lost after having passed through three dry years to come up against a drought period such as is being experienced at the moment.

Without irrigation 90 per cent. of the men on the land would have walked off it. Can the Parliament of this State sit idly by and allow that situation to develop? I am concerned to expend money from which we can reap a return. In that respect let me state what has happened in regard to irrigation. The capital expenditure stands at £28,700,000, and the return for the year 1942-43 was £8,000,000. I venture to say that we could not conceivably find a sounder investment than that from a business point of view, or one that is of greater importance to the State. The honorable member for Flemington has said that although a short while ago he was concerned about the possibility of over-production, he now has had his mind disabused in that regard.

If we read the situation abroad correctly, we can conclude with every confidence that the overseas markets for Australian produce are secure for at least the next ten years. The British Government is prepared to enter into an agreement to buy everything we can produce up to 1948 at present prices, and that is a clear indication of Britain's capacity to absorb all we can grow. Apart from what the people of the British Isles can consume, there will be a large demand in the areas which are being released from the subjection of the enemy, more particularly as Holland, which is a primary-producing country, has been denuded of almost the whole of its live stock. Holland's dykes have been opened, and much of her agricultural land has been flooded. Therefore, I stress the point that if we are wise in our age we will learn from the experience gained by our predecessors in the development of this State. We have learned the lesson in part; that is to say, some of the State has been developed under irrigation, but there are possibilities of further expansion.

Even third-class land can be made to produce prolifically if the farmer has two things—fertilizers and water. Certainly the rain from the heavens is more valuable than irrigation water, because of its chemical content, but if we cannot have rain we must fall back on the best substitute, which is irrigation water. Of the total revenue received by the producer of dried fruits, only 10 per cent. is expended on water; of canned fruits, approximately 6 per cent.; and of dairy produce, approximately 8 per cent. That being so, I again, as a practical man, say that expenditure on the provision of water for irrigation can be compared to taking out an insurance policy by paying a premium to provide security over the year.

Security for the farmer is of paramount importance, because he plays a vital part in the economic life of the community. With stabilization of primary industries the producers are enabled to purchase much more freely the goods manufactured in secondary industries. In that way the ambition of the Labour party that the maximum employment should be provided for the people is fulfilled. As that argument must commend itself to Opposition members, I am certain that they will approach the consideration of the present measure from a national point of view. I have no doubt that the vision displayed by the Government as a whole, and the Minister of Water Supply in particular, in bringing forward a measure so broad in its outlook augurs well for greater success in this State than has even been experienced in the past.

Mr. MUTTON (*Coburg*).—It had not been my intention to address myself to the Bill now before the House, but after having heard the honorable member for Bulla and Dalhousie, I decided to remind him that there is a water scheme in his electorate. Admittedly, the Minister of Water Supply is most sincere in his desire to extend water supply activities to every part of the State. The present Bill is, in my opinion, one of the most important ever submitted to any Parliament in Australia. It is in line with the prophetic utterances of former Australian statesmen whose names are still household words. I have in my possession a booklet written by the late Dr. Bradfield, the designer and construction supervisor of the Sydney Harbour bridge. The writer dilated on the possibilities of water supplies for the hinterland of the Commonwealth. There are records amply illustrating production processes on the Katherine river under a system of irrigation. A study of Dr. Bradfield's pamphlet brings a conviction

that Australia is backward. Even in China, 4,000 years B.C., the necessity for adequate water supplies was realized. It is a standing disgrace to the Commonwealth that large quantities of useful water should be allowed to flow into the oceans.

The question is, to what extent is the Government prepared to implement the present measure? Is it willing to spend millions of pounds to achieve the objective described by the Minister of Water Supply? In view of the long period for which there has been constitutional government in this State, it is a serious reflection on administrations, both present and past, that large areas of brown country are still to be found. If they had been properly treated with water long ago, their productive capacity would be of the utmost service at the present time. For miles on both the Victorian and New South Wales sides of the Murray river there is dry country. Here and there one comes across an irrigated farm which stands out like an oasis in the desert.

Mr. ZWAR.—Victoria has a larger area under irrigation than the rest of the States combined.

Mr. MUTTON.—That does no credit to other States. It is to be hoped that the money proposed to be raised for water supply purposes in this State will not be spent on open channels or drains, but on a proper system of pipe lines.

Mr. ZWAR.—What would that cost?

Mr. MUTTON.—No thought is given to the cost of war. In his interesting pamphlet that wise man, the late Dr. Bradfield, declared that there could be evolved a scheme at an approximate cost of £40,000,000 to irrigate the entire inland area of the Commonwealth. Interest at 3½ per cent. would mean the payment of £1,400,000 a year. It is suggested that although huge loans can be raised for war purposes, similar sums cannot be made available for peacetime undertakings of vital importance to the stability of the nation? That the money would ultimately be repaid to the lenders is merely commonsense. A friend of mine has informed me that it is almost impossible to purchase a bag of chaff in the Geelong district. Just think of that! It is of no use this Parliament talking a lot of hot air if there is an unwillingness to spend money, not alone to retain men on the land, but to increase the consumption of the products of properly irrigated areas.

I have sufficient confidence in the Minister of Water Supply to believe he realizes that something must be done in the interests of the irrigation schemes of this State. Something must be done also for the benefit of settlers in the dry areas, and money must be spent. Nothing will be lost by investing money in such projects. We must offer inducements to people to come to this country, because we cannot populate it ourselves, and the agricultural conditions would be made more attractive if we were to utilize all the water that is now going to waste. The Shire of Broadmeadows has asked me to submit a request to the House. Half of the councillors are concerned about water service in their district. The supply in Kilmore is under the control of a trust which provides water for a portion of Wallan East. Residents of the Wallan township wish to participate in the supply. I understand that 250 people are affected, and they occupy 131 dwellings. The estimated cost of a scheme to satisfy their requirements is £3,350, and it is reckoned that about 3,500,000 gallons of water would be used annually. I regret that the Minister did not visit Kilmore. It may be said that the Kilmore supply is not adequate to permit of extensions to Wallan.

Mr. ZWAR.—It is not at present.

Mr. MUTTON.—Therefore, I wish the Minister to authorize the extension of the Kilmore supply so as to help Wallan. I regard the Minister as sincere, and I have every confidence in making this request to him. If there is one job that must be undertaken after the war, it is to see that there is a properly administered water supply in each of the States. If that matter is attended to, much will have been done in the interests of the Commonwealth.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clause 1 was agreed to.

Progress was reported.

RAILWAYS BILL.

The debate (adjourned from August 29) on the motion of Mr. Oldham (Honorary Minister) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr. HAYES (*Melbourne*).—This measure is the outcome of discussions that took place in the course of the consideration of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Bill last year, and I am pleased that the Government saw fit to give effect to its promise by introducing the proposals now before us. During the last twenty years several Bills of this nature have been submitted and, according to the Honorary Minister, they have been similar to this one. However, this measure provides that the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act shall apply to it. Actually, it is not likely to have a great effect on this legislation because it was passed recently and will affect only returned soldiers of the last war, of whom very few will come under the Bill. The majority of men to be appointed have been in the service in a temporary capacity for a period prior to 1939. I am anxious to know why Bills of this nature are introduced at varying periods instead of legislation to provide for the automatic appointment to the permanent staff of all supernumerary employees after a certain period of service with the Department. In other States temporary employees are given permanent appointment after twelve months' service, and I ask the Government to consider bringing down an amendment of the Railways Act so as to give temporary employees in the Victorian railways a similar benefit.

During the last twenty years, Parliament has debated three Bills of this character, and on each occasion some persons have been precluded, owing to the provisions of the superannuation legislation, from accepting permanent appointments. If the proposal I have put forward were adopted, employees would not be debarred from accepting promotion on the ground that they could not afford to pay high superannuation contributions.

The Bill provides that the permanent appointments shall be finalized in 1946, but I trust that consideration will be given to representations which have been made to the effect that the men should not be asked to wait until 1946 before being able to obtain the benefits of this legislation. If they are called upon to wait for that period, they will have to meet higher superannuation rates; that will be a handicap on them. It will even debar certain of the men from accepting permanent appointments. The employees have been in the service of the Department since 1939, and I submit that from now until June, 1945, will provide a sufficiently long period to enable the Railways Commissioners to determine who shall be permanently appointed.

Another important issue relates to lads who have joined the service since 1939 at ages ranging from sixteen to eighteen years. To-day, those youths are more than 21 years old, but they will not benefit from this legislation. In many instances they have been refused the right to enlist with the armed forces, and therefore they will be excluded from the benefits of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act. Apparently, they will never be permanently appointed to the railways unless amending legislation is brought down to cover their special cases. I ask the Government to consider the matter. The difficulty could be overcome if an amendment were made to the Railways Act to provide that all employees shall be permanently appointed after a specified period of temporary service. I commend the Government on the introduction of the Bill, which I trust will receive a speedy passage.

Mr. MULLENS (*Footscray*).—I agree with the submissions made by the honorable member for Melbourne that it is time that the necessity was obviated for periodical approaches to Parliament on the question of the permanency or otherwise of the employment of railway workers. Honorable members will recognize that in addition to the Railways Classification Board and the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, this Parliament is a tribunal covering railway employees. Over the years honorable members will also have recognized that the great Australian Labour party—represented in this House as His Majesty's Opposition—has been most active in furthering the economic interests of the

rank and file of railway men who naturally look to members of the Labour party to support their proposals.

Mr. THONEMANN.—Why do you say "naturally"?

Mr. MULLENS.—They turn to us as naturally as night follows day! They would never look towards Toorak. As the result of their persistent efforts over the years, measures have been introduced that have been of inestimable benefit to the rank and file of railway men. We have heard from time to time from such an estimable gentleman as the ex-secretary of the Victorian Railways Union, Mr. Randells, whose career in that office was studded with great achievements for the men on whose behalf he worked, such as sick leave, appointments of supernumeraries to the permanent staff, allocations of special building grants, and the grant that enabled the "Spirit of Progress" to be built. Also, amendments to the Workers' Compensation Acts applying to craft unions in the Railway Department and elsewhere, are achievements that redound to the credit of the party of which I have the honour to be a representative in this House, and to the credit of the gentlemen, including Mr. Randells, whose unceasing and untiring efforts ultimately found their effect and level in this Parliament.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—Of course, there is also credit due to the Government for what it has done.

Mr. MULLENS.—Naturally, the Government, being a Government that has its ear proverbially to the ground, acquiesced to the pressure that came from Opposition members. More so did the Government acquiesce when the Labour party sat behind it. I agree with the honorable member for Melbourne that there should be no necessity for periodical agitations with regard to permanency for supernumeraries. It should be the right of all State employees to receive permanent appointment after a certain time, and not a privilege dependent on the will of the Government for the time being. I join with the honorable member for Melbourne in stressing the claims of those young men who entered the Railways Service at the age of 16 to 18 years and who now, having reached the age of 21 years, will find themselves debarred from attaining permanency because of the operation of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act.

I commend the Government on the introduction of the Bill, which I would term the product of the combined will of the Government and the Opposition. I do not give any credit to the United Australia party in this matter. I hope that in future there will be no necessity for a continued approach to Parliament for permanent appointments in the Railway Department, and that the rank and file of it will attain permanency as is their just due.

Mr. MERRIFIELD (*Essendon*).—The Bill proposes to make permanent certain supernumeraries in the Railway Department who were employed prior to September 1939. Some have been employed for a considerable period and will now be made permanent at a comparatively late stage in their working career. As a result, they will suffer great disabilities in connection with superannuation contributions. Recently, reference was made in the House to disabilities under which certain employees in the Government Printing Office are labouring because of that same factor. They, too, have been permanently appointed late in life and are obliged to pay comparatively high superannuation contributions in order to obtain a retiring pension. I do not know all the classifications in the Railway Department involved in this Bill, but some who may be on comparatively high salaries will retire on a high pension and will not suffer to the same degree as the supernumeraries in receipt of a salary close to the basic wage. These latter will not retire on a high pension, but they will lose their right to the Commonwealth old-age pension because they will be in receipt of State superannuation. I suggest that that matter should be further considered by the Government in connection with this Bill.

I desire to refer to working conditions at the West Melbourne workshops and the locomotive depot. Disabilities under which those employees are labouring should have been rectified prior to this. There are no facilities at those establishments for their personal cleanliness

after the day's work, and despite their constant appeals for better conditions, nothing has been done.

Mr. OLDHAM.—That matter is not relevant to the provisions of the Bill and this is not the appropriate time to raise it.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—The Bill proposes an amendment of the Railway Act and the matter to which I have referred has reference to that Act. As a result of the disability I have mentioned, some employees are suffering from certain complaints. I have personal knowledge of a man suffering from dermatitis, but because of difficulties associated with the Workers' Compensation Act he is experiencing extreme difficulty in getting justice, although it has been clearly proved that he contracted the disease as a result of his occupation. The time has arrived when the Railways Commissioners should be asked to do something more for the benefit of this section of their employees. The disabilities to which I have referred are not confined to the workshops I have mentioned, but are spread throughout the service.

Naturally, the Bill commends itself to Opposition members. We feel that many of the operations of the Public Service Act should be made uniform in their application to all permanent State employees. In one sphere the Act may apply with greater advantage to one section of the employees than to another, and the time has long since passed when there should be established uniformity in respect to all sections of State employees.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clause 1 was agreed to.

Clause 2—(Power to appoint certain persons to permanent offices).

Mr. OLDHAM (Honorary Minister).—I wish to inform the honorable member for Melbourne that the Bill does not provide that when the proposed appointments are decided upon they shall all be made on one day. The 30th of June, 1946, has been fixed as the outside limit, but I am advised by the Railways Commissioners that most of the appointments are to be made almost immediately. They will not all be made in one batch, but will be dealt with in several groups.

Other questions concerning automatic permanency and records are being considered by the Government and may form the subject of a further amendment to the Railways Act. The honorable member for Footscray suggested that the credit for the Bill is due to the Labour party. No matter to what party the credit is due, this Government brought the measure forward, and I hope that its passage will be agreed to in the spirit that has characterized the debate.

The clause was agreed to, as was clause 3.

The Bill was reported to the House without amendment, and passed through its remaining stages.

ADJOURNMENT.

TRANSPORT TO SPORTING FIXTURES.

Mr. DUNSTAN (Premier and Treasurer).—I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr. MULLENS (*Footscray*).—On Saturday next the Footscray football team is due to play the Essendon football team at St. Kilda, and that matter is of sufficient importance to me as the representative of Footscray and my 60,000 constituents to make sure, if possible, that no hitch occurs in the arrangements. The people of Footscray are most anxious to attend the match. In the developments that have occurred from day to day concerning transport, one minute it is said that race meetings are to be postponed and the next that there is a possibility of the football match being postponed. It is time that some light was shed on the situation and a clear, definite and precise statement made by the Premier.

Mr. MICHAELIS.—A few words from the Newcastle coal miners would not go amiss.

Mr. MULLENS.—The public are becoming tired of the general haziness attaching to this situation. Are the citizens of Footscray to go, in all their glory and enthusiasm, to see their team play on Saturday? Are they to be confronted with a ground packed with people who live nearby and who also desire to see the game? In other words, will they

find closed doors, or will they discover that on account of their inability to find proper and adequate means of transport to the ground they are denied attendance? I read in the press that the chairman of the tramways Board says there will be no standby trams for the football but that the ordinary service at eight-minute intervals will take the crowd to the match and transport them thence and that the crews otherwise disengaged will not be engaged to man extra trams. There are hints of chaos and confusion and disaster and death and despair everywhere in the papers concerning this prospective football match.

In all seriousness I ask the Premier, is the State of Victoria to be under a perpetual jeremiad? Are we to give ourselves up to sackcloth and ashes? Are we to do without the proper amenities of life? Are the munition workers of Footscray to be denied the pleasures that are so important in keeping their morale at a high level? Is the State of Victoria to be penalized unduly while sports go on *ad lib* in other States? Let us get away from all the skullduggery and humbug and find out where we stand in this matter. I am really concerned about this football match—I think Footscray is going to win—and, naturally, being an enthusiast, I think a postponement might militate severely against the chances of the team.

I know that I am detaining honorable members by raising this matter on the adjournment motion, but I ask why there should be so much interference with football and racing. Does anybody suggest that the lights should cease to shine over the picture theatres in Bourke-street? Does any one consider that there should be some restriction there? Why this nonsense and humbug and hypocrisy about trams, which do not use Newcastle coal? If there is to be restriction on sport, let it apply all round. There are people in the community who have an inherent prejudice against racing and football and a puritanical outlook on what is really the only scope the worker has for a little relaxation and enjoyment. I think it is time all this stopped.

I have no interest in the *Sporting Globe* or in the *Herald,* which have been speculating about the prospects — publishing a dirge one moment and a pæan of joy the next. We want to know where we are from Saturday to Saturday concerning transport arrangements, and above all I want to know about next Saturday. I am vitally interested. My family is interested; the people of Footscray are interested; and, ultimately, all Victoria should be interested in what is going on. I decline to go into penance; the war is just about won, and it is time we had something to light up the gloom, and I am sure the Premier is the man to provide the light.

Mr. DUNSTAN (Premier and Treasurer).—This question appears to be almost a hardy weekly. The matter was raised last week because of the uncertainty that then prevailed in relation to transport to sporting fixtures for Saturday last. Unfortunately, the same position prevails at the present time—a situation which is unsatisfactory to the racing clubs, to the Government, and to the racegoers. The same unsatisfactory position applies to the football clubs and patrons.

Mr. MULLENS.—Would you mind dealing with the football first?

Mr. DUNSTAN.—I shall deal with the football and races concurrently—they are somewhat interwoven. I believe this unsatisfactory position will remain so long as there is duplication of control. Two Governments—Commonwealth and State—are trying to deal with transport to sporting fixtures. That is an impossible and intolerable position out of which chaos must result. Every one knows that a successful race meeting or football match cannot take place unless there are satisfactory transport facilities. The State Government to-day has the responsibility of determining whether or not a sports meeting shall be held, and the Commonwealth Government accepts the responsibility of saying whether or not special or adequate transport services shall be provided. It is not possible to get anywhere under those conditions.

Mr. MULLENS.—Race meetings could be held at Caulfield and Flemington under present conditions.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—I am not competent to determine that point, but during the last few days two orders have been issued —one by the Director of Rail Transport.

and the other by the Director of Road Transport. The one issued by the Director of Rail Transport, Mr. D. J. Howse, reads:—

Take notice that owing to the grave shortage of coal for transport purposes, and to ensure the immediate movement of defence and other essential traffic by rail, you are hereby prohibited from running or making any provision for any special or extra trains, electric or steam, or any special or extra trams, to provide travel facilities for persons travelling to or from any sporting or racing fixture, or for any purpose connected therewith, and take further notice that this restriction will commence forthwith and continue until further notice.

It was addressed to the Railways Commissioners of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia. Another regulation, signed by F. P. Mountjoy, Director of Road Transport, was issued relating to trams, in these terms:—

Take notice that you are hereby prohibited from running or making any provision for any special, extra or stand-by trams, or any special extra or stand-by motor omnibuses, to provide travel facilities for persons travelling to or from any sporting or racing fixture, or for any purpose connected therewith. And take further notice that this restriction will commence forthwith and continue until further notice.

Mr. MULLENS.—That man does not know his business, to apply that decision to stand-by trams and buses.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—Those regulations simply mean that for any sporting fixture next Saturday there will be no special trains, trams, or omnibuses. The Cabinet gave full consideration to the facts at its last meeting, and we decided to appoint for race meetings an advisory committee, consisting of representatives of the racing clubs, the Railway Department, the tramways Board, and the Police Department, to advise the Government.

Mr. REID.—Why not appoint to the committee a member of the public?

Mr. DUNSTAN.—I think those appointed can very well represent the public, but if we could find a man who could fairly represent the public we should take no objection to appointing him. The committee met, and it made a recommendation to the Government that next Saturday's race meeting should be held at Mentone. In a report which it also submitted, it dealt with the difficulties, if not the dangers, associated with handling race traffic on that day. The committee consisted of the president of the Victoria Racing Club; the president of the Victoria Amateur Turf Club; Mr. M. J. Canny, chairman of the Railways Commissioners; Mr. A. A. Bell, chairman of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board; and Sub-Inspector Morris, of the Police Department.

Mr. CREMEAN.—Were the football clubs represented?

Mr. DUNSTAN.—No. We were dealing at that time with races. The Government also received a report from Sub-Inspector Morris, to the Chief Commissioner of Police, and it was rather disturbing. Perhaps I had better read it—

I respectfully report that attached hereto is a copy of the report submitted to Cabinet by the Advisory Committee appointed to make recommendations in respect of the holding of race meetings.

The committee having learned that more than twice as many people attend races at Caulfield as attend races at Mentone, considered that it would be a much safer proposition to hold the races at Mentone.

In forwarding the memorandum both Mr. Canny and myself felt that complications were unavoidable under the circumstances and that Cabinet should be advised of our fears.

Trains proceeding to Mentone would be the normal service trains conveying people to their homes and, as is well known, trains at that period are well loaded and the station platforms crowded. With an additional crowd of several thousand racegoers, the congestion in and about Flinders-street railway station and on the one platform from which Mentone trains leave can easily be imagined, but with the facilities there I see no great danger to the public.

The return journey from Mentone presents a different aspect, for with an estimated attendance of only 6,000 (half the number usually carried) and a through train at approximately 20 minutes intervals, with each train empty on arrival at Mentone, it would require six trains to move the crowd, so that it can be assumed that some people would have to wait at least two hours for transport.

In ordinary circumstances there would be no difficulty in controlling the people, but in view of the crowd anticipated, their impatience due to the long wait, and the inadequate facilities at Mentone railway station to deal with such an eventuality, I am alarmed at what might easily end in chaos or worse, for should the crowd get out of hand and, on the approach of a train, rush across the rails in the failing light or darkness to gain the platform, the result might be disastrous.

Candidly speaking it is my opinion that in the interests of public safety and convenience, the races should not be held under the difficult circumstances.

T. O. MORRIS,
Sub-Inspector.

Mr. Canny concurred in that report. It was placed before the racing club concerned, which said that in view of all the circumstances it had no alternative to cancelling the arrangements it had made for the meeting on Saturday next. I express my appreciation of the action of the club in that regard, but I point out also that the situation is very unsatisfactory. I discussed it to-day with the Chief Secretary and members of the advisory committee, and this afternoon I forwarded a telegram to the Prime Minister at Canberra, in these words:—

Reference Sporting fixtures this State. Railways and Tramways authorities in compliance your instruction will not run special trams or trains. In view of police report concerning traffic difficulties and dangers unless minimum essential transport provided, race meeting at Mentone next Saturday will probably be cancelled by Racing Club concerned. Huge crowd is expected at semi-final football match at St. Kilda ground next Saturday and with restricted transport chaotic conditions likely. Taking into consideration small amount coal involved am strongly of opinion that to avoid present unsatisfactory duplication of control Victorian Government should be given full power to determine whether sporting fixtures should be permitted this State and whether reasonable transport should be made available to cope with traffic involved. Would suggest operation of order be suspended for one week in order that matter may be reviewed. As matter very urgent would appreciate advice to-night.

I telephoned later to Canberra and was informed that my telegram had been received, and that the Prime Minister was telegraphing to me in reply. I have not received that telegram, but its contents were conveyed to me by telephone. It states:—

In view of the present unavoidable serious reduction in essential goods and passenger railway services, it would be contrary to the public interest to provide special additional rail and tram transport for sports gatherings.

That is where we stand at the present time. We appear to have reached almost a dead end.

Mr. MULLENS.—Can you explain to me how people from Essendon and Footscray converging on North Melbourne to the number of 10,000, can travel to St. Kilda in safety?

Mr. DUNSTAN.—I do not know how they can travel there and return, but I would say to the people of Victoria, particularly to those who are not extremely interested or enthusiastic about the fixtures, that it would be a grave mistake on their part if they attempted in these circumstances to attend the St. Kilda football ground. The unsatisfactory situation will continue so long as there are two controlling authorities—the Commonwealth on the one hand, and the State on the other. The Chief Secretary and I are devoting much of our time to the problem of solving the difficulties associated with race meetings. We have been called upon to consider it on many occasions, and there appears to be scope for criticism from certain quarters, no matter what the decision is. Some weeks ago I took in the public interest what was regarded in those quarters as a drastic step. I cancelled a race meeting under the authority of a Premier's order, and the adjournment of this House was moved for the purpose of discussing my action. In a report submitted by a sub-inspector of police it was pointed out that it would be in the interests of public safety and convenience if the proposed race meeting was not held on Saturday next. As the racing club concerned has freely and voluntarily cancelled the event, ample justification has been afforded for my action on the previous occasion.

These situations, however, should not arise at all. Neither the Chief Secretary nor I should be expected to decide whether a race meeting shall be held or abandoned, when we have not complete and unlimited control. We are quite prepared to accept responsibility if at the same time the Commonwealth Government will grant us the authority to determine whether or not the necessary transport shall be made available. To say to the populace of Melbourne, "A race meeting, or a football match, may be held, but you cannot be provided with train or tram services for the purpose" is creating a farce and is not in the public interest.

Mr. MULLENS.—Could you not order the tramways Board to run trams and motor omnibuses along St. Kilda-road? Those vehicles do not use New South Wales coal.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—We cannot fly in the face of the Commonwealth order

I do not propose to indulge in any criticism of the Commonwealth, when that order is in operation, but the position should be made clear to the public.

Mr. HYLAND.—The bus situation is the silliest of all.

Mr. DUNSTAN. — The Commonwealth has issued an order affecting motor omnibuses. In my innocence, I was unaware of the fact that those vehicles used coal! The order in question covers motor omnibuses, trams, and trains. Consequently, the Government of this State is completely helpless in the matter. Moreover, it has to obey the decision of the Commonwealth Government or the Commonwealth Parliament. Although the State authorities are entrusted with the responsibility of deciding whether or not a race meeting shall be held, they are not delegated the authority to provide even the minimum volume of essential transport for that meeting. The same remark applies to football matches. I repeat that I have devoted hours to endeavouring to iron out the situation.

Mr. MICHAELIS.—You have done everything that is humanly possible.

Mr. DUNSTAN. — The honorable member is right, yet the more I have done the greater has been the criticism.

Mr. CREMEAN.—What is the position in other States?

Mr. DUNSTAN.—I do not know. Probably those States are as baffled as we are.

Mr. MULLENS.—There will be a race meeting at Randwick next Saturday.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—If that is so, any special trains or trams that are run will be provided in defiance of the Commonwealth order. I desire to place the facts before the people of this State and to appeal to the Prime Minister to give solely to one authority supreme control over horse races and other sports meetings and the transport arrangements connected therewith. Until that is done, the present unsatisfactory state of affairs will continue, with further inconvenience to the public, many of whom will be denied the right of attending race meetings or football matches on Saturdays. As the honorable member for Bulla and Dalhousie has suggested by interjection, the cancellation of the race meeting on Saturday will probably mean a larger attendance at the football match. The St. Kilda ground will be crowded to capacity, and in the absence of adequate transport facilities an element of danger is inevitable. I would say to the Commonwealth Government, "For goodness' sake allow some freedom of action to the State Government. As you are prepared to permit us to decide whether or not a sports meeting should be held, you should grant us the right to authorize the use of a small quantity of coal so that trains for the conveyance of the sporting public may be made available."

Mr. HAYES.—Have you not the same authority as New South Wales?

Mr. DUNSTAN.—I do not know what action New South Wales is taking, nor do I think that State is officially aware of the course of events in Victoria. It is true that this Government is frequently in contact with the Governments of other States with respect to other matters. When I receive a telephone call from another State I usually reply that my Government has not reached a decision as to sporting fixtures because the problem is so intricate. If I inquire what is taking place in that other State, the answer is similar. I repeat that the situation as a whole is unsatisfactory to every Government affected by Commonwealth control over sports meetings, and equally unsatisfactory to the sporting public. Every man and woman is entitled to a certain amount of sport or recreation at the week-end and, obviously, there is only one suitable period, namely, Saturday afternoon. It is farcical in the extreme to contend that sports meetings may be held when no transport is available.

Mr. MULLENS.—Can you make some special provision for the transport of the 60,000 people—the supporters of the Essendon and Footscray football teams —next Saturday? Why not use the tramways Board buses? Order the Board to do the job!

The motion was agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.48 *p.m.*

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, September 7, 1944.

The SPEAKER (**the Hon. G. H. Knox**) took the chair at 11.8 a.m., and read the prayer.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTORS BILL.

The Order of the Day for the second reading of this Bill was read.

The SPEAKER (**the Hon. G. H. Knox**).—As the Bill seeks to amend the Constitution Act Amendment Act 1928 I have examined it in its relationship with sections 60 and 61 of that statute. It is my opinion that the Bill does not require an absolute majority of the House on the motions for the second and third readings.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

On the 20th of November, 1941, as a private member, I moved the second reading of the Legislative Council Elections Bill, the object of which was similar to that of the measure now before the House. The 1941 Bill was passed unanimously by the Assembly, but because of certain changed circumstances since then necessary alterations have been made in this Bill. In the 1941 measure I proposed to amend sub-section (1) of section 67 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act by amending paragraph (*f*) to provide that the qualification of "voted" there set out should read—

An officer or retired officer of His Majesty's naval military or air forces or the naval military or air forces of the Commonwealth or a person who was appointed or enlisted for service outside Australia as an officer or member of His Majesty's naval military or air forces or of the naval military or air forces of the Commonwealth in connection with the war which commenced in August One thousand nine hundred and fourteen or the war which commenced in September One thousand nine hundred and thirty-nine.

Since that amendment was drafted there has been a change in the military set-up in the Commonwealth, and as a result I am now proposing that paragraph (*f*) should be amended to provide for "discharged servicemen" as defined in the regulations issued under the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act 1943. The principle involved in the proposed extension of the Legislative Council franchise is neither new nor novel; it has already been adopted in certain other States. Section 67 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act provides—

Every person of the full age of twenty-one years and not subject to any legal incapacity who is resident in Victoria and is—

(*a*) a graduate of any university in the British dominions;
(*b*) a barrister and solicitor;
(*c*) a legally-qualified medical practitioner;
(*d*) a duly appointed minister of any church or religious denomination;
(*e*) a person possessing a certificate of fitness to teach issued by some competent authority appointed under any Act;
(*f*) an officer or retired officer of His Majesty's land or sea forces; or
(*g*) a person who has matriculated at the University of Melbourne,

shall subject to the provisions of this Act be qualified to vote in any election of members for the province in which he resides for the time being.

Mr. HYLAND.—In which States has similar legislation been passed?

Mr. CAIN.—In Queensland there is no Legislative Council; in New South Wales the Council members are elected by a proportional system of voting by both Houses of Parliament meeting together; in South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania the method of electing members to the Council is similar to our own and the franchise differs but little. In 1940 the South Australian Parliament amended its constitution to extend the Legislative Council franchise to members of the A.I.F. of the Great War, 1914-18, and for those members of the Forces who served in the present war. In 1943 a further amendment was made. In the 1940 South Australian Act, which was passed prior to my submission of the Legislative Council Elections Bill in November, 1941, it was provided—

Every person who—

(i) is or has been a member of the Second Australian Imperial Force or of the Royal Australian Navy or of the Royal Australian Air Force or of any other naval or military force raised in the Commonwealth by the Minister of Defence for service in the war which commenced on the third of September, nineteen hundred and thirty-nine; and

(ii) has served outside the Commonwealth in such war.

The 1943 amendment of section 20 of the 1940 Act added the following provisions:—

(1) Subject to the next two succeeding sections, the following persons shall also be entitled to vote at the election of members of the Legislative Council, namely—

(1) Any person who is or has been a member of a naval, military, or air force of the Commonwealth during any war in which the Commonwealth is or has been engaged and who—

(*a*) voluntarily enlisted in that force; or

(*b*) whether he voluntarily enlisted or not, served in that force outside the Commonwealth, or in an evacuated area.

The definition of "evacuated area" is, with slight variations, similar to the definition of "combat area" under the regulations issued in connection with the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act 1943. The towns of Cairns and Darwin and any other place which the civilian population were instructed to evacuate would become an evacuated area in accordance with the provisions of the South Australian Act; consequently, members of the Forces from South Australia who had served in those evacuated areas would be entitled to a vote at Legislative Council elections.

Mr. McKENZIE.—That is a wide provision.

Mr. CAIN.—It is wider than the definition of "combat area" under our Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act. The South Australian Act also extends the franchise to include merchant seamen because it reads—

Any person who during a war in which the Commonwealth is or has been engaged was domiciled in any State of the Commonwealth and whilst so domiciled is or has been employed in any capacity in sea-going service on a ship other than a ship belonging to a Navy.

That provision is much wider than the proposal I am submitting to-day.

Mr. HYLAND.—An "evacuated area" would not apply in South Australia.

Mr. CAIN.—It would apply to any South Australian member of the Forces who had served in an evacuated area anywhere in Australia. A "combat area" does not apply in Victoria under the terms of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act, but any soldier who has served in a combat area is entitled to preference. A South Australian soldier who had served in an evacuated area would, irrespective of his age, and if he had resided in a province for one month, become entitled to enrolment for Legislative Council elections. To that extent the South Australian Act has provided for an enlargement of the franchise in that State. I shall now quote from the second-reading speech of the then Attorney-General of South Australia, the Hon. S. W. Jeffries. He said—

The object of this Bill is to enact some permanent provisions relating to the franchise for persons who have served during war as members of the fighting forces or on merchant ships.

The Bill applies to both Houses and to all wars, past, present, and future.

They were looking forward, but I hope there will be no future wars. He continued—

The first matter dealt with is the war-service franchise for Council elections. Under the existing law all members of Australian or other British Forces who served overseas in the 1914-18 war and all members of the Australian Forces who have served outside Australia in the present war are given the franchise. There is, however, no provision conferring a war-service franchise on persons who have served in the present war in British Forces other than those of the Commonwealth or on those who have served in Commonwealth Forces inside Australia, nor is there any provision for votes for persons who have served on merchant ships. It is proposed by clause 4 to confer the Council franchise on all persons who have served as volunteers in the Australian Forces irrespective of whether they served inside or outside the Commonwealth, and on all persons, whether volunteers or not—

that included the militia—

who have served in the Australian Forces outside the Commonwealth or in an evacuated area inside the Commonwealth.

The Tasmanian Parliament passed an Act in 1941 on exactly the same lines—in fact, it copied the South Australian Act. I do not think there has been any amendment since that time. I am not aware of any legislation in Western Australia extending the franchise, but the two States out of the four that have elective Legislative Councils have, up to the present, enlarged the franchise for Legislative Council elections to embrace service personnel. I hope this House will accord the same support to this measure as was given to the Bill I introduced in 1941. Members on both sides, and particularly

the Chief Secretary of the day—the honorable member for Warrnambool—gave the Bill their blessing. I feel that this measure must command the same support.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—No provision is made by the Bill for persons who served in the Boer War. A number of those veterans are still alive.

Mr. CAIN.—That is true, and that is an omission. The South Australian legislation makes provision for those who served in past wars or who will serve in future wars. In this Bill I am following the Government policy and have accepted the qualification for preference under the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act as the qualification for enrolment. That applies to those who served in the 1914-18 war and in the present war. My personal view is that the franchise should be extended much farther. In the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act, Parliament sought to provide an economic security for returned soldiers; I am endeavouring to accord them political rights as well. To that end I propose to add to sub-section (1) of section 67 of the principal Act, after the words "University of Melbourne," the following words:—

; or

(*h*) a discharged serviceman within the meaning of section two of the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act 1943.

The effect of my proposal is that all members who are qualified under the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act will be entitled to be enrolled as electors for the Legislative Council whether or not they possess the property qualification.

Mr. THONEMANN.—Do you approve of that Act?

Mr. CAIN.—I am not discussing that Act. The honorable member for Toorak should endeavour to restrain himself. He has been engaged recently in a municipal election campaign and I understand that the result has not pleased him. He should not try to collect votes any longer or waste money on a Melbourne City Council election; he should direct his attention to this Bill, which deals with one of the most important subjects associated with this Parliament.

Mr. HOLLAND.—We are sorry he was not elected.

Mr. THONEMANN.—I can take a hiding!

Mr. CAIN.—If I had been a ratepayer in the ward the honorable member was seeking to represent in the Melbourne City Council, I might have had to make a choice, in my casting vote, between him and some one else. It is hard to say what that choice would have been. Returning to the subject matter of the Bill, it is only proper that the franchise for the Legislative Council should be extended if the principles of democracy are to be observed. Under the bi-cameral system of government in this State, the Legislative Council has as much control over legislation as the so-called democratically elected Legislative Assembly. The Assembly, however, is not democratically elected. As I have already said, the Legislative Council franchise should be extended to members of the Services when they return from fighting for their country, irrespective of any other consideration or qualification. Those men should be entitled to express their opinion in both Houses of this legislature—particularly in view of the example they set to Australia in the recent referendum. They rose above the petty selfishness of the average Australian citizen.

Mr. MICHAELIS.—Particularly those in Queensland!

Mr. CAIN.—That is true, and also those in New South Wales. The votes of the Victorian members of the Services showed a majority of 10,000 votes in favour of the transfer of powers. In every State the vote of the soldier was the vote of a wise man. Through this measure an opportunity will be provided for that same wisdom to be expressed in the election of members to the Legislative Council. Had the soldiers' votes in the referendum been cast before those of the civilians, the result would have had a profound effect on the issue and would have shamed many of those who ran away from their opportunity to exercise their democratic rights. I submit the Bill to the House in the hope that it will be given the consideration that it deserves. I expect that honorable members will accord it the same favourable consideration as was given to the similar Bill on the 20th of November, 1941.

Mr. MICHAELIS.—What happened to that Bill?

Mr. CAIN.—It passed through all stages in this House and was transmitted to the Legislative Council, where it was left on the Notice Paper.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Have you made an estimate as to the probable percentage increase in enrolment for Legislative Council elections?

Mr. CAIN.—I am unable to estimate the number who have actually qualified among 800,000 servicemen throughout Australia, but I should say that between 200,000 and 300,000 will be entitled to the franchise in due course. It is equally difficult for me to suggest what proportion of that number will be Victorians. If enrolments are increased by some thousands, that will prove beneficial, not alone to the Legislative Council, but to this parliamentary institution as a whole.

Mr. BROSE.—The honorable member seems to suggest that his Bill does not go far enough.

Mr. CAIN.—My original proposal was wider in its ambit because it sought to extend the franchise to every enlisted man, whether he had served within or away from Australia.

Mr. HYLAND (Chief Secretary).—As the Government is willing to proceed with this Bill at once, there is no question of suggesting an adjournment of the debate. The Leader of the Opposition has already reminded honorable members that a somewhat similar measure was passed by this House in 1941. Naturally, he has adjusted the provisions to meet changed conditions, and so the present measure covers both men and women who are eligible under the definition of "discharged serviceman" in the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act. Under that Act "discharged serviceman" means—

(*a*) any person who—

(i) in Victoria, or while domiciled in Victoria, was appointed enlisted or enrolled for continuous full-time service during the war which commenced in the year One thousand nine hundred and fourteen; or

(ii) being domiciled in Victoria at the commencement of this Act had been appointed enlisted or enrolled for continuous full-time service during the war which commenced in the year One thousand nine hundred and fourteen; or

(*b*) any person who in Victoria, or while domiciled in Victoria, was appointed enlisted enrolled or called up for continuous full-time service during the war which commenced in the year One thousand nine hundred and thirty-nine—

and who served in a prescribed theatre of war as a member of the naval military or air forces of His Majesty or the Commonwealth or any of His Majesty's Dominions or any of the women's services or bodies auxiliary to any of those forces and who has completed his war service and who provides evidence of such matters in the prescribed manner.

It has been pointed out in other States that there is no age limitation in the Act. Consequently, if a discharged serviceman who is aged nineteen or twenty years comes within the definition, he will be entitled to vote at Legislative Council elections.

The Government offers no objection whatsoever to the present measure. When a similar Bill was submitted in 1941 those who addressed themselves to it—including the present Minister of Public Instruction, the present Attorney-General, the honorable member for Warrnambool, the honorable member for Toorak, the honorable member for Hawthorn and the honorable member for Boroondara, who is now an honorary Minister—commended the proposal. It will, without doubt, enlarge the franchise for the Upper House and, if the measure is passed by the Council this session, ample time will be afforded the Electoral Office to deal with an inevitably large increase in the number of enrolments. A considerable period for preparation is necessary owing to the shortage of staff in practically every State Department and public utility. Obviously, many months would elapse before even those servicemen who are eligible at the present time could be enrolled, and as time passes, the volume of the work will increase. Section 67 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act is peculiar in some respects. It reads—

Every person of the full age of twenty-one years and not subject to any legal incapacity who is resident in Victoria and is—

(*a*) a graduate of any university in the British dominions;

(*b*) a barrister and solicitor;

(*c*) a legally-qualified medical practitioner;

(*d*) a duly appointed minister of any church or religious denomination;

(*e*) a person possessing a certificate of fitness to teach issued by some competent authority appointed under any Act;

(*f*) an officer or retired officer of His Majesty's land or sea forces; or
(*g*) a person who has matriculated at the University of Melbourne.
shall subject to the provisions of this Act be qualified to vote in any election of members for the province in which he resides for the time being.

Mr. MCKENZIE.—Why should the persons enumerated be more entitled to the franchise than a wharf labourer?

Mr. HYLAND.—I shall leave the honorable member to expound his views on that particular question. An examination of the section leads one to the conclusion that men and women who come within the definition provided in the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act are as fully entitled to vote at Legislative Council elections as those to whom the privilege is now granted.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clause 1—(Short title, construction and citation).

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE (*Collingwood*).—I have no desire to stonewall the Bill or to prevent its passage. It is an excellent gesture on the part of the House to accept the measure on the voices. It appears to me, however, that by a minor amendment, veterans of the Boer War could be embraced in the scope of the Bill. I know that several members of this Chamber fought in that war and probably served their country as well as have many of the soldiers of the present conflict, to say nothing of the Great War of 1914-18. Most of the Boer War veterans are now considerably advanced in years, but if they are not already enrolled they would value the privilege of having a vote for the Legislative Council. I think the Government would be wise in providing for these men.

Mr. HYLAND (Chief Secretary).—Like the Leader of the Opposition, I prefer to see the Bill passed as it is. We might have a good deal of trouble in obtaining a satisfactory definition, and if we were to make an amendment of the type suggested, the whole measure might be upset.

Mr. MICHAELIS (*St. Kilda*).—The second reading of this measure was agreed to so quickly that a number of honorable members did not have an opportunity to address the House on it. I understand that discharged servicemen will be qualified to vote, but the point is, will they be compulsorily enrolled and subject to penalties if they fail to vote? I suppose that every honorable member has had telephone inquiries during elections as to the law on various points. The Electoral Act has been amended so often that it is almost impossible to check up the position. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition or the Chief Secretary can furnish the information sought.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—No compulsion will be exercised so far as enrolment of the discharged servicemen is concerned. The ordinary rolls for the Legislative Council are compiled from the ratepayers' lists. A person is eligible to vote at a municipal election if the yearly rateable value of the property he owns or occupies is £5 or more, but an annual rateable value of £10 for owner and £15 for tenant is necessary for a vote for the Upper House, and, of course, although a ratepayer may have three votes for a municipal election, he has only one for the Legislative Council. In addition, a graduate of the Melbourne University may apply for a Council vote on a card prescribed by the Electoral Office. A barrister, solicitor, a doctor, or an officer of the army or the navy can also apply for a vote for the province in which he resides.

Mr. MICHAELIS.—In the old days, they used to get an elector's right.

Mr. CAIN.—Yes. When a discharged serviceman is enrolled, he will be subject to the compulsory voting provisions of the Act. The responsibility for enrolment will rest on these men, just as it rests on other persons qualified under the Act.

Mr. HAWORTH (*Albert Park*).—I approve of the Bill, and am in entire accord with the recommendations of the Leader of the Opposition. Still, I wish to know how the discharged servicemen are to be enrolled. Who is to decide whether they have the qualification set out in paragraph (*h*) of clause 2? I do not think the Bill goes far enough, but is the electoral officer to say to an applicant, "All right, you are a discharged serviceman under the Act"?

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—The servicemen will get a lot of advice from the candidates.

Mr. HAWORTH.—It is possible that a number of men will be enrolled although they are not qualified. The Bill is vague and offers opportunities for dishonesty.

Mr. MCKENZIE.—Will not the electoral officer check the applications?

Mr. HAWORTH.—The applicants should present certificates to the electoral officer, but the Bill does not prescribe any conditions that he is to observe.

Mr. MCKENZIE.—The electoral officer will know his job.

Mr. HAWORTH.—A man who had been only in the St. Kilda-road barracks might describe himself as a discharged serviceman and tell the electoral officer that he came under the preference Act, and that would be the end of it. He would be enrolled.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—What safeguard is there under the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act?

Mr. HAWORTH.—Proof must be submitted to the Discharged Servicemen's Employment Board.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Is it not a responsibility of an applicant to submit proof?

Mr. HAWORTH.—The onus of proof should be laid on the discharged serviceman to show that he is entitled to a vote for the Legislative Council. I am inclined to go further than the Bill provides; I am changing my views as I go on.

Mr. CAIN.—I think all soldiers are.

Mr. HAWORTH.—However, I am not in entire agreement with the Leader of the Opposition when he said that many thousands of soldiers voted wisely in saying "Yes" at the recent referendum. Unfortunately, the propaganda issued in the camps was for one side only. We should provide that the onus of proof must be on the discharged serviceman to show his qualifications under the measure.

Mr. SLATER (*Dundas*).—I hope that the Committee will not agree to the proposal of the honorable member for Albert Park. The effect would be that so many returned soldiers would be indifferent about the discharge of the burden placed upon them that they would be disfranchised. If they merely satisfied the provisions of the Act by securing enrolment, that should be sufficient, and the burden should be on the electoral officer to satisfy himself about the qualification, as he has to do to-day about the qualifications of other special groups that are entitled to enrolment.

Mr. HOLLINS.—That would be an impossible task for the electoral officer.

Mr. SLATER.—What does he do now about barristers and solicitors who seek enrolment? He ascertains the qualifications of any groups that are specially entitled to enfranchisement.

Mr. HAWORTH.—Prior to an election there would be a rush of people to be placed on the roll, and it would be impossible for the electoral officers to check the qualifications of all of them.

Mr. SLATER.—I cannot envisage that there would be a sufficiently large number of soldiers in any province to flood the electoral officer with too much work. The effect of the argument of the honorable member for Albert Park would be to impose on the soldier a greater burden than is imposed on other classes of persons who, by their special qualifications, are entitled to enrolment. We should place the soldier in no worse position than the barrister, solicitor, doctor, or matriculated student. He should be merely required to satisfy the electoral registrar of his qualifications for enrolment. To do what the honorable member suggests would inevitably result in the disfranchisement of a large mass of soldiers.

Mr. HYLAND (Chief Secretary).—I direct honorable members' attention to the wording of the claim for enrolment or transfer on the general roll of the Legislative Council. It has to be filled in by the applicant, and I think it covers the point raised by the honorable member for Albert Park. It asks for name, address, and other personal particulars, including nature of qualifications, such as certificated teacher, or other professional qualification. That would have to

read "or other professional or military qualification." At the bottom of the card there is this declaration—

I, the undersigned, being a person over the age of 21 years, certify that I have seen the above-named claimant sign the above claim, and that I either know the statements contained in the claim to be true, or have satisfied myself on inquiry of the claimant or otherwise that the said statements are true. (Penalty on witness for failure to comply fully with this requirement—£50.

Mr. HOLLINS.—I suppose that in the case of returned servicemen a special form would be provided.

Mr. HYLAND.—Yes, and all the conditions relating thereto would be set out, as to qualifications, location of service, unit, and so on. The details could be easily checked.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—The qualification which the honorable member for Albert Park proposes should be added to the Bill is not in the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act. All the discharged servicemen has to do under that Act is to provide certain evidence when he applies for a job, and the responsibility of checking its truth is on every employer. If a farmer employs more than one man he has to satisfy himself when any one asks him for a job that the applicant is a discharged serviceman within the meaning of the Act.

Mr. HAWORTH.—There is a board that can assist him.

Mr. CAIN.—How much easier would it be for the electoral officer in his office in Melbourne, with all the information beside him, to make the necessary inquiries by telephone?

The clause was agreed to, as was clause 2.

The Bill was reported to the House without amendment, and the report was adopted.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a third time.

I take this opportunity of thanking the House for the support it has given me. The measure has much to commend it, and I hope that it will meet with the same success in the other House as it has met with here.

The motion was agreed to, and the Bill was read a third time.

WATER BILL.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD (Minister of Water Supply) presented a message from His Excellency the Governor recommending that an appropriation be made from the Consolidated Revenue for the purposes of this Bill.

A resolution in accordance with the recommendation was passed in Committee and adopted by the House.

SEWERAGE DISTRICTS BILL.

The debate (adjourned from August 29) on the motion of Mr. J. G. B. McDonald (Minister of Water Supply) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—The Minister of Water Supply explained the Water Bill and also this Bill, and it is interesting to note that whereas his second-reading speech on the Water Bill occupied several pages in *Hansard,* he used very few words in telling honorable members the purpose of this Bill.

One of the major items in the measure is the proposal to empower sewerage authorities to adopt or join superannuation or endowment schemes for the benefit of their officers and employees. I feel sure that that will meet with the approval of the majority of people. The mention of superannuation schemes leads me to remark that if many small schemes are introduced to cover water trusts, sewerage authorities, and other semi-governmental bodies the projects will be very costly from the point of view of the subscribers. In most cases such schemes have to be financed by insurance companies. I suggest that the Government ought to consider the matter to see if it is not possible to introduce a comprehensive system to provide superannuation rights for the employees of all semi-governmental instrumentalities, municipalities, and so on.

Mr. JAMES.—Under clause 4 the authorities are given an option in the matter; but you suggest that they should be compelled to provide superannuation benefits.

Mr. CAIN.—When it is optional for a body to give its employees a benefit, it sometimes happens that the necessary action is not taken; therefore, I urge that consideration should be given to the introduction of a comprehensive scheme to cover all these authorities.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—The Government has been requested to include this power in the Bill.

Mr. CAIN.—But, even so, I suggest that water authorities, sewerage authorities, and similar bodies should be placed in groups for the purpose of being covered by a superannuation scheme. We all agree that the employees concerned should be granted superannuation benefits, but instrumentalities will be faced with many difficulties if they try to implement individual schemes. The Bill also provides that the chairman of a sewerage authority shall be permitted to receive payment of the sum of £25 a year. He will not go very far astray in spending that amount in these times! In clause 2 it is proposed to amend section 31 of the principal Act by inserting the following sub-section—

"(8) Prior to the appointment of chairman of a sewerage authority the members may if they think fit grant an allowance to the chairman during his term of office; such allowance—

(*a*) shall not in any year exceed One pound per centum of the revenue of the authority for such year, or if such revenue is less than Five hundred pounds shall not exceed Five pounds, and shall in no case exceed Twenty-five pounds . . . . .

I would not insult a chairman by moving that he should be paid a mere £5 a year.

Mr. JAMES.—The chairman would be less likely to go astray if he were paid only that amount.

Mr. CAIN.—That is true. A peculiar feature is that, no matter how important or financially successful the work of an authority may be, the amount paid to the chairman must not exceed £25. A man is worthy of his hire. Probably this request emanated from the sewerage authorities.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—There is a similar provision in the Water Trusts Acts.

Mr. CAIN.—The chairman of a sewerage authority is likely to incur out-of-pocket expenses in carrying out his official duties. On sewerage trust authorities, water trusts, and in municipalities the chairman and members spend some of their own money in carrying out public duties. The president of a shire or the mayor of a city, under provisions in the Local Government Act, is legally entitled to receive an allowance, and no exception can be taken to the principle being applied to sewerage authorities. I think no one but a Scot would suggest that the minimum should be £5.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—That limitation was already in existence before I took office.

Mr. CAIN. — Opposition members raise no objection to the Bill and I can see no reason why it should not be passed.

Mr. JAMES (*Bulla and Dalhousie*).—I support the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition that sewerage authorities should be empowered to combine in providing a superannuation fund for their employees, but I feel that it should be dealt with on the basis of a funded scheme. That visualizes a complete unit being worked out, either through insurance companies or through the State Superannuation Board. It would be confusing to have a large number of sewerage authorities and other semi-Government instrumentalities each working its own superannuation scheme. Parliament should encourage such instrumentalities to assist employees to make provision for their future. I trust that the Minister of Water Supply will give consideration to the representations of the Leader of the Opposition that a comprehensive scheme be evolved, with the necessary machinery provided to enable it to work with greater efficiency than would be possible if the schemes were operated by individual authorities.

Mr. MERRIFIELD (*Essendon*).—I concur in the opinions expressed by the Leader of the Opposition and the honorable member for Bulla and Dalhousie. I think it desirable that the chairman of a sewerage authority should be given an allowance in the same way as are shire presidents and mayors of cities. Clause 4, which confers powers on sewerage authorities to adopt or join superannuation or endowment schemes for officers and employees, is similar to a provision incorporated in the Water Bill and should be carefully considered. All public servants are compelled to contribute to the State Superannuation Fund and that scheme has been stabilized since its inception in 1925. It was found necessary to provide for periodical actuarial investigations, and Parliament

subsequently varied the schedule of contributions so as to cope with the position disclosed by those investigations.

Contributions to the State Superannuation Fund are compulsory, both on the Government and on its employees; that principle is markedly different from the proposal in this Bill. Under the Local Government Act many Victorian municipalities have instituted superannuation or endowment schemes while others—principally country municipalities—have not. That is because the Local Government Act makes it optional whether such schemes should be adopted. The optional system is continued in the Water Bill and in this measure. Our experience in the local government sphere has been that many authorities will not voluntarily undertake the job. That occurred in New South Wales; many local governing authorities did not take advantage of the Act, with the result that municipal employees suffered disabilities. Ultimately it was found necessary to make the scheme compulsory—to some extent at least—and to amend the provisions of the superannuation legislation to cover employees of quasi-governmental bodies.

In England, a similar position obtained because the scheme introduced was voluntary. By 1938 only a limited number of local governing authorities had introduced a superannuation scheme for their employees. In that year, it was proposed that the provision should be made compulsory, with the result that about 126 local authorities promptly instituted a superannuation fund. That did not deter the National Association of Local Government Officers from pressing for a compulsory superannuation scheme for local governing bodies, and in 1939 two Acts were passed for the purpose, covering municipalities in England and Scotland. That places those officers on a constructive basis.

The Municipal Officers' Association embraces, generally speaking, most of the officers employed by local governing bodies. Many of their conditions of employment are laid down by the Arbitration Court, because that association is registered under the Commonwealth Arbitration and Conciliation Act, and it has been able to secure a fairly reasonable standard of conditions of employment for its members. The establishment of a superannuation fund for its members depends on the voluntary action of the local governing authorities. The amending superannuation Act, passed in 1932, providing for the validation of trust funds, mentioned certain substantial superannuation funds and authorities throughout the metropolitan area, such as the State Superannuation Fund, the Police Superannuation Fund, the Police Pensions Fund, and the Port Phillip Pilots Sick and Superannuation Fund, and it also provided for the present and future superannuation funds for employees of the State Savings Bank, the State Electricity Commission, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, the Melbourne Harbor Trust, the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board, the Country Fire Brigades Board, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board, and any other organization declared by the Governor in Council to be a public body.

If an authority were created to cover some of the local governing bodies, it would be brought by the Governor in Council within the purview of that Act. Unfortunately, although many of the authorities named are sufficiently wealthy to establish a superannuation fund for their employees, some have never volunteered to do so. In section 18 of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board Act provision is made to set up a superannuation fund. During the last few years that Board has made payments to municipalities out of its surplus revenue, but it has not yet attempted to establish a superannuation fund. Not only sewerage authorities, but also local governing authorities and other quasi-governmental bodies should be brought into line. The only way to accomplish that is to make superannuation schemes compulsory.

Among the employees of these bodies are men with technical or semi-technical training. They may not always be full-time employees of one authority, but engaged part-time with several. In such instances, difficulties would be encountered in operating a scheme of superannuation. Less difficulty would be experienced, however, if a number of authorities combined in operating a superannuation fund than if each body attempted to do it separately. Employees of local governing bodies, for instance,

move from one municipality to another, as they seek to improve their positions. A man may be employed as shire engineer or shire clerk in a country municipality, but after having gained experience he will naturally seek employment with one of the wealthier municipalities nearer Melbourne. The award governing such persons provides that the salary of the officer is to be determined according to the rating capacity of the municipality. When transferring from the employment of one municipality in which he received a lower salary than he would receive from the municipality in which he took up new duties, difficulty would be experienced concerning superannuation. That is another demonstration of the need to have an over-all superannuation scheme to cover such employees.

In 1929, the Municipal Officers' Association framed a superannuation scheme which was widely discussed. Various resolutions were carried by shire councils, some in support and others in opposition to it, but since that time only the wealthier metropolitan municipalities have established superannuation funds for their employees. No doubt, opposition would be raised by some sections of the House to a co-ordinated scheme of superannuation, because many of the existing schemes are safeguarded by payments to insurance companies. Some sections would not want a stable superannuation board or fund set up, because that would take business away from insurance companies in certain areas. Although the Government may experience some difficulty in introducing such a scheme, it would be found in the long run to be better for all concerned than the unsatisfactory state of affairs which now exists. What is good for Government employees should also be good for employees of semi-governmental bodies.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clauses 1 to 3 were agreed to.

Clause 4—(Power to sewerage authorities to adopt or join superannuation or endowment schemes for officers and employees).

Mr. THONEMANN (*Toorak*).—Although I support the principle of this clause and the Bill in general, I suggest that it should be implemented with considerable caution. I am in favour of superannuation and profit-sharing schemes, but superannuation generally is not financially workable unless there is a fairly large body of persons to share its benefits. Under this clause, with the approval of the Governor in Council any sewerage authority may undertake the provision of a scheme of superannuation. The clause should be interpreted widely. If a sewerage authority had only 20 or 30 employees, it would be difficult to carry out a satisfactory superannuation scheme, unless it were done on a broad basis. During the second-reading debate, an honorable member mentioned that opposition to such a scheme might come from insurance companies. I am not associated with any insurance company engaged in life assurance business of this nature in Australia, but I do not think such companies would offer any opposition to the Bill.

Mr. CAIN.—Few sewerage authorities in Victoria would employ as many as 25 persons.

Mr. THONEMANN.—That is so, and that is why it would be difficult for such authorities to implement a superannuation scheme. In such a case it would be necessary for arrangements to be made with some company or authority which effected insurance of this nature. I am certain that insurance companies or, possibly, semi-governmental authorities would undertake that business if they were aware that the scope could be extended. I suggest that the Committee should agree to the clause in its present form. Nevertheless, I direct attention to the inadvisableness of any small sewerage authority implementing this provision without seeking the assistance of a larger body with the object of spreading the risk over a greater number of employees.

Mr. McKENZIE (*Wonthaggi*).—Could a number of country sewerage authorities combine under this Bill to establish a scheme for all their employees?

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD (Minister of Water Supply).—At the moment I do not think so. There is provision for endowment life insurance, which is practically the same as superannuation.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—I doubt if the Minister has interpreted the Bill correctly in answer to the honorable member for Wonthaggi. I direct attention to sub-clause (1) of clause 4, which provides, *inter alia*—

> With the approval of the Governor in Council any Sewerage Authority may, for the purpose of making provision for any of its officers or employés and their dependants on the resignation retirement or death of such officers or employés or on the cessation or abolition of the offices of any such officers or employés, adopt any scheme either alone or jointly with any other Sewerage Authority or Authorities or similar body or bodies (whether constituted under the principal Act or any other Act) or with any municipality or municipalities or join or co-operate in any existing scheme—

That gives an affirmative answer to the question asked by the honorable member for Wonthaggi.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—Apparently, it does.

Mr. CAIN.—Power is given to any sewerage authority to join with a similar authority or body in an existing scheme. In reference to the interjection I made when the honorable member for Toorak was speaking, I consider that apart from Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, and Melbourne, there is scarcely a sewerage authority in the State that would permanently employ more than four or five men. The difficulty would be for small sewerage authorities to establish superannuation or endowment schemes without co-operating with all other similar bodies. In such circumstances a central administrative authority would be necessary and, in that connection, the Municipal Association of Victoria might assist. The honorable member for Wonthaggi is a member of that body.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—Clause 4 will give that association an opportunity of submitting any proposition.

Mr. CAIN.—For some time past I have considered the need for evolving a basis of co-ordination with the view of providing a group scheme for all the men concerned. At present all that the sewerage authorities are able to do is to enter into an arrangement with an insurance company. Now is the time to inaugurate an appropriate scheme—when the members of the various staffs are young and when superannuation is attractive to them.

Mr. McKENZIE (*Wonthaggi*).—It is now clear that a scheme could be adopted jointly by a number of sewerage authorities. It may be interesting to the House to learn that the executive of the Municipal Association, of which I am a member, is preparing a scheme which, if brought to fruition, will provide superannuation for the employees of all municipalities in the State. There appears to be the necessary power under the Local Government Act, and I am hoping that a suitable plan will be completed. The present Bill is a further encouragement in that direction. Overhead expenditure connected with a small fund is the same as with a large one, but the contributions to and benefits derived from a substantial scheme are far more satisfactory to the participants.

As the necessary authority will be given under this measure, I presume that the Municipal Association will consider altering its scheme to include the employees of sewerage authorities. Most members of this House have advocated from time to time that a worker, no matter what his occupation, should be enabled to arrange superannuation for his old age. In fact, that should be made compulsory. It is not my intention to belittle existing pension schemes, but my view is that, no matter how small the prospective benefit, the arrangement should be on a compulsory contributory basis. Possibly that expression of opinion would be regarded as heresy in some quarters.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—A provision similar to this is contained in the Water Bill, which recently reached the Committee stage in this House. Under that measure any waterworks trust or local governing body may adopt a superannuation scheme either alone or jointly with other waterworks trusts or similar bodies—whether constituted under the principal Act or any other Act—or with a municipality, or it may join "in any existing scheme." Actually the provisions in the two measures are the same. There is a proposal to link up sewerage authorities and municipalities, but certain municipalities are also water trusts. All of these bodies might well be linked together in a project of this kind. In the circumstances, the Minister of Water

Supply might well suggest to them that they confer with the Municipal Association of Victoria and any other organizations that might be entitled to provide superannuation for their employees. That would be a sensible way out of the difficulty, and it might produce a practical general scheme. The sewerage authorities will be comparatively small employers.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD (Minister of Water Supply).—I am prepared to accept the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition and submit it to Mr. Jenkins, the secretary of the Municipal Association, so that his organization can go thoroughly into the matter with the bodies concerned. It may be possible for them to prepare a satisfactory scheme, when there should be no difficulty in the way of the Government bringing down the necessary measure. Some difficulty might be experienced by waterworks trusts and sewerage authorities because of the number of employees and the revenue involved.

Mr. MERRIFIELD (*Essendon*).—I should like the Minister to tell me whether the clause is definite. It states that the sewerage authority may join with similar bodies whether constituted under the principal Act or any other Act. Would those words give the other bodies the converse right to join with a sewerage authority? In my mind, there is no doubt that a sewerage authority may enter into an agreement with a water trust to join a scheme. The words "municipality or municipalities" appear in the clause. Will their use give a municipality the right to enter into a joint superannuation scheme with a sewerage authority? I am doubtful whether the provision gives a municipality the converse right to enter into an agreement with a sewerage authority.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD (Minister of Water Supply).—At this stage, I am not clear on that point myself, but as we are amending the Water Act, I shall look into the matter. The honorable member for Wonthaggi has stated that the Municipal Association is considering the position, and that body may submit a worthwhile scheme. It may be that an amendment of the Local Government Act would permit these organizations to join together in a superannuation scheme. There are water trusts that do not come under the principal Act. Among them is the Geelong Waterworks and Sewerage Trust, but it is covered by clause 5, under which the provisions of clause 4 will apply to that body.

The clause was agreed to, as was clause 5.

The Bill was reported to the House without amendment, and passed through its remaining stages.

The sitting was suspended at 12.48 *p.m. until* 2.7 *p.m.*

MILDURA IRRIGATION AND WATER TRUSTS BILL.

The debate (adjourned from July 18) on the motion of Mr. J. G. B. McDonald (Minister of Water Supply) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr. A. E. COOK (*Bendigo*).—This small measure was explained to the House by the Minister of Water Supply, who pointed out that it contains no departure from established practice because proposals similar to those in the Bill have been adopted in previous legislation. I made inquiries as to the number of instances in which the trusts would be called upon to remit rates as provided in the Bill, and I was informed that there might be a total of six cases. Apparently, that small number of properties will come within the definition of "poverty" in the Bill. The measure merely gives the First Mildura Irrigation Trust and the Mildura Urban Water Trust power similar to that already vested in other authorities.

Mr. McKENZIE.—If members of this House do not receive an increase in their salaries in the near future, we shall have to try to come under a "poverty" clause!

Mr. A. E. COOK.—It will be possible for persons coming under the definition in the Bill to request the Treasury to remit their water rates. I do not know whether it could be provided that poverty-stricken members of Parliament should also apply to the Treasury for assistance! I recommend the Bill to the House.

Mr. DODGSHUN (*Ouyen*).—The honorable member for Bendigo said that the Bill does not break new ground; but this is the first occasion within my memory in

which an urban water trust has been given power to remit payment of rates. I understand that provision was made in other legislation for the consolidation of arrears of rates in rural areas, but the Bill will give water trusts power to wipe off arrears in cases where "poverty" can be proved. It is generally assumed that Mildura is a wealthy district, but on account of the passing of legislation such as the debts adjustment measures and Bills providing for the remission of water rates in rural areas, tradespeople in districts affected have suffered so severely that they have not been able to pay their water rates. I direct the attention of the Minister of Water Supply to that fact, because I understand that he is setting forth a new principle in the Bill. I contend that the people I have mentioned have a claim for redress because they have suffered on account of Government action.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clause 1 was agreed to.

Clause 2—

> The Trust may, with the approval of the Minister, upon the application of any person liable to the payment of any rate made by the Trust, remit or excuse the payment thereof or any part thereof on account of the poverty of the person liable to pay the same.

Mr. FULTON (*Gippsland North*).—In the clause, as well as in the title of the Bill the word "poverty" is used. I should prefer the use of other words, such as "inability to pay."

Mr. MCKENZIE.—Does not that mean the same thing?

Mr. FULTON.—Probably it does, but I think another expression should be used, for the peace of mind of those who may find it necessary to apply to be excused the payment of rates for any reason.

Mr. HAWORTH.—Do you suggest that if the word "poverty" were used a ratepayer would be reluctant to apply, for fear that he might be considered poverty-stricken?

Mr. FULTON.—That is so, and I think other words would be preferable.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD (Minister of Water Supply).—I appreciate the sentiments that actuate the honorable member for Gippsland North but I must give further consideration before agreeing to the use of the words "inability to pay." They may be taken to include temporary inability, or something of that nature. I shall look into the matter further.

The clause was agreed to.

The Bill was reported to the House without amendment, and passed through its remaining stages.

WATER BILL.

The House went into Committee for the further consideration of this Bill.

Clause 2 was agreed to.

Clause 3—(Provision for arrangement of certain water works districts, &c., into divisions including a "fourth division" of non-rated lands).

Mr. MERRIFIELD (*Essendon*).—The clause deals broadly with the reclassification of the waterworks districts into four divisions instead of three, as at present, and with the area of each holding to be assessed as rateable. In my second-reading speech I expressed the opinion that the four divisions as outlined could be more accurately classified. Paragraph (*c*) in the proposed amendment to section 62 of the principal Act as set out in sub-clause (1) of this clause provides that when any part of any holding of land is supplied by gravitation with water from the works, or is commanded by gravitation, then the holding shall be rated in accordance with the sizes as subsequently defined in the sub-clause. On a property of 640 acres, all the area is rateable, although possibly 639 acres may be above the level at which water could be supplied by gravitation. In regard to areas of more than 640 acres the Bill proposes, in accordance with paragraph (*c*), of sub-clause (1) to provide—

> (*b*) (if the holding exceeds six hundred and forty acres in extent) an area of six hundred and forty acres thereof or such larger area thereof as, in the opinion of the Commission, is benefited or is capable of being benefited by such supply—

Obviously it is left to the good will of the Commission to estimate rates for part of the area—certainly something less than the total area of the holding, because that exceeds 640 acres. Such a provision is wrong in principle. The tendency will be for the larger holdings to be subdivided into areas of less than 640 acres, but it is proposed to impose

full-scale rating on those small blocks. In respect to the larger holdings, however, there may be a considerable number of new irrigation areas in respect of which the rating is proposed to be less than 100 per cent. If any holding is to be assessed it should be on a scale comparable with surrounding areas, whether it be large or small. The proviso in paragraph (*c*) of the proposed new third paragraph states—

> Provided that where any holding is divided into two or more separate portions by a public road or railway each of such portions shall for the purposes of this paragraph be regarded as a separate holding of land.

A man may have an area of land considerably in excess of 640 acres but it will be classified as two separate holdings if a public road or railway passes through it. Again that is wrong in principle. If there is any logic in remitting part of the rates on an area of more than 640 acres, it should be remembered that although a public road or railway happens to divide the holding, it will possibly be farmed as one unit. What distinction would be created between the areas on either side of the road passing through the holding? The clause contradicts itself in moral effect and is opposed to the principles for which Parliament stands. It certainly places a bigger burden on the smaller holders than will be carried by the larger. If a man has a large holding and wishes to secure the benefit of the increased price which will accrue to him when the irrigation district becomes established, he is actually assisted by this clause in maintaining one large holding, because the Commission may remit certain of his rates by classifying his holding as being of some smaller area than the whole.

Mr. DODGSHUN (*Ouyen*).—There may be a little substance in what the honorable member for Essendon has said, but the conditions of land holding vary so much that the interpretation of this clause will cover each case. Sub-paragraph (ii) of paragraph (*b*) of sub-clause (1) provides for the substitution of an expression which includes the following:—

> **(*c*) lands which are not commanded by gravitation from such works and are not supplied with water therefrom by pumping.**

Lands which are described as high lands come within that category, but they are lands to which water cannot be applied. In some cases it is possible for a person to purchase an acre of land from a neighbour on which he can construct a dam, and by erecting a mill he can lift the water and convey it by pipeline to his farm. That land would then come within this rating provision.

Mr. CAIN.—Would that be rated as first-class land?

Mr. DODGSHUN.—Yes, because it would then be commanded by water. It may have cost the farmer £200 or £300 to bring water on to that land, but that is the principle of the legislation. I know of instances where water has been brought by that means for a distance of 30 or 40 chains. I do not think the honorable member for Essendon would suggest that portions of farms should be excised when they are commanded by water. Approximately half of my property—about 400 acres—is below or at the level that could be commanded by water supplied by gravitation. The other half can be commanded by water only if the water is lifted and taken to it.

Mr. CAIN.—Would you be rated on 640 acres, according to the definition?

Mr. DODGSHUN.—No. The honorable member for Essendon quoted paragraph (*b*) of the proposed new paragraph to be substituted for the third paragraph in section 62 of the principal Act. It is set forth in paragraph (*c*) of sub-clause (1). The framers of the Bill evidently considered that they had to draw the line somewhere, and they provided for lands divided by a road or railway line which could not be commanded by water, also bearing in mind that stock from either section could not obtain ready access to the other portion of the property.

Mr. CAIN.—If you had three sections of 640 acres, one of which was within a mile of the channel and could command water, you could be charged a higher rate on that section of 640 acres and released from rating on the remainder.

Mr. J. G. B. MCDONALD.—Or a second-class rating could be imposed on the remaining area.

Mr. CAIN.—That is so, and that would be following the practice which now obtains.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—The effect of this Bill will be that there will be little third-class land, perhaps none at all, because it will be placed in the fourth class. In my opinion, there will continue to be only three classes of land in the water divisions, as the third class will become the fourth. It seems to me that for the purposes of this measure a fourth class is being created, upon which no rates will be payable. Originally, rates were payable on third-class land. It would appear that the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission will be confronted with the task of defining lands which are and which are not rateable.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—The clause now before the Committee proposes certain amendments in section 62 of the principal Act, which reads—

> The Commission shall from time to time make and levy upon the occupiers or owners of all lands within any waterworks district subject to its jurisdiction and control except within any urban district or within any irrigation and water supply district except within any urban division thereof a general rate for the supply of water for the domestic and ordinary use of persons dwelling upon such lands and for watering cattle or other stock or for the drainage of such lands. Such rate may be made for one year and shall be of such amount in the pound of the rateable value of such lands as may be necessary to recoup the proportion of interest on costs of works (except such works as are by this Act or any other Act declared free head-works) and of maintenance and management thereof properly debitable in respect of the service rendered by the works as the Commission determines.

In dealing with the method of levying the rate, the section states—

> For the purpose of making and levying such rate lands may be arranged in divisions but so that there shall be not more than three such divisions in any district. In the arrangement in divisions regard shall be had to the relative extent of the benefits derived by such lands from the works constructed for the service of such district; but so that lands that are commanded by gravitation with water by such works shall be in the first or highest division.
>
> The whole of any holding of land not exceeding six hundred and forty acres in extent and not divided into two or more separate portions by a public road or roads shall be deemed to be commanded by gravitation if any part thereof is commanded by gravitation with water from such works.
>
> In any district the lands whereof have been arranged in divisions as herein provided the rate in respect of lands in the second division shall be one-half of the rate in respect of lands in the first division and the rate in respect of lands in the third division shall be one-fourth of the rate in respect of lands in the first division.

Paragraph (*a*) of sub-clause (1) provides—

> In the first paragraph for the words "The Commission shall from time to time make and levy upon the occupiers or owners of all lands" there shall be substituted the words "Subject to this section the Commission shall from time to time make and levy upon the occupiers or owners of lands";

The first portion of the next amendment is as follows:—

> In the second paragraph—
>
> (i) for the words "three such divisions" there shall be substituted the words "four such divisions";

It is of no use to say that there will not be four divisions. Sub-paragraph (ii) of paragraph (*b*) sets out the following amendment:—

> (ii) for the words "but so that lands that are commanded by gravitation with water by such works shall be in the first or highest division" there shall be substituted the expression—
>
> "but so that—
>
> (*a*) lands which are supplied with water by gravitation from such works; and
>
> (*b*) lands which are commanded by gravitation from such works and are, in the opinion of the Commission, capable of being readily supplied with water therefrom—
>
> shall be in the first or highest division; and so that—
>
> (*c*) lands which are not commanded by gravitation from such works and are not supplied with water therefrom by pumping; and
>
> (*d*) lands which are not supplied and, in the opinion of the Commission, are not capable of being readily supplied with water from such works (unless forming part of a holding some part of which is so supplied)—
>
> shall be in a division to be called the 'fourth division' notwithstanding that the other divisions of the district may be less than three in number";

Obviously, the object of the clause is to remove the ambiguity of section 62. If my interpretation is correct, an area of 640 acres of land within a mile of a channel, commanded by that channel and supplied with water by gravitation, would come into the first division. Suppose that on a block of 2,000 acres not divided by roads or railways there was an area of 640 acres not readily supplied with water from the Commission's works, the water

authority could contend that one portion of the holding came within the first subdivision, while another portion, which was not commanded by gravitation and was some distance from the means of supply, should be brought into the second, the third, or the fourth division.

At an earlier stage I was inclined to agree with the honorable member for Essendon that the clause, in its effect, would confer a substantial advantage on large land holders, but I now perceive that that is not the object. The advantage to land holders, both small and large, will be of the character I have already indicated. The proposed amendments of section 62 will certainly make that section more specific in its operation. I am unable to say whether Mallee farmers ever read Acts of Parliament but, if they do, this Bill will enable them to understand the situation much more clearly than is possible when the principal Act is examined. That Act might be understood by a lawyer; it could not be understood by the average member of the Country party. I think, however, that this amending Bill has been drawn so that an ordinary member of the Country party can read it and understand it. If a block of 2,000 acres had a channel running down its side, and water was supplied to that area by gravitation, the land would be in the first division.

Mr. CAMERON.—We have known that for years.

Mr. CAIN.—I am pointing out that this amendment simplifies the statute and makes it easier for everybody to understand.

The clause was agreed to, as were clauses 4 to 6.

Clause 7—(As to interest on orders and judgments for rates, charges, &c.).

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—This clause refers to the collection of arrears and of funds by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, and it also makes provision for a County Court Judge to award costs. There are one or two major questions which I desire to discuss, and I shall say something about post-war works. In the course of the second reading debate I drew attention to the serious position of water supplies and pointed out that the Waranga basin was holding much below its normal capacity. Its capacity is not as great as it should be, whereas the Goulburn weir is overflowing. The Minister's property is safe because he is served from the weir at Nagambie.

Mr. J. G. B. MCDONALD.—We are on higher land than the people on the other side.

Mr. CAIN.—Water is plentiful there, and there is no scarcity at the moment. Probably there will be trouble later. People who rely on the Waranga basin for water will, perhaps, be in difficulty towards the end of the season unless the weather conditions change. The channel filling the Waranga basin has an intake capacity of about 20,000 acre-feet a week, and it takes a fairly long time to fill it. The question of increasing the size of the channel has been considered for many years. In either 1929 or 1930, the Government of the day started to have constructed an underground channel from the weir to the basin. About £20,000 had been spent on the work when it was discontinued.

When consideration was given to the expenditure of £30,000,000 on water conservation in this State I should have thought the proposal to duplicate the channel would have been included. I do not know what the cost of that work is to be, and I do not think the Commission has an estimate ready. This will be a big job, and it should have been continued many years ago. It is calculated that the Commission will spend £3,400,000 in one year, and will be committed to the expenditure of large sums for the following two years. The list of capital expenditure includes the construction of the Rocklands reservoir and outlet works (£394,500), the construction of the Nambrok and Denison irrigation scheme (£751,000), and the Murray river irrigation scheme (£480,000). The relining of the concrete channels at Redcliffs, Merbein and Nyah is to cost £66,000. The list of works also includes £154,600 for the Coliban scheme, and £1,000,000 for the purchase of plant and material for use on construction works. At any rate, £3,463,000 is to be spent in the first year, but the duplicating of the channel that feeds the Waranga basin from the Goulburn weir does not appear on the list. It, therefore, looks as though

the prospects of having this channel duplicated were remote. The work could not be done in one year, and it might take two or three years. It will be a big job, and I am disappointed that the Government has not included it as a post-war undertaking.

What is the use of spending money to provide more storages when those already existing are not being utilized to their utmost extent? The Waranga basin is about 100,000 acre-feet below its capacity, because the authorities have failed to provide means for harnessing much of the water that is now running to waste down the Goulburn river. That is happening because we have not spent money to duplicate that channel. It is proposed to spend money on the Rocklands reservoir and on the Murray valley scheme, but the work cannot be completed in less than four or five years. Yet we have not thought of constructing a channel to use water which is now flowing down the Goulburn river, and which cannot be diverted into the channel because of its limited capacity. I suggest that the first thing any Government should do in connection with the conservation of water is to make full use of the water storages already existing in places where there are channels and people to take the water. Failure to do that seems to me to be neglect of duty on the part of the Government.

I understand that this year it is proposed to transfer water rights again, as was done in 1938. What are water rights, and what does "transfer of water rights" mean? A man who has rights, say, in the Goulburn valley, and does not use them to the full extent allowed, can sell them to another person. The person who buys them does not pay 6s. an acre-foot, which the holder of the rights pays, but some price which may be £2, £3, £4 or £5 an acre-foot, as determined by supply and demand. He does not necessarily use the water on the land where he buys the rights, but he is entitled to transfer it to a property that may be 3, 4, or 5 miles away. He does that because water is scarce and he has exercised all his own rights and cannot buy more water from the Commission.

Mr. CAMERON.—Can he do it without the permission of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission?

Mr. CAIN.—No, but the Commission agreed to its being done in 1938, and I understand has agreed to it again this year. The Minister knows the circumstances, and is aware of what happens. Probably the practice is of great advantage to certain individuals, including those who pay 6s. an acre-foot for water in the Goulburn Valley and sell it at perhaps a fabulous price. It is not done extensively.

Mr. FULTON.—Was it done extensively in 1938?

Mr. CAIN.—I am not sure on that point. If the honorable member for Gippsland North had a property with 40 acre-feet water rights, and I wanted the water, I could rent the property and its water rights. The honorable member would be paying 6s. an acre-foot for the water, and I would perhaps be paying him £3 or £4 an acre-foot for it. I may use the water not on that but on another property. I may not put a sheep or a cow on the property. The purchase of the rights has to be approved of by the Commission, but it is well known that people who have a fruit crop ripening and are short of water will pay almost any price to obtain extra water. The practice has been adopted because limitation of water rights is necessitated by the fact that the Waranga basin is 100,000 acre-feet short, or some other reservoir is short. I suggest to Parliament and the people of the country, apart from the interests of individuals, that Parliament should consider using the existing storages, on which millions of pounds have been spent before setting out on a scheme for building new ones.

One of the most urgent water works in the State at the present moment is the duplication of the capacity to carry water from the Goulburn to the Waranga basin. That scheme will affect not only the people in the Goulburn district, but also others to the north as far as the southern Mallee. I think the Minister will agree with me in that statement, for he lives in the midst of people who draw their water from that source. Therefore, it appears to me, notwithstanding the projects agreed to at Canberra, and the obligation entered into there by the Premier on behalf of the State, that some further

consideration should be given to the matter. Some of the proposed new works may be all right, but they ought not to take precedence over existing works. I expressed my belief on Tuesday last, and I hold it more strongly to-day when I realize what South Australia is spending to convey water by a concrete pipe line which, at its commencement, is 3 feet in diameter.

Mr. FULTON.—What is wrong with that?

Mr. CAIN.—There is nothing wrong with it, but Victoria carries water in open, sandy channels. The South Australian method is one way of conserving water.

Mr. HOLLINS.—Has any investigation been made as to the possibility of concreting the channels and covering them with concrete slabs?

Mr. CAIN.—The honorable member for Hawthorn should direct that question to the Minister. I understand that preliminary inquiries have been made into the concreting of channels and the practicability of substituting pipes, but the subject has not been explored to the extent that it should be and must be.

Mr. HUGHES.—Open concrete channels would be almost as good as pipes.

Mr. CAIN.—They are not so good. It is impossible to keep sandy country out of open channels. In the Minister's electorate concrete channels would be almost as good as pipes, but where there is erosion the sand accumulates in the channels. That is a matter for consideration by the Minister in the light of the fact that it is proposed to spend approximately £3,500,000 on new works and extensions of existing works.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD (Minister of Water Supply).—May I be permitted to give the Committee the picture that I, as Minister of Water Supply, believe to be the correct one in regard to the claims and statements made by the Leader of the Opposition? He has expressed his disappointment that the Government and the Commission have not seen fit to increase the size of the inlet into Waranga basin, and he has contended that it is wrong to submit to the National Works Council such projects as the Rocklands dam, and to seek grants for them. I would point out that each of the works suggested has already been started. They represent the initial part of the Government's post-war programme, and they received approval because they can easily be put into operation. Last summer a serious weakness was discovered in the channel conveying water from the Nagambie weir to the Waranga basin. As the water began to flow into the Goulburn river, there was no alternative but to stop the flow in the channel so that the damage could be repaired. When everything was ready to effect repairs, a heavy storm delayed the work and reduced the storage in the Waranga basin. I emphasize that that was not due to any fault of the Commission.

I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that a new channel into the Waranga basin should be constructed as early as possible; but that will depend on the fulfilment of the complete scheme. In the present conditions the additional channel would be of advantage, but it would not be of such great benefit in normal years unless increased storage capacity was provided at Eildon. The Leader of the Opposition remarked that the eastern side of the Goulburn system was receiving a material advantage on account of our not having an additional channel into the Waranga basin from the Nagambie weir, but the only water flowing down the river at present is the quantity necessary for Shepparton and requirements along the stream.

Mr. CAIN.—If the channel had been duplicated the basin would now be filled.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—As I have explained, the basin was not filled because major repair work had to be done to the channel. I depend for my livelihood on this system, and I know what is needed in the district. I assure the Committee that the storage capacity of the Goulburn weir will be increased at the first opportunity. The Government is doing all that it can to protect the interests of the people who depend on this great scheme.

Mr. DODGSHUN (*Ouyen*).—I was surprised to hear the Leader of the Opposition remark that water rights are being exploited in that they are transferred. If that is so, it is a cogent reason for the clause we are discussing.

Mr. CAIN.—Do you dispute my statement?

Mr. DODGSHUN.—I am not in a position to do so.

Mr. CAIN.—The Minister agreed that it was correct.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—The Government should take action to safeguard water users generally.

Mr. CAIN.—Both parties cannot be safeguarded, and the law of supply and demand operates. High prices will be paid for water supplies in the present circumstances.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—But the practice of transferring water rights should be stopped.

Mr. CAIN.—I drew attention to the matter in the hope that the Government would stop it.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—There should be strict control.

Mr. CAIN.—There is control by the Commission, which must approve of all transfers.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—I should like to know the facts of cases before passing judgment, but if the situation is as the Leader of the Opposition has stated it to be, it is astounding to me. Then the Government and the Commission are exploiting certain producers by charging 6 per cent. interest on overdue water rates. Private banks charge from 4½ to 4¾ per cent. on overdrafts. I direct attention to this matter because the exorbitant interest charge is placing a heavy burden on the persons concerned.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD (Minister of Water Supply).—I omitted to reply to the Leader of the Opposition on the question of the transfer of water rights. No transfer takes place as such, but an owner of land on which there is a water right transfers his property by lease to the person who requires that right. The lessee may have several properties and may decide one year not to crop or irrigate one property but to concentrate his water rights upon his other properties. The Commission has taken the wise step of grouping the water rights in a district so that a land owner who is in difficulties, because he has insufficient rights, can lease an adjoining property and then apply to have the rights to the two properties grouped. That grouping can be undertaken only if the properties are in the same waterworks district.

A fruit grower may have a crop worth £60 or £80 an acre on his trees, but because he is short of water, unless he can lease a property and group the rights, he will lose his crop. It would pay him to offer 25s. or 30s. an acre to lease an adjoining water right. I know of only one instance in which £3 an acre has been paid. It is wrong to say that exploitations are taking place. A farmer who is not using a right may be prepared to lease it to a neighbour who is producing a more valuable crop. There are other reasons, but until we have sufficient water available to meet all demands I can see no alternative to the Commission taking power to group water rights. Misunderstandings have arisen, and I am personally aware of a case where a man who owned valuable property applied for many years to the Commission for additional water rights. When they were being allocated, for some reason he was overlooked and now there is not sufficient water to give him the quantities he desires. It would be wrong if he were not able, by grouping or by leasing property, to obtain adequate water. Not only would he be ruined but the State would lose hundreds of tons of produce from his farm. I do not think the situation is so bad as the Leader of the Opposition has suggested. The only alternative is to have more storages so that all producers in a district will be able to obtain sufficient water to grow produce with security.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—What do you say about the 6 per cent. interest rate to which I referred?

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—It is not an interest rate as such; it is a penalty rate for failure to pay. There are men well known to the Commission who are deliberately refraining from paying their rates because of the advantages they can get by withholding their money. The Commission is not a money lender, but it must obtain its revenue, and unless a penalty rate is imposed the position will be worse than it is.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—The Commission is victimizing the whole for a few.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—No; but if it were to show any weakness in the collection of rates it would soon revert to

the financial position that obtained prior to 1936. If there were laxity in administration it would be easy for the whole situation to drift.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—Do you not think 6 per cent. is too heavy a penalty rate to impose?

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—Admittedly, the financial position is different now from when the Act was passed. I shall take up this matter with Cabinet.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—It is true that a farmer would not buy water rights at an excessive price unless he wanted the water. I can quote some instances, however, in which I understand up to £3 an acre has been paid. When water is scarce and a number of fruit growers want additional water, competition for the purchase of those water rights will increase, and as the demand increases so does the price. The drier the season the more the producers will pay, because they are in the hands of those who have the rights to lease. I have had cases reported to me where as much as £5 an acre has been paid. That might still be profitable to the lessees since it would be better than having no water, but it would be extremely profitable to the man who received water for 6s. an acre-foot from the Commission and then sold it at £5 an acre-foot.

Mr. FULTON.—The seller might forgo the application of water to a crop from which he would get more money.

Mr. CAIN.—That may be, but in some cases the higher rates are paid to people who do not utilize their holdings to full advantage. The Minister has given an example of a man who failed to obtain a water right for his orchard, for reasons best known to the Commission. He has to buy water every year, either by sales or by leasing adjoining water rights. When water is scarce he cannot obtain it on the sales basis and must obtain it by the only other method available to him. A producer who has 20 per cent. below his normal supply will, naturally, seek to buy more. The Minister and the Commission should consider whether it would not be advisable to stabilize the price to be charged in those circumstances. I realize the difficulties, because once the price was stabilized every one would want to buy. This year there will be a scarcity of water and I think the Commission should take steps to prevent one grower from exploiting another in the leasing of water rights.

The clause was agreed to.

Clause 8—

In paragraph (*c*) of section nine of the Water Act 1942 after the words "carry out works" there shall be inserted the expression "and surveys (including surveys for the subdivision of any land)".

Mr. MERRIFIELD (*Essendon*).—This clause introduces a new principle. Generally speaking, the Government is comprised of members who normally support the interests of private enterprise, but the provision now proposed will cut across the rights of at least one section of the community. Evidently the Minister is concerned more with rural interests than with any others. The clause relates to surveys for the subdivision of any land. A person who effects a survey must be qualified under the Land Surveyors Act, and he has obligations under that Act alone. He may, of course, effect surveys under the Transfer of Land Act. If he is engaged by the water Commission, he will be in the position of having an employer on the one hand who has some measure of control over him, but he will also be bound by the terms of the Land Surveyors Act, and so will have two masters. In practice, these circumstances have given rise to detrimental results to certain sections of the community.

A surveyor may be called upon, under the terms of this clause, to carry out engineering surveys for the more effective subdivision of certain holdings, and also private surveys for the subdivision of land. The land holder—who is the private employer—will pay prescribed fees and will have certain rights to the services of the surveyor, apart from those of the Department. The Commission, on the other hand, will have the right to control the activities of the surveyor, who, in his turn, is still subject to the Land Surveyors Act. If the land in question is subject to the Transfer of Land Act, a plan of subdivision may be lodged, provided the occupation agrees with title. If it does not agree, an application for amendment must be lodged in the Titles Office. If the land is held under the old Common Law, a plan of

survey to bring it under the Transfer of Land Act must first be lodged. All these obligations are implied in clause 8, and I am confident that the Minister has not realized the implications of the provision.

The Victorian Institute of Surveyors was not approached, and certainly had no knowledge of this clause; some of its members may have definite objection to it. As to costs, the Institute, with the sanction of the Surveyors' Board, has laid down a scale of fees, which its members are obliged to observe. If the Commission asks surveyors to do private work, how will it assess the cost of that work? It may remit a proportion of the cost, and disregard the scale of fees. Although the clause reads well, its implications are far-reaching, and the Victorian Institute of Surveyors should have been given an opportunity to consider it.

Mr. FULTON (*Gippsland North*).—I do not think the fears of the honorable member for Essendon are fully justified. This clause will correct anomalies which have caused hardship in irrigation areas. In the country few surveyors are available, and if it is possible for the Commission to employ a surveyor while an irrigation area is being developed, farmers will be able to have their land surveyed on the best lines, and the maximum benefit will be gained. During the development of the Maffra-Sale irrigation area, great difficulty was experienced in securing the services of surveyors, and the work was carried out by men engaged in other walks of life. I commend the Government for the inclusion of this clause in the Bill.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD (Minister of Water Supply).—I thoroughly appreciate the views that have been expressed by the honorable member for Essendon. He will realize, however, that it is often extremely difficult for land holders to obtain the services of surveyors in connection with work required to be done. For instance, when I was developing one of my properties I searched everywhere for a surveyor, and was compelled to go as far afield as Burragong.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—How long ago was that?

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—About four or five years.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—Probably the difficulty was acute at that time.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—The State Rivers and Water Supply Commission would engage only qualified surveyors for subdivisional work, and standard fees would be charged. The Commission has no desire to compete with surveyors. If there happens to be one available in any particular district, I am certain that the Commission will be only too pleased to give him the opportunity of sharing the work. The fact remains that in many parts of the State qualified surveyors are not to be found, and as the honorable member for Gippsland North has pointed out, a great amount of money has been wasted by permitting amateurs to grade land.

It is hopeless to expect satisfactory results from inexperienced persons who claim to have professional status. The clause now under consideration represents an attempt to overcome certain difficulties with which land holders are confronted. It will empower the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission to authorize work to be done in certain circumstances, whereupon the land holder concerned will be expected to pay. I emphasize that there is no ground for the fear that the Commission will compete with professional surveyors.

The clause was agreed to, as were clauses 9 to 11.

Clause 12—(Power to waterworks trusts and local governing bodies to adopt or join superannuation or endowment schemes for officers and employees, &c.).

Mr. McKENZIE (*Wonthaggi*).—In an earlier discussion to-day on a proposal similar to that embodied in this clause, some doubt was expressed whether sewerage authorities would be entitled to join existing schemes.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—There is a similar provision in the Local Government Act.

Mr. McKENZIE.—I am pleased to find this clause in the Bill. I trust that local government bodies will take advantage of the provision and make adequate arrangements for superannuation for their employees.

The clause was agreed to.

Clause 13—(Applications by owners of certain lands for order entitling them to acquire compulsorily easements for supply of water from Commission's channels, &c.).

Mr. **MERRIFIELD** (*Essendon*).—I agree with the principle of this clause so far as its purpose is to provide for the more efficient use of land in irrigation areas. The Labour party does not cavil at that principle, although its ultimate effect is not too clear. Any person who has dabbled in the use of land or has informed himself of the results of systems operating in other countries, realizes that many disabilities occur in the efficient use of land, owing to the property rights that gradually accumulate over holdings. India is notorious in that respect, and even Balkan countries are badly off because, there, many of the holdings are small and of a piecemeal character, covered may be, by the subsidiary right of an individual other than the holder. Consequently, much of the efficiency expected in the early stages of water schemes may not be evident in the concluding stages.

The clause will enable a land owner to secure an easement for the purposes of water supply or drainage over adjoining blocks. There is no objection to that provision in itself, but I fear that it would make an owner the proprietor for the time being of a particular easement. If it is deemed essential to have an easement for water or drainage purposes, that easement should be vested in the authority itself. When once it obtains an easement for particular purposes, the State Electricity Commission—for example—has it registered in the Commission's name and not in that of an adjoining holder who may have a power line running to his property. The clause under consideration ought to contain a similar provision. There are on our statute-books other Acts affecting water and drainage, and I may mention, in passing, that the Labour party recognizes more than ever the principle of compulsory acquisition of land in all forms.

Clause 13 is not the only example of provision being made for the acquisition of land used by a party other than the subservient party. The agreement relating to the pulp mill at Maryvale, for instance, provided for the compulsory acquisition by the mill of certain requirements. The operation of the principle in question, together with the registration of an easement, presents a confused pattern. If the owner of a dominant tenement secures the easement it will become registered in his name. If, on the other hand, it is put into a plan of subdivision—the subject of clause 8—the effect will be that as soon as it is included in that plan it will be recognized by the Titles Office as giving a right to all other blocks shown thereon. That right will be implied, whether stated in the title or not.

If it were contended that, because of the changes in land usage that have occurred over half a century it was desirable to eliminate an easement, and the holder of it was parochial enough to say that he disagreed, the only remedy would be to wait for 30 years until it could be said that the easement had not been used in the meantime. Not until that period had elapsed could the easement be removed from the title, and application would have to be made to the Titles Office to have it struck off the lodged plan. The provision in question involves much more consideration than is generally realized.

The Drainage Areas Act provides for a council constituting a drainage district, and that body may compulsorily acquire drainage rights. Those rights would be vested in the council as a drainage authority and not in the applicant who had secured the benefit of the drainage as against the other man. The Drainage of Land Act also enables a person outside a drainage area to apply for the right to drain over some other sections. Such a right has to be obtained by an order of the Court of Petty Sessions. Many easements are brought into effect under the Drainage of Land Act, and the Titles Office knows nothing about them. Those easements are orders of the Court and are not registered on the titles. The effect of this proposal will be to make the position confused. Changes may take place in the form of the holdings and the relocation of some may be required. If the Government persists in registering the easements in favour of the dominant title, and one owner holds out and demands the satisfaction of his legal rights, it will take 30 years before they can be altered. The clause should be amended to have the

easements registered in the name of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, which, after considering the broad facts, could cancel them of its own free will at a later date.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD (Minister of Water Supply).—I can assure the honorable member for Essendon that the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission feels that the power sought is necessary. The fact that money must be deposited will have the effect of preventing the lodging of any frivolous applications. I am sure that in most cases no easement will be taken but that an agreement will be reached by the neighbouring land owners concerned. A suggestion has been made that the Commission should take over these easements, but that is a real problem. Some of the easements do not come within the Commission's districts, and it does not feel that it should back every applicant for an easement.

Mr. MERRIFIELD.—What are the reasons?

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—As I have said, an applicant may be outside a waterworks district. A similar comment applies to stock and domestic supplies. I am sure that the Commission will consider the points raised by the honorable member for Essendon and, if necessary, steps can be taken to make amendments in the Bill in the Legislative Council.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*).—I know that the honorable member for Essendon has expressed views which have not been arrived at in haste. He has given the matter very much thought. The adoption of his submission regarding drainage easements would probably be a distinct advantage. If they are in the hands of the Commission, they are just as good as if they were in the hands of the land owners. I do not think the incorporation of any of his proposals would impair the Bill or prejudice a person who desired to secure an easement. The honorable member has taken a long-range view.

Mr. J. G. B. McDONALD.—If the Commission took over the easements, there might be all sorts of problems.

The clause was agreed to, as was the schedule.

The Bill was reported to the House without amendment, and passed through its remaining stages.

The House adjourned at 3.47 *p.m. until Tuesday, September* 12.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, September 12, 1944.

The SPEAKER (**the Hon. G. H. Knox**) took the chair at 4.5 p.m., and read the prayer.

PUBLIC SERVICE.

DELAYS IN FORWARDING APPLICATIONS TO BOARD.

Mr. CAIN (*Northcote*) asked the Premier—

1. If the Public Service Board has found it necessary to draw the attention of permanent heads of Departments to delays in forwarding to the Board applications submitted by officers for transmission through the permanent head as required by the Public Service Regulations?

2. If any applications made by officers of the Children's Welfare Branch of the Chief Secretary's Department and of the Departments of Water Supply, Agriculture, and Public Works, since January, 1943, have not been forwarded to the Board within one month; if so—

(*a*) what is the date of each application and the date of its receipt by the Board; and

(*b*) what is the date of each application not yet forwarded to the Board?

Mr. DUNSTAN (Premier and Treasurer).—The answers are—

1. Yes.

2. (*a*) Yes, I make available to the honorable member a list of such applications.

(*b*) As far as I can ascertain, all applications have been forwarded to the Board.

HOUSING COMMISSION.

COST AND ACREAGE OF LAND—ARCHITECTS PANEL—HOME-BUILDING PLAN.

Mr. MUTTON (*Coburg*) asked the Premier—

1. What was the cost and the acreage of the land purchased or acquired by the Housing Commission, since 1st July, 1941, at Ashburton, Coburg, Holmesglen, Mulgrave, Newport, Preston, and West Brunswick, respectively?

2. What was the cost and the acreage of the land purchased or acquired under the provisions of the Housing Act 1943, at Ashburton, Coburg, Mulgrave, and Newport respectively?