

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

*Tuesday, April 30, 1957.*

The **PRESIDENT (Sir Clifden Eager)** took the chair at 4.57 p.m., and read the prayer.

### VICTORIAN NURSING COUNCIL.

#### REPRESENTATION OF NURSING AIDES.

The **Hon. J. A. LITTLE** (Melbourne North Province) asked the Minister of Health—

(a) Was the Minister approached by the Hospital Employees Union in respect of the appointment of a representative of nursing aides on the Victorian Nursing Council?

(b) Did the union submit at the Minister's request the name of a person holding a nursing aide certificate for five years?

(c) Was the person appointed a certified nursing aide; if so, for how long before her appointment had she held a certificate?

(d) Did any representative body having nursing aides as members submit the name of the person chosen?

The **Hon. E. P. CAMERON** (Minister of Health).—The answers are—

(a) Yes.

(b) Yes. The person named had held a certificate of enrolment for five years but did not hold a certificate of training.

(c) Yes. She obtained her certificates of both enrolment and training on 24th November, 1956, after completing the course of training at the Austin Hospital and the Nursing Aides School. She had eighteen months' service as a nursing orderly in the Portsmouth Hospital. Prior to commencing training she was employed at the Queen Victoria Hospital. During her training she was at the Austin Hospital and upon completion of the training, in view of her ability, she was placed upon the staff of that hospital.

She is an ex-servicewoman and served for the period of the second world war and for two years thereafter in the Women's Royal Naval Service with the rank of chief petty officer.

(d) As there is no association of nursing aides, inquiries were made from the larger hospitals associated with the Nursing Aides School in the general field, e.g., Fairfield, Austin and Caulfield. In addition, the nursing officer at the Hospitals and Charities Commission, where the Register of Nursing Aides is kept, was consulted.

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## ALBERT PARK RESERVE.

**MOTOR RACING CARNIVALS: ENTERTAINMENTS TAX: STATEMENTS OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE: DISTRIBUTIONS TO CHARITIES.**

The **Hon. A. J. BAILEY** (Melbourne West Province) asked the Minister of Transport—

(a) What amount of entertainments tax was paid in respect of the motor racing carnivals at Albert Park on—(i) 11th and 18th March, 1956; (ii) 25th November and 2nd December, 1956; and (iii) 17th and 24th March, 1957?

(b) Has an audited statement of receipts and expenditure of each such carnival been presented to the appropriate Government Department; if so—(i) on what date was it audited; (ii) what were the gross takings and expenditure; and (iii) what amount was distributed to each individual charity which benefited?

**Sir ARTHUR WARNER** (Minister of Transport).—The answers to these questions cover one and a half pages of typewritten matter, and I suggest that Mr. Bailey might be prepared to allow their incorporation in *Hansard* without being read.

The **PRESIDENT (Sir Clifden Eager)**.—As the House is agreeable to the adoption of that course, the answers may be taken as read.

*The answers were as follow:*

(a) No entertainments tax has been paid in respect of the motor racing carnivals on the dates specified.

The Albert Park reserve is permanently reserved as a site for a public park. It is controlled by a committee who could be said to represent the community as a whole. Accordingly, it is accepted that the committee of management of the Albert Park reserve are trustees for the community and the lands and improvements, being available for the use of the community generally, are public property, and any expenditure thereon is for a public purpose within the meaning of section 16 of the Entertainments Tax Act 1953. Briefly, section 16 provides that where the Commissioner is satisfied that the whole of the net proceeds of the entertainment are, or will be, devoted to public, patriotic, philanthropic, religious or charitable purposes, and that the whole of the expenses of the entertainment do not exceed 60 per cent. of the receipts, he shall repay to the proprietor the amount of entertainments tax in respect of the entertainment.

(b) Statements of receipts and expenditure held by the Entertainments Tax Branch of the Taxation Office are not signed by an auditor. The statement for the carnival 25th November and 2nd December, 1956, held by the Lands Department carries a copy of an auditor's certificate.

For the Carnival held in March 1957, an extension of time for entertainments tax purposes was granted to 30th April, 1957, and no statement has yet been furnished.

- (i) The date of the auditor's certificate for the 25th November and 2nd December, 1956, is the 9th February, 1957.
- (ii) Gross takings for 11th and 18th March, 1956, were £19,627 10s. 11d. Expenditure £8,020 0s. 10d. Gross takings for 25th November and 2nd December, 1956, were £46,139 18s. 11d. Expenditure £13,906 3s. 6d.
- (iii) Amounts distributed to individual charities—

March, 1956, Carnival—

|             |           | £       | s. | d. |
|-------------|-----------|---------|----|----|
| Moomba      | Committee | 643     | 10 | 6  |
| Police      | Provident |         |    |    |
| Fund        | ..        | 1,287   | 1  | 1  |
| Southern    | Command   |         |    |    |
| Army Club   | ..        | 1,287   | 1  | 1  |
| Albert Park | Reserve   |         |    |    |
| Committee   | ..        | 8,389   | 17 | 5  |
|             |           | <hr/>   |    |    |
|             |           | £11,607 | 10 | 1  |

November-December, 1956 Carnival—

|                      |    | £       | s. | d. |
|----------------------|----|---------|----|----|
| Prince Henry's Hos-  |    |         |    |    |
| pital                | .. | 1,250   | 0  | 0  |
| St. Vincent de Paul  |    |         |    |    |
| Boys' Orphanage      | .. | 1,020   | 0  | 0  |
| Mayor of St. Kilda   |    |         |    |    |
| Charity Fund         | .. | 1,000   | 0  | 0  |
| Claremont Home of    |    |         |    |    |
| Aged and Infirm      | .. | 750     | 0  | 0  |
| South Melbourne El-  |    |         |    |    |
| derly Citizens' Club | .. | 500     | 0  | 0  |
| St. John's Ambulance |    |         |    |    |
| Brigade              | .. | 250     | 0  | 0  |
| R.A.A.F. Welfare     |    |         |    |    |
| Trust Fund           | .. | 200     | 0  | 0  |
| Albert Park Reserve  |    |         |    |    |
| Committee            | .. | 27,263  | 15 | 5  |
|                      |    | <hr/>   |    |    |
|                      |    | £32,233 | 15 | 5  |

## RIVER IMPROVEMENT AND LAND DRAINAGE.

### TRUSTS: GOVERNMENT GRANTS: REVENUE.

**The Hon. P. T. BYRNES** (North-Western Province) asked the Minister of Transport—

(a) How many trusts were engaged in river improvement works prior to the proclamation of the River Improvement Act 1948, and how many trusts have been constituted since?

(b) How many drainage trusts were in operation before the passing of the Drainage Areas Act 1950, and how many trusts have been constituted since?

(c) What Government grants have been made to river improvement trusts since 1948, and on what terms?

(d) What Government grants have been made to drainage trusts since 1950, and on what terms?

(e) What is the revenue from rates of each river improvement trust and each drainage trust in the current financial year?

**Sir ARTHUR WARNER** (Minister of Transport).—The replies to these questions cover two pages of typescript, which I shall be happy to read if Mr. Byrnes desires me to do so. However, perhaps that boredom might be avoided by taking the same course as that followed in respect of the answers to the questions asked by Mr. Bailey.

**The Hon. P. T. BYRNES** (North-Western Province).—I shall be only too happy to avoid inconveniencing the Minister of Transport.

**The PRESIDENT** (Sir Clifden Eager).—As Mr. Byrnes and the House are agreeable, the answers may be taken as read.

### *The answers were as follow:*

(a) No trust was engaged in works of this nature prior to the proclamation of the River Improvement Act 1948. Eleven river improvement trusts have been constituted since that date under that Act.

(b) Thirty-two drainage areas were constituted before the Drainage Areas Act 1950. Of these, two areas have been abolished and eight have been converted to River Improvement Districts. Fifteen drainage areas have been constituted since the Drainage Areas Act 1950 came into operation.

Drainage areas are not administered by trusts but by municipal councils. In 1950 a waterworks trust was reconstituted as a

drainage trust under the River Improvement Act and since then one more drainage trust has been constituted under that Act.

(c) Government grants totalling £378,456 have been made to trusts constituted under the River Improvement Act, 1948. The basis of financial assistance to river improvement authorities is determined by the Government from time to time in the light of loan funds available to the Government. When the first trust was constituted under the River Improvement Act 1948, grants were on the basis of seven-eighths of the total cost of approved river improvement works being provided by the State as free grants with the trusts paying interest on the remaining one-eighth at the concession rate of 3 per cent. with the redemption at an additional  $\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. For levee banks or drainage works the State Government grants were made on the basis of two-thirds of the capital cost.

In 1953, owing to limitation of loan funds available to the State and higher interest charges payable by the State, Government grants were made on the basis of two-thirds of the capital cost in the case of river improvement works and half of the capital cost in the case of levee banks or drainage works. The interest concessional was continued by the State meeting all interest charges in excess of 3 per cent. In 1955, Government subsidies for river improvement works were increased to five-sixths of the capital cost of such works.

(d) Grants made to drainage trusts total £32,673 on the same basis as grants to river improvement trusts constituted under the River Improvement Act.

Grants for works under the Drainage Areas Act since 1950 have amounted to £122,179 on terms varying from one-half to seven-eighths of the cost of the works.

(e) The total amount of revenue received by river improvement authorities (including drainage trusts) in the current financial year amounted to £16,707. For drainage areas the revenue was £10,336. Details are as follows:—

| Name of Trust.                         | Revenue from rates in 1956. |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                                        | £                           |
| Avon River Improvement Trust ..        | 1,089                       |
| Kiewa River Improvement Trust ..       | 880                         |
| King River Improvement Trust ..        | 829                         |
| Latrobe River Improvement Trust ..     | 2,555                       |
| Lough Calvert Drainage Trust ..        | 2,667                       |
| Mitta Mitta River Improvement Trust .. | 924                         |
| Ovens River Improvement Trust ..       | 1,863                       |
| Snowy River Improvement Trust ..       | 3,824                       |
| Tambo River Improvement Trust ..       | 592                         |
| Tarwin River Improvement Trust ..      | 1,039                       |
| Yatchaw Drainage Trust ..              | 445                         |
|                                        | £16,707                     |

Bendigo Creek Improvement Trust does not strike a rate. It derives its revenue from precepts made on the municipal councils within its district, the amount for 1956 being £450.

The Macalister River Improvement Trust held its first meeting only in November last and no rate was struck for 1956.

| Shire.        | Drainage.             | Revenue from Rates. |
|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
|               |                       | £                   |
| Ararat ..     | Bunnugal No. 1 ..     | Nil                 |
| Belfast ..    | Yambuk ..             | Nil                 |
| Corio ..      | Balliang ..           | Nil                 |
| Hampden ..    | Pejark ..             | Nil                 |
| Minhamite {   | Eumeralla ..          | Nil                 |
|               | Northern Eumeralla .. | Nil                 |
|               | Moyne ..              | Nil                 |
| Mortlake ..   | Fresh Lake ..         | Nil                 |
| Narracan {    | Trafalgar Meadows ..  | 1,950               |
|               | Upper Latrobe ..      | 97                  |
|               | Elingamite-South      |                     |
| Heytesbury {  | Ecklin ..             | 400                 |
|               | Keayang ..            | 889                 |
|               | Cashmore ..           |                     |
| Portland {    | Condah Swamp          | 1,634               |
|               | Heathmere             |                     |
|               | Holey Plains ..       | Nil                 |
| Rosedale {    | Kilmany South ..      | Nil                 |
|               | Mt. Warrnambool ..    | Nil                 |
|               | Nullewarre ..         | 7,000               |
| Warrnambool { | Merri Swamp ..        | Nil                 |
|               |                       |                     |
|               |                       | 10,336              |

## MEDICAL BOARD.

### PERSONNEL: DATE OF CONSTITUTION: DECISION REGARDING ALIEN DOCTORS.

For the Hon. W. O. FULTON (Gippsland Province), the Hon. A. K. Bradbury asked the Minister of Health—

(a) What are the names and qualifications of the present members of the Medical Board, and what are their duties and responsibilities?

(b) On what date was the Board constituted?

(c) Is it the intention of the Government to abolish the Medical Board for alleged failure to interpret satisfactorily the recent legislation dealing with alien doctors?

**The Hon. E. P. CAMERON** (Minister of Health).—The answers are—

(a) The names of the present members of the Medical Board and their qualifications are—

Clifford Henry Coomer Searby, B.Sc., M.S., M.B., B.S., F.R.C.S., F.R.A.C.S., Q.H.S.

Peter MacCallum, Kt.Bach., M.C., M.A., M.Sc., M.D., M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H., M.R.C.P., F.R.S.E., F.R.A.C.P., F.R.C.P., M.C.P.A.

Frank Kingsley Norris, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., E.D., M.D., M.B. et.Ch.B.

Frederick John Orr Colahan, M.D., M.S., M.B. et.Ch.B., F.R.A.C.S.

Allan Bothwell McCutcheon, M.B., B.S.

Robert Southby, M.D., M.B., B.S., F.R.A.C.P., M.R.A.C.P., F.A.C.S.T. (Hon.)

John Kellerman Adey, O.B.E., M.B., B.S., F.R.A.C.P.

Edward Rowden White, M.D., M.B., B.S., F.R.A.C.S., F.R.C.O.G.

The Board is responsible generally for administering the provisions of Divisions 1, 2 and 3 of Part I. of the Medical Act 1928 and the amendments thereof with particular reference to the registration of medical practitioners.

(b) Members of the Medical Board are not appointed for any period.

The first Victorian legislation relating particularly to the Medical Board was Act No. 158—an Act to amend the laws relating to the registration of legally qualified medical practitioners—which received Royal assent on the 18th June, 1862. However, this Act merely refers to the powers of a Medical Board of Victoria which had been operating under the laws of New South Wales and England as applied to this State by the Constitution Act since the separation of Victoria from New South Wales. The Medical Board of Victoria was therefore constituted when this State was first established.

(c) It is not intended to abolish the Medical Board.

## STATE RIVERS AND WATER SUPPLY COMMISSION.

### WOADY YALOAK RIVER: DIVERSION.

**The Hon. D. P. J. FERGUSON** (South-Western Province) asked the Minister of Transport—

When does the Government propose to commence operations to divert the flow of Woady Yaloak river away from Lake Corangamite?

**Sir ARTHUR WARNER** (Minister of Transport).—The answer is—

The proposal for the implementation of the recommendations of the Parliamentary Public Works Committee concerning reclamation of flooded lands around Lake Corangamite involving the diversion of the flow of the Woady Yaloak river has been submitted to the landholders concerned with an indication of the extent to which the Government would be prepared to subsidize the project.

The Government is awaiting a decision from the landholders as to whether they are prepared to meet the financial obligations involved.

## EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

### STRATHMORE HIGH SCHOOL.

**The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER** (Doutta Galla Province) asked the Minister of Transport—

(a) Is the Minister of Education aware of the extreme discomfort and inconvenience being caused to teachers and pupils alike in the present functioning of the Strathmore High School?

(b) Will the Minister take all steps to facilitate the moves now being proposed by the Broadmeadows City Council to sell the Napier Park land to the Education Department and thus end the protracted litigation which has prevented the erection of the Strathmore High School on the Napier Park site?

**Sir ARTHUR WARNER** (Minister of Transport).—The answers are—

(a) Yes.

(b) Yes. The Minister has already submitted an offer to the Broadmeadows City Council to purchase the Napier Park land as a site for the Strathmore High School. He has been advised that the council has now accepted this offer.

## HOSPITALS AND CHARITIES COMMISSION.

### CONSTRUCTION OF HOSPITALS.

**The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER** (Doutta Galla Province) asked the Minister of Health—

(a) What are the names and locations of hospitals in Victoria now in course of construction?

(b) What are the names of the hospitals the completion of which has stopped?

(c) What is the estimated amount required to complete the construction of each of the hospitals referred to in (b)?

**The Hon. E. P. CAMERON** (Minister of Health).—In the replies to these questions there is considerable detail. I would ask, therefore, that they be embodied in *Hansard* without their having been read.

**The PRESIDENT (Sir Clifden Eager).**  
—The House, I take it, is agreeable.

*The answers were as follow:*

(a) The following hospitals are in course of construction in Victoria:—

The Dental Hospital of Melbourne (First stage).  
Royal Children's Hospital (First stage).  
Preston and Northcote Community Hospital.  
Tallangatta Hospital.  
William Angliss Hospital, Upper Fern-tree Gully.  
Winchelsea Hospital.  
Woorayl District Memorial Hospital, Leongatha.  
Yea and District Hospital.

In addition, major works are in course of construction at:—

The Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital.  
The Royal Women's Hospital.  
Prince Henry's Hospital.  
St. Vincent's Hospital.  
The Warrnambool and District Base Hospital.  
Swan Hill District Hospital.  
Benalla and District Memorial Hospital.  
The Camperdown District Hospital.  
Casterton Memorial Hospital.  
The Mortlake District Hospital.  
Norah Cosgrove Terang and District Community Hospital.  
Port Fairy Hospital.  
Kaniva District Hospital.

The Commission's policy is to utilize existing buildings wherever possible and not, unless absolutely unavoidable, to replace existing hospitals, with costly new structures. In accordance with this policy, and in addition to the above works, reconditioning, modifying and equipping of many hospitals throughout the State is proceeding.

(b) No such hospital building work has been stopped since 1953.

Of the works suspended in 1953, all have been completed or recommenced, except—

Daylesford and District Hospital—Nurses Home.

The contract was suspended before building operations commenced in 1953, and subsequently was terminated by agreement with the builder. The plans have been amended and tenders should soon be invited for commencement of the work.

Sandringham Memorial Hospital—Nurses Home.

This work was terminated in 1953 very shortly after work on the foundations had commenced. The Commission has authorized sketch plans for a smaller hospital.

Work has been completed or is continuing on all projects commenced since 30th June, 1953.

Since 1953 new hospitals have been completed—

Box Hill and District Hospital.  
Footscray and District Hospital.  
Healesville and District Hospital.  
Heywood and District Memorial Hospital.  
Kerang and District Hospital.  
Koroit and District Hospital.  
Numurkah and District Memorial Hospital.  
Penshurst Hospital.  
Portland and District Hospital.  
Rochester and District Hospital.  
Robinvale and District Memorial Hospital.  
Tiraboon and District Hospital.  
Traralgon District Hospital.  
Westernport Memorial Hospital.  
Wodonga District Hospital.

and many other reconditioning and modification works have been completed also.

(c) The estimated amount required to complete current contracts is £7,000,000.

This does not include such works as the Royal Children's Hospital and the Dental Hospital (main blocks) for which contracts have not yet been let.

## ROAD TRANSPORT AND DECENTRALIZATION.

### CLOSING OF CEMENT WORKS, PORT FAIRY.

**The Hon. D. L. ARNOTT** (Western Province).—I wish to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing the disastrous policy of the Government in relation to road transport and decentralization, culminating in the closing of the Arcadia cement company's works at Port Fairy.

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

**The Hon. D. L. ARNOTT** (Western Province).—It is with great regret that I address the House regarding this matter. I should have thought it unnecessary for a motion such as I have proposed to be submitted. Honorable

members are well aware of the importance of cement in the State of Victoria. I ask them to take their minds back to the period prior to the commencement of operations by the Arcadia Cement and Lime Company Proprietary Limited at Port Fairy, when the price of cement in western Victoria and, I think, throughout the State, was approximately £20 a ton and over. I am mindful of the fact that the Port Fairy Borough Council paid £24 10s. a ton for cement to carry out works in its area.

I desire also to associate my remarks respecting this company and others in western Victoria—decentralized industries—with the policy of the present Government and particularly with its administration by the Minister of Transport. That policy and its administration are having a disastrous effect which extends beyond industries in country towns throughout the State. I use the expression “throughout the State” because the Port Fairy cement works—the Arcadia company—is not the first decentralized industry to have suffered by being compelled to leave the country for the metropolitan area. The road transport policy of the Government is creating great hardship for primary producers such as wheat growers and for sawmillers—in fact, for all those who are engaged in primary production. It is true that as a result of efforts made in this House on previous occasions some primary producers to-day are exempt from the provisions of the road tax, but throughout the State, in its country areas, we are faced with falling markets and with this obnoxious administration of decentralization. I have pointed out in this House previously that the legislation was ill-considered and would have disastrous effects in our rural communities.

With respect to the Arcadia company, I wish honorable members to understand quite clearly that this is not the unfortunate concern which began operations at Port Fairy for the production of cement some years ago; this company has stood on its own feet—at least, I think it has—and has received little or no consideration from the

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Government. There are 90 men who have been engaged at Port Fairy in the production of cement as employees of the Arcadia company. Those men have received their dismissal notices and the works are now closed down. So far as Port Fairy is concerned, this is a tragedy. One can realize that when an amount of £2,000 in wages weekly ceases to circulate in a small country centre the effect upon that community, and upon business people particularly, is very considerable. The circumstances would not be so bad if work were obtainable elsewhere by these dismissed employees. Of the total of 90 men, 80 are married. Many of them are new Australians who went to Port Fairy, settled into the local community and became really good citizens and honest workers.

The tragedy is that those men have now no employment; there is no alternative occupation in that area. We can imagine the worry caused to men, including new Australians, who are responsible for the welfare of their families. Many of them had settled in homes there and had undertaken to purchase them. Several are tenants of the Housing Commission, and as a result of the closure of the cement works their plight is grievous. I do not want to overstress the tragic side of their situation but I emphasize that Port Fairy has no other industry capable of employing them.

I regret that the Minister of State Development and Decentralization and the Government have not shown greater initiative in establishing industries not at Port Fairy alone but elsewhere in country districts. This Government has not made one worth-while effort to establish industries in any rural part of Victoria apart from Gippsland. That is something upon which it should be censured. Perhaps I should have taken action earlier in order to bring this matter to the notice of the House, but I was prepared to give the Government time to adopt corrective measures before I launched my attack. The Government should have amended its road transport policy and should have given more

sympathetic consideration to decentralized industries. It is doing too little too late.

I do not want honorable members to misunderstand the position concerning the two companies that have produced cement at Port Fairy. Previously, Governments of all political complexions assisted a company in that area in its efforts to manufacture that commodity. However, the former company, whilst it had available abundant supplies of raw materials and could produce good quality cement, was ill advised in that it purchased second-hand, and in some cases obsolete, machinery. The result was that the company was forced to cease operations. Some two years ago a Labour Government, despite the fact that various Governments had assisted this company to the extent of more than £200,000, was forced to take certain action. The Port Fairy works were sold for £40,000 to the company which has just ceased operations, and the company itself invested £229,000 in the project in order that it might produce cement at a time when that commodity was in short supply. The company increased its output to 700 tons a week, which honorable members will agree is a considerable quantity of cement. During the shortage to which I have referred, the big cement combines were charging exorbitant prices for the product.

I am sure that I have convinced honorable members that the company that has been operating in Port Fairy recently had the capacity to produce cement. The difficulty with which it was faced—I do not blame the Government for this—was that under section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution, as the Minister for Transport is aware, it is possible for interstate road transport operators to carry cement into Victoria and deliver it anywhere free from road hauliers' tax. As a result of this unfair competition, the Port Fairy company was forced to reduce its selling price of cement by £3 a ton. I am not unmindful of the fact that the controlling interests of the cement industry in Australia involved this company, which was endeavouring to expand its operations

in the Western District and Gippsland, in a price-cutting war. The combines undercut prices wherever cement was sold. This policy was achieved in part by transporting cement from Bathurst in New South Wales and from Adelaide. It is significant that cement produced in Adelaide was sold in that city for £14 10s. a ton, yet the sale price in Melbourne was the same.

To my mind, that is indiscriminate competition, and the only objective of the combines could have been to crush the Port Fairy company. Doubtless, similar action will be taken against the Traralgon company in the near future. When that company was obliged to transport its cement to Melbourne by rail, it could not sell all that it produced. After the Minister of Transport granted the Traralgon company—the Gippsland Cement and Lime Company Proprietary Limited—a permit to use road transport, its sales trebled. However, the Port Fairy company was given no similar consideration. I do not know whether that was because the Traralgon company was able to exert greater influence on the Government. I am convinced that every effort was made to destroy the Port Fairy company and now that has been done the Traralgon company will suffer the same fate.

I understand that the Traralgon company has been informed that the road transport permit that it has obtained is not necessarily permanent. When the Port Fairy company first began operating it was paying a freight of 67s. a ton to transport its product to Melbourne. The company repeatedly approached the Government to obtain assistance from the Decentralization Fund, concessions regarding rail freights and a permit to use road transport. Eventually, the Minister of Transport agreed to a reduction of 15s. 4d. a ton in the rail freight from Port Fairy to Melbourne. On the surface, it may appear that the Port Fairy company had received an excellent concession. I point out, however, that at the time the company was facing fierce competition from cement combines. In addition, at about the same time—I presume in an effort to obtain more

freight for the Railway Department—the Minister of Transport agreed to a reduction in the freight charged for cement carried from Albury to Melbourne. The result was that that commodity could be transported by train from Albury to Melbourne for 11s. a ton less than it could be railed from Port Fairy to Melbourne, despite the freight concession of 15s. 4d. granted to the Port Fairy company. That was the extent of the assistance given to the Port Fairy company by the Government!

The company asked for a loan of £100,000 from the Decentralization Fund with a view to modernizing and improving its plant. It was proposed to buy new machinery in Germany. However, the request was not acceded to. The Port Fairy company began operations sooner than it should have because it wished to assist to alleviate the shortage of cement in Victoria at the time. Had it been able to import the requisite machinery from Germany, the company would have been enabled to reduce its cost of production by £3 a ton. I submit that the figures I have quoted indicate that the company put forward a sound proposition to the Government for financial assistance. Because it did not obtain the loan from the Decentralization Fund the company got into financial difficulties, and unless immediate action is taken by the Government to assist other decentralized industries, they will suffer a similar fate. This Parliament cannot stand idly by and watch the population of Victoria congregate in Melbourne. Much has been said about the encouragement of decentralization, but if the Government, through its road transport policy, allows the slow destruction of industries in country towns, rural Victoria will be in a sorry plight.

The Government is insincere in regard to decentralization. The Port Fairy industry is not the first that has been forced to cease operations in a country town, and unless the Government takes action to alleviate the financial burden placed on country industries, by road transport taxation, it will not be

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the last. The policy about which I complain will eventually affect every farmer in Victoria to such an extent that costs of production will rise out of all proportion to the prices obtained for primary products. This is a tragic problem. Furthermore, the Government is responsible indirectly for the trend of rising costs that has been evident during the last two years. I could quote many instances in support of my contention. However, dealing specifically with cement, I point out that the cost of electric power alone amounts to £1 for each ton of cement produced, and the Government's action last November in increasing the charge for electric power by 12½ per cent. did nothing to improve the position. Measures passed in this House have aggravated the inflationary spiral, affecting adversely not only primary producers and decentralized industries, but also the Government itself.

The efforts to assist the Port Fairy cement company were not substantial and, in any case, action was taken too late. Probably, the Minister of Transport will say that the Government was prepared to help the company and provide a certain amount of finance. Recently, I had the honour to accompany my colleague, Mr. Gibbs, M.L.A., in introducing a deputation to the Minister of State Development and Decentralization and, at that stage, I was hopeful that some action would be taken to enable this industry to remain functioning at Port Fairy thereby assisting to keep occupied those unfortunate men who are now unemployed, and to enable the Port Fairy works to continue manufacturing cement which is so urgently needed in western Victoria and elsewhere. There is no reason why the cement works should not continue to function as there are unlimited quantities of raw materials available, and the quality of the cement produced in the past was unsurpassed anywhere else. In fact, officers of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission have paid tribute to the high standard of cement produced at Port Fairy. On Monday, at Port Fairy, drivers of trucks of all types and sizes could be seen endeavouring to obtain

the last ounces of Port Fairy cement—a true indication of the high quality of the local product. The demand for cement in the western part of the State, and elsewhere, will be colossal, and the closing down of the Port Fairy establishment will create “an open go” for interstate cement companies, and for large cement manufacturers in Victoria. Statistics furnished by the secretary of the Portland Harbor Trust revealed that the stock of cement used by the Trust included 300 tons of Arcadia cement, 80 tons of Geelong cement, and 12 tons of South Australian cement. The contractors engaged by the Trust had used only 118 tons of Arcadia cement as compared with 260 tons of South Australian cement, despite the fact that the Port Fairy works were only 50 miles away.

As a result of the company being forced to close down, there will be a shortage of supplies of cement. In fact, already, cement is difficult to obtain in Hamilton. If an artificial shortage of cement is created in western Victoria, the price of cement will rise, and then ample supplies will be available. That has happened on many occasions in the past, but it should not be permitted to occur in this State. The closing down of the Port Fairy cement works is tragic. In support of my claim that the price of cement will rise, I point out that some merchants have already increased the price by 4s. a bag. Honorable members will realize the effect of that on the building industry in western Victoria and elsewhere. Surely this Government which desires to keep costs and everything else down, should seize the opportunity of granting assistance to the Port Fairy cement company.

I was amazed to hear that when Cabinet discussed this matter yesterday, the directors of the company were not interviewed with a view to ascertaining what assistance was needed to maintain the works. During my journey to the city with the Mayor of Port Fairy, I said, “I feel sure that Cabinet will investigate this matter in detail and bring the directors of the company before it seeking a complete statement of fact as to what is wanted, not only for Port

Fairy, but also for Traralgon.” Probably the Government will claim that assistance to the extent of hundreds of thousands of pounds would be required to enable the company to carry on, but that is not so. In fact, had the Government taken action to assist the company twelve months ago, very little expenditure would have been involved. Can this Government, or the State, afford to let both the Port Fairy and Traralgon cement works go out of production? Unfortunately, the fate of the Port Fairy cement works is indicative of the trend throughout western Victoria since the present Government assumed office. It is political humbug for the Premier to say that the Government is prepared to grant financial aid to country industries if, by pursuing its present transport policy, it is going to send them bankrupt, or force them to transfer to Melbourne. Of course, if this House supports that type of policy, I can do nothing about it.

In conclusion, I shall refer to the effect of the Government's transport policy on primary industries. I should like the Minister, and members of the Country party, to note the harsh manner in which the Government's transport policy affects wheat farmers in the Wimmera. In a paper that does not support my party, there recently appeared an article under the heading, “Gestapo on the loose in the wheat belt.”

**The PRESIDENT (Sir Clifden Eager).**—Will the honorable member state briefly the purport of that article?

**The Hon. D. L. ARNOTT.**—This brief article, under its tragic heading, points out the effect of the Government's transport policy on the wheat growers in the Wimmera. The writer says that one would never think that men from northern Victorian wheat belts had laid down their lives to fight for a freedom that is now being taken away from them. As an example of this loss of freedom is cited the requirement contained in the Commercial Goods Vehicles Act whereby primary producers must fill in certain forms indicating the exact tonnages and description of consignments forwarded by road. In filling in these forms, the wheat

farmers are virtually signing their own death warrants. Of course, honorable members will recall that during the debate on the Commercial Goods Vehicles Bill both Mr. Galbally and I pointed out the dangers that would attend the implementation of such legislation. If the wheat farmers do not enter the correct weight of their consignments on the waybill they lose many bushels or bags of wheat. If they record the correct weight they immediately become liable.

The Hon. D. J. WALTERS.—You are not implying that they fake the returns?

The Hon. D. L. ARNOTT.—I am not suggesting that. In any case, the wheat farmers in that area are too honest, although I cannot speak for those in Mr. Walters's constituency. The farmers supply authentic information when filling in the forms. I invite the Minister of Transport to visit the area and justify the existing road tax amongst the primary producers. I am amazed that members who represent country people have not raised this question in the House earlier.

The Hon. D. J. WALTERS.—Is not the matter the subject of litigation at the moment?

The Hon. D. L. ARNOTT.—I could not say.

The Hon. P. T. BYRNES.—It is before the High Court.

The Hon. D. L. ARNOTT.—I shall give an illustration to indicate that, under the present administration of transport, if a person is not caught in one way he can be prosecuted and fined for something else. Approximately twenty wheat farmers from a northern town were waiting to deliver wheat to a silo. They were sitting down some distance from their vehicles, possibly in the heat of the day, having some light refreshment; they had left their keys in the ignition locks of their trucks, and were pounced upon. Proceedings were taken against them and they were fined.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—Is that supposed to be my fault?

The Hon. D. L. ARNOTT.—I do not think even the Minister of Transport would have taken such drastic action. However, I am amazed that the honorable gentleman permits the laws to be administered in such a way as to create hardship to primary producers.

The Hon. J. A. LITTLE.—Do you suggest that there is one law for primary producers and another for other sections of the community?

The Hon. D. L. ARNOTT.—I do not but, as I stated previously, this is a sectional law. It is one of the most ill-considered pieces of legislation that has ever been before Parliament. It should never have been passed, but unfortunately the members of the corner party cast their votes in favour of it. I am sure that to-day they are ashamed of their action.

The Hon. D. J. WALTERS.—Your party wanted to make the tax 3d. a ton-mile.

The Hon. D. L. ARNOTT.—The road policy of the Government, as it is being administered, will not only ruin and force into bankruptcy industries such as the Arcadia cement company but will cast a colossal burden on every primary producer in Victoria. I hope that the House will support the motion I have submitted by expressing its opinion in no uncertain terms.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER (Minister of Transport).—I am pleased, for several reasons, that Mr. Arnott has raised this question. First, it affords me an opportunity to deal with the subject matter of transport, and, secondly, it enables me to refer to the Port Fairy cement company. I am quite sure that the honorable member has been badly informed concerning the cement company, and when I unfold the whole story he will be inclined to wish that he had never mentioned the subject. I, too, have received a considerable amount of misleading information regarding this matter. It is only after considerable investigation of all the files that the truth can be obtained. I am sure that if Mr. Arnott had had access to those files he would not have submitted this motion.

The Hon. D. L. ARNOTT.—That does not alleviate the position of the employees at Port Fairy.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—The original purpose of the Port Fairy cement company was to supply cement in the Western District. When the first money was subscribed to that company I was Minister of Housing and Minister of Decentralization in the Hollway Government. It might have been a grave mistake on my part, but I strongly advocated decentralization of the cement industry. At the time there was a great shortage of cement, both in Victoria and in other States. We were in fact importing cement at high prices and granting subsidies in order that it might be sold at the level of the local product. Members will probably recall that approximately £2,000,000 was appropriated in order that the prices of raw materials from overseas might be brought down to the level of those for the local articles. To overcome some of that expenditure and also to assist the decentralization of the cement industry, the Hollway Government supported the operation of the cement company at Port Fairy. Moreover, there was then a shortage of black coal, and we were anxious to foster this particular company which proposed to use brown coal. Although engineers held divided opinions whether brown coal could be used in the manufacture of cement, the Government of the day chose to take a risk and make the experiment. However, I repeat that the proposal we envisaged was that the company should supply cement to the Western District. It was never considered that it would endeavour to by-pass Geelong—where there is a cement undertaking—and bring the commodity to Melbourne. By doing so, the distance over which the cement is carried is doubled, and so the position is made much more difficult.

The company was able to truck cement by road within a 50-mile radius of its works without having to obtain any permit. However, even on that basis it has not succeeded in competing successfully in the Western District. As Mr. Arnott has correctly stated, interstate operators have brought cement 300 miles from Adelaide and have paid the road charges within Victoria—at least if they have not paid them, they are still liable for them—and from Sydney—the cheapest

freight rate for cement from Sydney to Melbourne is more than £6 a ton—yet the company has been unable to compete with those operators within a distance of 50 miles of the factory.

The Hon. PAUL JONES.—What has been the actual loss on the Port Fairy cement company?

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I shall come to that matter later; it is a very meaty question. Even the Portland Harbor Trust has seen fit, for a number of reasons, to use other cement. I do not wish to do the company any harm, but suffice to say the price is not the only reason. I would agree with Mr. Arnott that cement has been hauled for 300 miles, by road or rail, into the territory served by the Port Fairy cement company and operators have been able to compete right in the territory of the undertaking. That has not been due to the transport policy. In fact, the disadvantages of the road transport system, whatever they are, must have operated very much more against its competitors than against the company itself.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—It was a knock-out blow by the monopolists against a small firm.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—Although there may be some truth in that argument, I am not prepared to debate it because I am not sufficiently informed as to whether the Geelong company and other companies did make a "drive" against the Port Fairy cement company.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—That is the whole point.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—Mr. Arnott has not made any suggestion that any cartel was involved; therefore, I do not propose to answer an attack that has not been made. Let me now deal with the question of the actual freight rate of this company, which desired to enter a territory in respect of which neither the Hollway Government nor the Cain Administration financed it. It was not intended originally that the Port Fairy cement company should operate out of the Western District.

The Hon. D. L. ARNOTT.—Why should other companies be permitted to go into the territory of the company?

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I do not contend that they should go into the Western District, but their activities have not been restricted in any way. All I am saying is that the Port Fairy cement company was established to operate in that particular territory.

The Hon. D. L. ARNOTT.—It was feared that the merchants would have their supplies cut off.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—Let us not argue that point. Mr. Arnott did not raise that question when he was speaking, and I do not propose to deal with it.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—I shall deal with that aspect.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—Another member can answer Mr. Galbally.

**The PRESIDENT (Sir Clifden Eager).**—I would point out that the subject of the debate is clearly defined in Mr. Arnott's motion, which refers to "the disastrous policy of the Government in relation to road transport and decentralization culminating in the closing of the Arcadia cement company's works at Port Fairy." It is limited to Government action or inaction.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I shall deal with the allegation that the Port Fairy company has been unfairly treated. The ordinary freight rate for the carriage of cement from that centre to Melbourne by rail was 72s. 10d. a ton. Representatives of the company saw me about the matter and as a result the freight rate was reduced to 67s. 4d. a ton. They then made another application for consideration, and were granted a further reduction of 15s. 4d. a ton from the Decentralization Fund. It might help members to understand what the Government is doing if I explain the procedure. Purely as a matter of Government policy, if a decentralized industry requires a special rail freight rate on merchandise either to or from its works, the rate is reduced to the lowest possible cost. In other words, it is

reduced to the stage where there is no margin at all for the railways. If further assistance is required, the advantages and disadvantages of the industry are analysed and a further grant may be made from the Decentralization Fund. In the case of the Port Fairy cement company the Government has been carrying cement at cost so far as the railways are concerned and providing the company with a further sum of money from the Decentralization Fund. Some thousands of pounds have been conceded to the company in this way.

I shall now refer to the transport policy of the Government. I direct the attention of Mr. Arnott to the fact that last year Victoria spent £21,000,000 on maintaining and reconstructing roads. The total sum collected under this so called iniquitous tax last year was approximately £1,000,000. The contribution of the road hauliers, therefore, was about 5 per cent. of the total expenditure on our roads. It is so small that if there can be any attack it ought to be on the ground that the tax is not worth collecting! When the difficulties that are now being considered by the High Court are overcome, we will collect approximately £1,500,000 a year. I would remind Mr. Arnott that the Minister of Transport in the Government he supported recommended a charge of 1½d. or 2d. a ton-mile as compared with the one-third of 1d. a ton-mile at present operating. If the existing rate is iniquitous, the charge proposed by the Labour Government must have been outrageous. The legislation of that Administration was declared invalid, and I think that was unfortunate. It is true that wheat farmers do take wheat to railway stations, because the railways carry that commodity very cheaply and also transport it to silos and to our ports. According to my information, the average haul from a wheat farm to a station is 12 miles, and on the basis of a charge of one-third of a 1d. a ton-mile the rate is something like 3d. a ton. I am not sure how many bags of wheat there are to a ton.

The Hon. D. J. WALTERS.—There are twelve bags to the ton.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—The farmers are paid about £20 a ton for their wheat. So, the road tax on a product worth £20 is only 3d. Wheat farmers enjoy a very low rate of freight for the carriage of their product on the railways. Indeed, that commodity is freighted by the Department below cost. The saving thus effected by farmers far exceeds the tax they have to pay for transporting wheat by road from their farms to the railhead. I wish to point out that Ministers of Transport who have preceded me have been faced with the same difficulty as that with which I am confronted, namely, that the Government lacks certain taxing powers. It cannot charge a registration fee on interstate hauliers nor can it impose sales tax on tires or petrol; those avenues of taxation are reserved for the Commonwealth. It cannot levy a forward charge nor can it make a fixed charge. It can merely impose a tax which is considered to represent fair wear and tear on the roads. Further, we cannot discriminate between interstate and intra-state traffic. At the last conference of Transport Ministers, which the Commonwealth Minister for Shipping and Transport attended, all present—with me dissenting in part—voted in favour of the holding of a referendum on the question whether the States should impose a charge for road construction.

In passing, I might say that the present tax is for road maintenance only. The proposal was to make the charge applicable to hauliers who are cutting up the roads, and I emphasize that hauliers means everyone. Investigations clearly show that road repair costs are in the region of 2d. a ton-mile. Moreover, it costs the Railway Department about 2d. a ton-mile to maintain tracks, signals and other devices. Accordingly, no unfair burden is being placed upon road hauliers generally in asking them to pay one-third of 1d. a ton-mile road tax. When exemptions are taken into consideration the hauliers contribute from £1,500,000 to £2,000,000 in road tax out of a total revenue in the region of £20,000,000. I remind Mr. Arnott that if a road permit were granted to one organization engaged in a particular trade, it would be imprac-

ticable to deny a similar privilege to other organizations. I do not believe there is a member of this House who would claim that a responsible Minister should grant to firm "A" operating in town "X" a concession that he was not prepared to extend to another firm in the same, or a different, district.

At present, the Geelong cement company is paying to the State Government £600,000 annually in rail freights. If the Government removes from the Port Fairy company the obligation to have its cement carried by rail, a similar condition should obtain with respect to the Geelong cement works, and vice versa. Such a state of affairs would mean a loss of £400,000, because two-thirds of the railways' costs comprise overhead and the remaining one-third comprises haulage. When this matter was first raised I said it would be better for the State to carry the Port Fairy cement on the railways for nothing rather than to depart from Government policy. In 1955 I advocated a substantial reduction in railway freights on some commodities and more road freedom, and I shall now narrate what Mr. Galbally had to say in that regard. The *Hansard* record of 1st December, 1955, page 2313, reports Mr. Galbally as having said—

Some months ago the Minister announced that there would be a policy of the open road in this State. The railways would have to get along as well as possible in competition with road services and a tax of 1d. a ton-mile would be imposed on all traffic using the highways. Members of the Labour party quickly perceived that this would not only spell ruin to the railways, but also it would imperil the natural economy by raising the price of primary products—wool, wheat and livestock—thereby increasing the cost of living . . . . As a result, the transport policy of the Government, which, at that time, represented the political philosophy of the Minister of Transport—"Open road, open go"—was lost.

Quite clearly, the policy of the Labour party has been to preserve the railways by imposing certain restrictions. I am not arguing that that policy is wrong. The House decided that there should be control of the permit system and that the railways should be maintained for the carriage of primary products at low freight rates. I am administering that policy of the

Parliament. Having discussed transport, I now intend to deal with the question of the Arcadia cement company. When that organization was founded in 1946, the Government of the day commenced lending it money. I do not think members would wish me to bore them with particulars of each application.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—Are you referring to the Western cement company?

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I am speaking of the Port Fairy undertaking. The two organizations are connected.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—I hope you will be able to prove it.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I will. The Western cement company received from Governments the total sum of £202,000. Some of that money was provided by the Hollway Administration and some by Governments with which the Labour party was associated.

The Hon. WILLIAM MACAULAY.—Are you referring to grants or loans?

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I am speaking of loans although they ultimately became grants or bad debts. Loans amounted to £202,000. I understand that £7,200 has been repaid and that there is a bad debt of £194,000, which may be regarded as a grant. I might mention that creditors lost about £50,000 as well.

The Hon. D. L. ARNOTT.—Will you prove that that organization is associated with the present company?

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—Yes.

The Hon. PAUL JONES.—Did the Government have any security for the loans it advanced?

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—It had the security of the plant. When Mr. Cain was Premier he became tired of the financial entanglements of the company and wisely arranged for another organization to purchase the plant for the sum of £40,000.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—What is the connexion between the old company and the new?

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—The first company lost £200,000. I will now state what the new company cost and the extent of the Government's loss.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—Earlier you said it was the same company.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I said nothing of the sort.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—Are you now saying that it is the same company?

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I say it is not the same company but it is using the same plant as the first company and is operating on the same site.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—It bought the plant?

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—Yes, and some of the management is still the same.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—You mean that some of the old employees are still there?

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I think it goes further than that. My belief is that the same manager is there, but I am unable to obtain verification at the moment. I emphasize that I did not receive notice of the proposal to launch an adjournment motion until 4.30 p.m. to-day.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—You realize that it is a libel on the new company to say that it owed so much money?

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—If I had made any such statement it would have been gross libel. The old company lost £194,000 of the State's money and the creditors lost a sum of £50,000. I compliment Mr. Cain on his decision when he was Premier to sell the business and plant to another organization for £40,000.

The Hon. D. L. ARNOTT.—That is where your story should have commenced. You are grossly unfair.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I am submitting my case in my own way. I repeat that Mr. Cain wisely sold out for £40,000 and was fairly lucky because over a period he obtained the sum of £30,000 which offset to some extent the loss of approximately £200,000. He obtained a guarantee from a company in Sydney for £10,000. That sum of money is overdue and I make no further comment concerning the matter lest

difficulty should be caused. The new company was subsidized and assisted in various ways and when it became apparent that the organization was about to close down we adopted Mr. Arnott's suggestion and summoned the manager to Melbourne so that we could ascertain the character of his proposals. I have before me a statement signed by that gentleman.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—Have you seen a letter that was addressed by the company to the Minister of State Development and Decentralization on the 26th of this month?

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—Yes.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—In that communication it is stated—

**The PRESIDENT (Sir Clifden Eager).**—The Minister of Transport has indicated that he has seen the letter. If it is relevant to his argument he may refer to it. Alternatively, Mr. Galbally may do so later.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—The manager complained about the plant.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—He said that in 1954 he was asked to take over the plant after the previous company had failed.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—There had been one or two failures which had resulted in the Government losing approximately £200,000. I should like to read what he said at the last interview on the 11th of this month—

Notwithstanding the fact that Port Fairy was now working to full capacity, producing 3,200 tons per month which at present was being sold without difficulty, the price of realization on the competitive market was such as to involve the company in a loss on every ton of cement sold, because the type of plant in use at Port Fairy was too expensive to operate, and it was estimated that the amount of subsidy which Port Fairy works had received from Traralgon to cover operating loss and improvement of plant over the last two and a half years was a sum of not less than £100,000.

I will show another connexion. The company which is now called the Gippsland cement company—

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—Was it ever called anything else?

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—It is associated with a company in Traralgon known as Gippsland Industries Limited. That organization has been assisted to the extent of £134,000 in the last two years and a half. Of that sum £100,000 has been lent to the Port Fairy cement company. I revert now to the following passage from the report of the interview with the managing director of the company:—

Dr. Gottlieb indicated that at this stage he could see no prospects of Port Fairy being operated at a profit unless an amount of £100,000 could be found for new equipment and thus carry out the original plan of operations that the company had in mind when Port Fairy was taken over and which has been sabotaged because of the competition of interstate cement and its consequences.

The amounts I have mentioned total more than £400,000. Dr. Gottlieb emphasized that the company's inability to carry on at Port Fairy was not due entirely to interstate competition, which he felt confident it could at all times meet, but was the result of a combination of factors which had enabled some merchants to supply consumers a certain amount of Fyansford cement with imported cement and thus average the price. Dr. Gottlieb stated that he was more than ever reluctant to reach the conclusion that the Port Fairy plant must cease to operate but, having regard to all the circumstances, he felt that the Port Fairy proposition was hopeless. In fact, he did not feel justified in making any representations for further financial assistance.

Dr. Gottlieb said that in order to continue production at Port Fairy he would require, in addition to the £200,000 lost by the old company and the £100,000 that has been transferred from Geelong, a further sum of £160,000 in order to pay his creditors in full. No doubt the Shell company, which is owed £82,000, would support the application. Dr. Gottlieb would need another £100,000 for what he terms plant reconstruction, and a guaranteed market at a guaranteed price which would show a reasonable profit. Dr. Gottlieb would still not be out of his difficulties,

because he would want to move some of the plant to Gippsland. A further amount of £150,000 would be required towards the installation of a second kiln at the Gippsland works. The proposition boils down to this: A sum of £200,000 was lost by the first company; £100,000 went through the "back door" at Traralgon; and a further sum of £410,000 is required, making a total amount of approximately £700,000, apart from the money that has been lost by creditors and shareholders.

I am sure Mr. Arnott was not familiar with all these figures, otherwise he would not have raised the subject. I agree that it is a responsibility of the Government to foster secondary industries, but there must be a limit—Mr. Cain has agreed—to the extent to which Governments throw away taxpayers' money in order to placate some particular pressure in some particular area. I think an invitation to pour another £400,000 after £300,000 that has already "gone down the drain" would be in that category.

The Hon. D. L. ARNOTT.—The Minister of Transport is still referring to the £300,000. I think that is most unfair. The honorable gentleman has failed to prove that there is any association between the present company and the old company.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I am not trying to prove that, nor do I propose to do so. All I am saying is that at those works in Port Fairy, which have been operated under various managements, a colossal sum of money has been lost, including capital, Government loan and creditors' money. Now, the managing director is saying that the position is hopeless; that he does not feel justified in asking for further financial assistance, but that if he is to continue he would like a contribution of £400,000. It appears to be quite certain, in view of the record of the plant and in all the circumstances, that, if the Government advances Dr. Gottlieb £400,000, that sum also would go down the drain. I do not believe the Government would be justified in risking the loss of such

a sum in this arena. The Government and I regret that this particular industry has failed. I had a hand in starting it and should have liked it to be a success. Every Government has helped it in some way, but there must be a limit to the financial assistance extended. I realize that Mr. Arnott represents the territory and is bound to advance the best possible case for the men involved, who must seek other avenues of employment, but on behalf of the Government I must say I consider that enough finance has been lost in the project and that we are not justified in losing any more of the people's money.

*The sitting was suspended at 6.23 p.m. until 7.50 p.m.*

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY (Melbourne North Province).—This is not a pretty story. It is a story which would have made tough American business men, bred in the days before the Sherman anti-trust laws, shudder and go pale on hearing of such desperate business methods. Let us get the record straight. The company with which we are dealing here is Gippsland Industries Limited, which was formed in 1953 for the purpose of making cement by using cheap fuel—brown coal. It was advised by all the experts that this could not be done, that there was only one way of making cement, and that either oil or imported black coal must be used. However, the company went ahead and established the industry in Traralgon. So successful was it that in 1954, the then Premier, Mr. Cain, induced it to go to Port Fairy and, for the sum of £30,000, take over what was left of a cement company, financed by the State, which had been operating there for many years. The Traralgon company started to produce cement at Port Fairy.

I do not suggest for one moment that it can be put right by the loan or grant of £400,000 or £800,000, or even £1,000,000, and I do not assert that the present Government or any other Government should advance that sum of money; that is not our argument. While we have the ineptitude of the Government and its "Minister of

Monopoly"—as Sir Arthur Warner, in the words he spoke before dinner, showed himself to be—one could never hope to see this company operating successfully in Victoria. Our criticism of the Government is that, having sought the establishment of a cement works at Port Fairy as far back as 1947 or 1948—the Minister of Transport has stated that he asked the company to go there—and having encouraged and financed this decentralized industry, it then stands by and sees the company clubbed to death by the most powerful monopoly in the Commonwealth—Australian Cement Limited.

I intend to prove my assertion. This company began producing cement at Port Fairy, the idea being that the market in the Western District would be available and would take the locally produced article. As soon as cement was becoming available from this source, Australian Cement Limited flooded the local suppliers with its product; they could not stock any more. When the local company advertised cement at 12s. 3d. a bag, Australian Cement Limited announced that its product would cost 12s. Cement was difficult to get in those days and, as the Minister of Transport has cogently pointed out, subsidized cement was being imported from all over the world. Although cement was scarce in most parts of Victoria, Australian Cement Limited flooded the Western District with it.

There was then no local market available for the cement of the Port Fairy company, so it decided to send its product to Melbourne. There it met the cabal—a group of nineteen merchants in Melbourne that handles all the cement supplies. In its innocence, the Port Fairy firm decided that it would market its cement in Melbourne, but the Cement Distributors conference—a ring headed by Mr. W. B. McCann, a merchant in the city and chairman of directors of Australian Cement limited—would not handle it. Was it any wonder that the company lost money?

That is not the end of the story. The words I am uttering are no exaggeration of the position. In the course of his

address to the annual meeting of shareholders of Australian Cement Limited in February of this year, Mr. McCann stated—

Our endeavour has always been to provide for the entire cement requirements of Victoria.

What chance had the Port Fairy company against this large monopoly which, I point out, had been the subject of a great deal of attention from Governments just a few years ago when the production of cement was a national problem? That was when companies were being urged to produce more cement, but honorable members will recollect that at that time cement was under price control and it was not financially attractive for manufacturers to increase production. Sir Arthur Warner has told the House some of the story. From where did the cement that was sold in the Western District come? It was hauled from places as far away as Adelaide in order that the cement ring might defeat the operations of the local Port Fairy company. The combination consists of a Victorian company, Australian Cement Limited; a South Australian company, Adelaide Cement Company; and a New South Wales company, Kandos Cement Company Limited. Aided by the decision of the Privy Council in the road transport case the ring was able to force the sale of its cement interstate. If one wished to buy cement in Melbourne one was offered so much Victorian cement and the order was completed with either New South Wales or Adelaide cement.

The Hon. J. A. LITTLE.—And in Adelaide customers were forced to buy Melbourne cement.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—Exactly. One can count on the fingers of one hand the number of cement companies operating in Australia. The criticism we make of the Government is that it has failed to protect a local industry which came forward with a programme that the big companies said could not be achieved so far as the production of cement was concerned.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—Do you not think the time to do that was when Mr. Cain sold the company?

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—The difficulty with the Minister of Transport is that he has come into the House without knowing whether I am referring to the Gippsland company or the Port Fairy firm.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—You do not make yourself very clear.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—I am endeavouring to do so, and I fear that the Minister did not.

**The PRESIDENT (Sir Clifden Eager).**—I suggest that Mr. Galbally should address the Chair.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—I am sorry, Mr. President. The trouble with the Minister of Transport is that he puts me off the scent. So far as the Gippsland industry is concerned, some rather nasty aspersions were cast, perhaps quite unwittingly, by the honorable gentleman. So far as I know, the Gippsland company was not in existence prior to 1953 and did not receive a penny of the £200,000 or whatever the sum is that the Minister repeatedly refers to. I met one of the directors of the Gippsland company today, and I feel that I owe a duty to him to explain to the House what he told me. He stated that prior to 1953 Port Fairy was quite unknown to him and his associates. They decided to start operations in that town in response to an invitation by the Government of the day. The Government said, in effect, that it had a "show" at Port Fairy which had gone broke and which could be purchased for £20,000 or £30,000. The Gippsland people went down there like lambs to the slaughter. What hope did they have? What chance would any industry have had of making a success of a project, starting off in circumstances similar to those I have outlined?

The real criticism of the Government is the supine attitude it has adopted to a young industry which, on reflection I suggest, will be found to be vital to the security of Victoria. Many years ago, Victorian people were so disturbed about the intermittent supplies of black coal available from New South Wales due to shipping and other troubles, that the Government of the day set up the State

Electricity Commission in order to develop the generation of electricity from brown coal at Yallourn. The reasons for that decision are set out in the records of the debates in Parliament at the time and the public discussions of the day. Everybody in Victoria knows how successful that experiment has been. The production of cement is also vital to our economy and we can never have regular, assured supplies whilst its manufacture is dependent on the supply of New South Wales black coal. Everybody knows that coastal shipping in Australia is becoming more and more difficult.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I wonder why?

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—The honorable gentleman who has interjected is the Minister of Transport. I suggest that he might examine that position some time and then tell us why. I contend that it is vital to our economy to encourage the production of cement by the use of brown coal. Figures I shall quote to the House reveal that this commodity can be manufactured more cheaply by the use of that fuel than by any other method. The capital cost of the production of 1 ton of cement under the conventional method of using black coal is £22, whereas if the new method is used and brown coal adopted as the fuel, 1 ton of cement can be manufactured for less than £8. All honorable members are aware how costly it is to build a cement manufacturing project. Sir Arthur Warner has spoken of a cost of £400,000; the actual figure, I understand, runs into some millions. I would go so far as to say that if this Government does not intend to curb the monopoly practices of Australian Cement Limited and its associated companies, so as to allow other competitors into the field, then it should do what its predecessors found necessary to do in this State years ago, namely, set up its own plant in the Latrobe Valley to manufacture cement, using raw brown coal. That would make Victoria completely independent of New South Wales in the production of cement and provide competition for Australian Cement Limited. To provide competition for a monopoly interest in another field some

years ago, a Government found it necessary to set up Trans-Australia Airlines to compete with Australian National Airways. We all know how successful that has been.

The Hon. PAUL JONES.—Would that mean a Government monopoly?

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—Mr. Paul Jones has not been listening to my remarks. Trans-Australia Airlines offers probably some of the best air services in the world. No group of people in Australia would be in possession of the necessary capital to establish a cement industry in Victoria large enough to compete effectively with Australian Cement Limited. Everybody knows that the cement combine would quickly run any small competitor out of business.

This Government boasts of a Minister of State Development and Decentralization, but let us examine its record in that regard. What is happening to industries in this State that the Premier has told the world about? Even at this very moment there is a mission of business men in America endeavouring to entice industry to Victoria. Americans who intend to establish industries in our State will not be safe unless they come armed to the teeth. They should bring a good Chicago bodyguard with them in order to "shoot their way" through established Victorian industries. That would be their only hope of providing any competition here. Let us examine what has happened to the industries in the country in the last twelve months.

The Hon. WILLIAM MACAULAY.—Do you think the Gippsland industry will be able to carry on at Traralgon?

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—I was hoping that Mr. MacAulay would ask that question. I have a great respect for his integrity, and I am sure that in his heart he cannot believe that Australian Cement Limited will not go a step further and knock out the industry at Traralgon. At present, the job is only half done so far as the cement combine is concerned. Figures that I have obtained from our Decentralization Division reveal a sorry picture in

relation to country industries. During the last twelve months the Australian Knitting Mills ceased operating a plant at Hamilton.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—They closed down works in Melbourne also.

Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—G. N. Raymond Limited, cardboard box manufacturers, closed their Colac plant. They did not close their works in Melbourne.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—That is true.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—Others whose activities have ended include D. A. Boag, a shirt manufacturer, of Yea; C. J. Wilson, a clothing manufacturer, who had plants in Ballarat, Swan Hill, Kerang and Lake Boga; Samel Implements—a plant at Lismore; and two small engineering works at Ballarat. Briars Limited, the manufacturers of Briar heaters, closed their Warrnambool plant. In the last few months, we have seen also the tendency of the Ford Motor Company to transfer plant from Geelong. That reveals a "great" decentralization programme; a sorry picture for the State of Victoria. Justice, fair play, honesty and decency in business demands that the Government should intervene and protect a small industry which is working for the benefit of Victoria and for its safety and security. I feel that if the Minister of Transport gave this problem his customary attention he would come to the same conclusion as I have. However, I know that he has not been able to consider it because he is so troubled with internal convulsions in his party, with difficulties in connexion with the railways, and so on. Otherwise, I am sure that he would be voicing the same opinions as I have expressed. I realize that he is an apostle of free enterprise and would be horrified at the thought of a big combine crushing out a small local industry.

I have much pleasure in supporting the remarks of my colleague, Mr. Arnott. He knows what the establishment of this industry has meant to Port Fairy. He also knows the difficulties with which the undertaking has been confronted after Australian Cement

Limited decided that there was only a double bed available and that there was not room in it for a little fellow as well as themselves. They decided to exclude the little fellow.

The House divided on the motion for the adjournment of the House (Sir Clifden Eager in the chair)—

|              |    |
|--------------|----|
| Ayes .. .. . | 13 |
| Noes .. .. . | 16 |
|              | —  |

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Majority against the motion .. .. . | 3 |
|-------------------------------------|---|

#### AYES.

|                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| Mr. Arnott     | Mr. Little  |
| Mr. Brennan    | Mr. Rawson  |
| Mr. Ferguson   | Mr. Smith   |
| Mr. Galbally   | Mr. Thomas  |
| Mr. Jones      | Mr. Tilley. |
| (Ballarat)     | Tellers:    |
| Mr. Jones      | Mr. Bailey  |
| (Doutta Galla) | Mr. Machin. |

#### NOES.

|               |                    |
|---------------|--------------------|
| Mr. Bridgford | Mr. Mansell        |
| Mr. Cameron   | Mr. Swinburne      |
| Mr. Chandler  | Mr. Thompson       |
| Mr. Dickie    | Mr. Walters        |
| Mr. Fulton    | Sir Arthur Warner. |
| Mr. Gawith    |                    |
| Mr. McArthur  | Tellers:           |
| Mr. MacAulay  | Mr. Bradbury       |
| Mr. Mack      | Mr. Grigg.         |

### GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.

#### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

The debate (adjourned from April 16) on the motion of the Hon. V. O. Dickie (Ballarat Province) for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech was resumed.

**The Hon. D. P. J. FERGUSON** (South-Western Province).—Members are afforded by this discussion an opportunity to survey the activities of the Government and touch upon the broad bases of its attitude on a wide range of matters. Already, speakers have expressed themselves in no uncertain manner on a number of subjects, showing that the Government has neglected to carry out its proper responsibilities to the electors as a whole. Mr. Galbally very severely and rightly castigated the Government for its complete lack of consideration over a highly contentious question which has

exercised the minds of a large section of the community and has been the cause of great hardship. I refer to the neglect of the Government to take cognizance of the exorbitant rates of interest charged by hire-purchase companies. The Government seems to be quite indifferent to the effects that this state of affairs is having upon the community, particularly at a time when we are trying to develop our country with the aid of immigrants. These have arrived from overseas in very large numbers and many of them have been striving to establish themselves in homes of their own. In their efforts in that direction they have been faced with all the unsavoury elements that have gone hand in hand with the infliction of exorbitant rates of interest. Yet the Government has refused point-blank to accept the responsibility of taking any action.

Mr. Byrnes, in the course of his address, passed some words of censure upon the Government for its neglect to pay due consideration to the development of country interests and the maintenance of activities already established in various parts of the country. Mr. Swinburne expressed himself in no uncertain manner respecting the attitude of the Government to housing, while Mr. Slater spoke at length on the vexed question of Debney's paddock. To-night Mr. Arnott also voiced strong views in criticism of the Government because of its failure to do anything to assist in the maintenance of decentralized industry.

I propose to direct attention to matters of great concern arising in my own electorate. First I intend to place before the House some facts ascertained regarding the almost scandalous position that has arisen in Geelong over the Old Folk's Home there. This project was first decided upon in 1945 when, at a public meeting, residents of the district agreed unanimously that there should be provision for a home for old people in Geelong. Subscription lists were circulated and the public responded most generously. However, the committee which was elected under the aegis of the Hospitals

and Charities Commission as then constituted was carried away with enthusiasm, and the sum of £138,000 was spent merely on the provision of a boiler house associated with an old building. This worth-while scheme has since become, in the minds of a large number of people interested, virtually a white elephant.

As late as June, 1953, at a time coincident with a change in the constitution of the Hospitals and Charities Commission, it became evident that the undertaking as it was then planned could not be carried out. That was due very largely to the over-ambitious nature of the original scheme. The Commission then intimated its opinion that the original project was out of proportion to what was really required. In that year the Minister of Health visited Geelong with members of the Commission and inspected the work accomplished. It was agreed that the plans as they then stood should be cancelled and new plans drafted. This left just the boiler house, and it was then proposed that the main building generally should take a different form—that there should be a type of construction involving a much lower estimated cost. It was considered by the new Commission that the proposed modified buildings would be more suitable for the care and maintenance of the aged.

Consequently, architects were instructed to proceed with amended plans. It was at that stage proposed by the Cain Government that a sum of £300,000, as a rough estimate, would be made available when the new plans were ready. These were not ready, however, until July 1955. After long delay, work was resumed and construction was carried out on a cafeteria and an administration block. As yet, no start has been made upon the accommodation block. The new work was considered by the Commission as project No. 2.

Great difficulty arose when the matter was submitted for tender. The lowest tender for the completed project amounted to £659,000. The people generally had felt that, once the new

plans were drawn up, the Government—particularly in the light of disastrous experience—would be fully prepared to say, "This is the green light that we are giving and we will make available accommodation at the home as soon as possible." The contract was let. Work is now proceeding but at almost a snail's pace. There are only about 30 persons engaged on the job, and that is all the Government is doing in fulfilment of the promise the Liberal party made during the last election campaign that it would do so much for the Old Folk's Home, Geelong. It was then said that if returned to power, that party would see to it that the work was carried forward to its completion. Now, after considerable backing and filling, the Government has slowed the work down and has said, "You can proceed only on the basis of such finance as we are prepared to provide." In 1955-56 the Government allocated a paltry £40,000 for this work. It was proposed that from 1956-57 to 1958-59 £148,000 would be provided in each year. Therefore, part two of the project will not be completed until 1959, and even then accommodation will be available for only 92 persons. Up to date £327,000 has been expended on the job.

The Hon. J. A. LITTLE.—Does that include the cost of the boiler house?

The Hon. D. P. J. FERGUSON.—Yes. The cost of the boiler house, including architects' fees, was £138,000. A total of approximately £600,000 will be spent to provide accommodation for 92 persons. Doubtless, at some time in the future the third part of the project will be started and that section will not require service or administrative blocks, and additional accommodation will be available. The Government has boasted about what it will do on this project, but the fact remains that less than 30 men are employed on it whilst over 100 building tradesmen are out of work in Geelong. The contractors are prepared to speed up the work if the Government will make more money available. In March of this year the Premier stated that the Government would move to salvage the mess in which the Geelong Old Folk's Home project had been left.

The Hon. E. P. CAMERON.—That is the first move for a long time.

The Hon. D. P. J. FERGUSON.—I disagree with the Minister of Health. The first move took place when the Labour Government was in office and an inspection was made of the site in 1953. The plans were then amended. That was an attempt at something constructive.

The Hon. E. P. CAMERON.—To do something constructive with the skeleton that was there.

The Hon. D. P. J. FERGUSON.—The objective was to put some flesh on the bones of the skeleton. Despite the Premier's statement that he would rectify the position, the old people of Geelong will not be accommodated at the Old Folk's Home until 1959. How can the Government claim that it is doing so much to assist the aged?

The Hon. E. P. CAMERON.—It has done quite a bit.

The Hon. D. P. J. FERGUSON.—It could do much more. I suggest that the Minister of Health should visit Geelong and call a meeting of the committee that is associated with the Old Folk's Home and the committee of the Geelong hospital; the interested public should be invited. The purpose should be to review the situation with a view to expediting the work and making accommodation available for the old people of the district. Until such time as action along those lines is taken the Government, and the Minister of Health in particular, should remain silent, because they will not be able to claim that they are sincere in attempting to provide accommodation for old people. I cannot understand why the architects were permitted to prepare such elaborate plans.

The Hon. E. P. CAMERON.—I cannot understand why the project was at a standstill for so long.

The Hon. D. P. J. FERGUSON.—It would have been at a standstill for a much longer period had not the Labour Government intervened.

The Hon. J. A. LITTLE.—Mr. Barry.

The Hon. D. P. J. FERGUSON.—A sum of £20,000 has been spent on concrete yards and roadways, which seems to me to be out of all proportion to what is required.

The Hon. E. P. CAMERON.—Like the boiler house.

The Hon. D. P. J. FERGUSON.—It was the intention of the Labour Government to use the boiler house to provide a community laundry. The proposal was that the laundry should service both the Old Folk's Home and the district hospital. The position now is that the committee of the Geelong and District Hospital is asking for approval to spend more than £100,000 on the construction of a new boiler house at the hospital, yet there is one ready to be used at the Old Folk's Home and little additional expenditure would be involved.

The Hon. J. A. LITTLE.—The laundry could be used to wash the dirty linen of the Queensland Labour party.

The Hon. D. P. J. FERGUSON.—Perhaps it could be used to wash those dogs of the honorable member and his dog party. The Old Folk's Home at Geelong is a humanitarian project, but the Government is merely trying to use it for political gain. The Minister of Health should visit Geelong, inspect the project and co-operate with the members of the two committees to which I have referred. I do not blame anyone in particular, but there is a lack of co-ordination and understanding in the construction of this amenity. Surely the plans could have been streamlined and costs reduced considerably. The old folk who will eventually live at the home do not want accommodation equivalent to that provided at the Savoy Hotel. They merely desire adequate facilities. If the Government agrees with the cost estimated by the architects—which I think is fantastic—it has an obligation to appropriate a larger sum of money each year than it has in the past. The job has been under construction far too long already. I know that my colleague, the Minister of Forests, will agree with me when I say that it is not fair to tell the old people of

Geelong, "You will have to wait until 1959 before any accommodation is made available to you."

The Hon. E. P. CAMERON.—Even though it was fair to leave the boiler house on its own for two years.

The Hon. D. P. J. FERGUSON.—That interjection illustrates the Minister's lack of knowledge of the subject. When the Minister of Health in the previous Labour Government visited the site in 1953, on the advice of Dr. Lindell he authorized the Hospitals and Charities Commission to instruct the architects to draw up new plans. The architects took from July 1953 to June 1955 to complete those plans, and that is the explanation of the delay of two years. It is only political capital for the Minister of Health to say to the old people of Geelong, "You cannot have accommodation until 1959 because there was a delay of two years in the conversion of the original project to that which is now envisaged." The Minister will not gain any plaudits for adopting that attitude.

My interest is to ensure that work on the project is accelerated. The contractor is willing to employ more tradesmen, and they are readily available. The Government may claim that it has insufficient money to allocate more to this undertaking, but I would point out that it had no difficulty in finding money to construct stadiums for the Olympic Games—not that I disagree with that action. I reiterate that the Minister should visit Geelong, confer with the interested committees, and then call a public meeting with a view to expediting the work.

For many years, the residents of the St. Leonards and Indented Heads districts have been agitating for extensions to the water supply system. The Bellarine peninsula is an area with great possibilities, both residential and from the point of view of tourist development. In 1927, the late Mr. Catanach, then chairman of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, ordered a survey of the area, following which the local residents were promised that a water supply would be provided. Since then, the Bellarine Shire Council, and various

other bodies, have participated in deputations to the Commission for the improvement of the water supply. However, there appears to be great reluctance on the part of the Commission to consider seriously the needs of this growing district.

The local shire council and various progress associations discussed the matter with the local engineer, who had had considerable experience in connexion with water systems in Queensland, and he drew up what was known as the Dalimore plan, which was submitted to the Commission. The estimated cost of the work according to this plan was approximately £43,000. An approach was made to the Commission for work to be proceeded with, but this proved unsuccessful. In March, with the present Minister of Public Works, I accompanied a deputation to the Minister of Water Supply to discuss this important question. Unfortunately, the Commission rejected the Dalimore plan, stating that it was not a first-class one. According to the Commission, the pipes provided for in the plan were not of a sufficiently high pressure. It was said also that the plan was lacking in other respects. However, Mr. Dalimore and the council are convinced that the plan is perfect and they feel that the Commission is not concerned with extending the water supply system on the Bellarine peninsula. One of the Commissioners was reported as having said that the Commission is not interested in this work because there is so much to be done at Kiewa and elsewhere. A Mr. Woodward, who accompanied the deputation to the Minister of Water Supply, submitted to the Bellarine Shire Council a report in which he made all sorts of accusations to the effect that the Commission "has the member for the Legislative Assembly district in the gun, and, so long as he is a member, there will be no water supply extensions carried out." I hope that is not correct—I do not think it is, but the matter should be cleaned up. I believe, however, that the Commission is not sufficiently active and sincere in its approach to this question.

The Government has a responsibility to see that this position is rectified. It should ask for an early report on the

matter to see what action could be taken to provide this fast developing area with an adequate water supply. It is no use saying that there are other districts requiring water supplies, as the demand for such a facility in the Bellarine peninsula has been long standing. In the summer months, hundreds of people encamp along the foreshore. Unfortunately, during the recent summer, campers were compelled to purchase water and haul it over long distances. A grave fire hazard exists under such circumstances. I am not satisfied with the excuses given by the Commission concerning the unsatisfactory water supply and I ask the Government to ensure that early action is taken to overcome this difficulty.

I am gravely concerned at the attitude adopted by the Government in connexion with the proposal to drain the flooded areas around Lake Corangamite. For some years, this lake has been expanding rapidly. Recently, the Parliamentary Public Works Committee investigated the problem and made certain recommendations to the Government. During the last election campaign, the Leader of the Liberal party—the present Premier—addressed a meeting at Colac and, in reply to a request for financial assistance to drain this flooded area, he said that, if necessary, he would obtain £10,000,000 for the work. That statement, which was sheer political kite flying and humbug, is on record in the *Colac Herald*. Several members of Parliament, and local councillors, have made representations to the Government on behalf of the landholders adversely affected by the flooding of Lake Corangamite but with little success. The landholders were advised that an approach should be made to the Rural Bank for financial assistance. As they were in desperate financial straits, £50,000 was made available for this purpose.

The Public Works Committee, after investigating the matter, recommended that a plan drawn by Mr. Horsfall of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission should be implemented. This plan, known as the Horsfall plan, proposed to divert the water from the

*The Hon. D. P. J. Ferguson.*

Woody Yaloak river away from Lake Corangamite and down the Barwon river. The estimated cost of this diversion was approximately £440,000, and it was proudly announced in the press that the Government would see that the work was carried out. To-day, in this House, I asked the Minister of Transport when the Government proposed to commence operations to divert the flow of the Woody Yaloak river away from Lake Corangamite and, in reply, he pointed out that the diversion plan had been submitted to the landholders concerned with an indication of the extent to which the Government would be prepared to subsidize the project. Obviously, the Premier has misled the residents of the Lake Corangamite district. In the first place, he promised that up to £10,000,000 would be made available for the drainage of this area. He fully realized that this was a fantastic proposition, and, when he got down to tin tacks, it became evident that the only solution was to accept the Horsfall plan. The Premier asked Mr. Horsfall for an estimate of the cost, and, on being informed that it would cost approximately £440,000, he intimated that the Government would proceed with the work. However, nothing has been done, and those who for so long have sought assistance from the Government, are now being asked to finance the work. Surely, this is misleading the people, and it explodes the claim that the Government is interested in helping the people in this area. The Government has merely used the flood situation around Lake Corangamite for cheap political purposes.

Some time ago, I wrote to the Minister of Health on behalf of the Associated Mothers' Clubs of Geelong and the district schools' committees, seeking the provision of dental clinics to meet the requirements of school children in the Geelong district. It was considered that more mobile dental clinics should be made available to enable the dental facilities for children to be extended, and that a free dental clinic should be provided at the Geelong hospital. I have received no reply from the Minister and I hope that he will examine the matter to ascertain what can be done. The

Government has laid great stress on the work that it has done in the field of education. However, it appears that some times its statements are issued only for the purposes of propaganda. It does not get down to doing the real things that are required and which mean so much to the comfort of the children and those associated with the various schools.

Recently I received a letter from the committee of the Herne Hill State School asking me to ascertain whether any action could be taken to ensure that the school is painted inside and out. Although authority was given for this work on the 15th November last year, letters to the Department have produced no results. No one seems to know anything about the job or be interested in it. I received also a letter from the committee of the Newtown State School asking me to make representations concerning the provision of shelter shed accommodation. At this very large and old school only one small shelter shed about 12 feet square is available. In order that provision might be made for an additional class-room some time ago, one of the then existing shelter sheds was pulled down. When I inquired about the matter at the Education Department, I was shown a plan and told that the shed had been removed, that a contract had been let for its renovation on another site, and that a new shelter shed would be erected later. I inspected the site, and I was amazed to see that the shelter shed which was to be renovated was only a pile of rubbish and had been in that condition for the previous six months. Although I wrote to the Minister of Public Works about this matter on the 28th February this year, I have not yet received a reply. I suggested to the honorable gentleman that he should cancel the contract for the renovation of the shed and arrange for the construction of a new one, because the old material was fit only to be burnt.

More than two years ago approval was given for site works to be carried out at the Chilwell State School. Improvements are badly needed in that

area. Despite the fact that the committee and the school were advised that the works were to be undertaken, nothing has been done. If the Government is sincere in its attitude towards education, it should give us some evidence of its sincerity; it should not make statements for political purposes all the time. The public is entitled to believe what the Government says. Lately it seems to have been a habit to say, "We have spent so much on education." However, when the figures are examined, it is found that they have been lumped together and do not necessarily mean that the amount has been available in one financial year. It is most misleading to assert that so many thousands of pounds have been spent on certain projects when in fact the expenditure is much less.

The Hon. G. L. CHANDLER.—Where are the figures incorrect?

The Hon. D. P. J. FERGUSON.—Quite recently the Minister of Public Works stated that approximately £750,000 would be spent on schools in Geelong. When the figures were examined, it was found that money spent by a previous Government had been included in that amount. I say that is wrong. I wish now to deal briefly with the question of transport. This Government seems to be sold entirely on the whims and fancies of the Minister of Transport, whose original approach was, "Here I come; everyone else is an idiot." The Minister disagreed violently, right from the start, with the Railways Commissioners and with Treasury officials. He more or less tore up the Elliot report on transport. He approached the question purely and simply from the point of view of the accountant. Although accountants are necessary in a community, the Government should not think in terms that everything starts and ends with their opinions. If that is accepted, Parliament might just as well be composed of accountants. However, other shades of opinion are necessary; it takes all kinds of thought to get a broad outlook on various questions. I do not believe that we should view a problem purely from the point of view of an accountant,

in terms of profit and loss, because there are other factors that must be taken into consideration. It is not possible to assess accurately in terms of pounds, shillings and pence what a facility means to a community. If that view is adopted, we shall reach the stage where there will be room only for modern Shylocks in the community.

I do not believe that there is any evidence that the railway services in Victoria are being reorganized or improved. Certainly the service between Geelong and Melbourne has not been made any better; in fact, it has deteriorated. I have asked the Minister of Transport repeatedly to review the time table on the Melbourne-Geelong line. I make no apology for my endeavour to have that service improved. Upon examination, I find that the present time-table does not compare favourably with that which operated some years ago. There are now fewer trains operating, and no consideration is given to certain periods of the day when people desire to travel by train. There is an urgent need for facilities to be made available on the Melbourne-Geelong line between 12.15 p.m. and 6.10 p.m. on Saturdays. I have seen the report that the Railways Commissioners submitted to the Minister of Transport on this question. I am sure that if the honorable gentleman had still held the view that he adopted when he took over his present portfolio he would have torn up the report, because the Commissioners are pulling the wool over his eyes. Originally the Minister was not prepared to listen to the ideas of anyone on transport, because he had "all the answers." Again, I ask the Minister to re-examine the time-table operating on the Geelong-Melbourne service. There is a need for an express from Geelong to Melbourne between 7.30 a.m. and 10.45 a.m.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—Why did not you make provision for the operation of such a train when you were Minister of Transport?

The Hon. D. P. J. FERGUSON.—During the time I held the portfolio I tried to do something but, as the

Minister knows, I occupied that office for only a limited time. When the Government of which I was a member was defeated, I followed what I considered to be the correct practice, and acted as a "caretaker" Minister. However, I noted that a former Minister of Transport, a colleague of the present Minister, gave a considerable plum to a transport company after the Government of which he was a member had been defeated. During the time I was Minister of Transport, I caused the Commissioners to clean up the Geelong service and to make certain alterations at some stations. It is regrettable so far as the people of Geelong and district are concerned that I am not still Minister, because the question to which I am referring would have been examined thoroughly. Rather than ask me why I did not do something, the Minister of Transport who has been in office for two years should accept the responsibility.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I do not propose to change the service.

The Hon. D. P. J. FERGUSON.—Recently the honorable gentleman said, "As long as I am Minister, there will be no electrification of country train services." He made a great song and dance, too, about what diesel operation has meant to the railways, but I notice that steam units are being reconverted from fuel oil to coal operation. Of course, I know that the Minister in his vain way will trot out the figures of the accountants again. He has the modern Shylock approach to everything—he thinks only in terms of hard cash. He considers that the opinions of other people in the community do not matter. He thought Mr. Elliot was a fool, and, in effect, tore up his report. The Minister apparently considered also that the Railways Commissioners knew nothing. The view of the honorable gentleman was, "I will do nothing at all to give a service to the community unless I am of the opinion that it is right. I will not think about it but will dig my heels in. What I say will go." That is a wrong attitude. Every factor that operates, particularly when transport problems are being dealt with,

should be given earnest attention. The Minister of Transport is completely ignoring the excellent facilities that are available locally, such as brown coal. Of course, he can produce accountant's figures concerning the cost of diesel fuel.

The fact that money is being sent out of the country is ignored. The day may come when supplies of oil from overseas will be cut off. I do not agree that decisions should be made solely on the basis of accountants' figures. The Government should adopt a broader outlook founded upon a natural asset that is located in its own back yard, so to speak, instead of hastening to fill the pockets of overseas organizations. It is all very well to claim that a saving of such-and-such a sum can be made by the use of diesel fuel as compared with coal, but I ask, "Has that money actually been saved?" Further, has the Government made any real contribution toward the development of the natural resources of the State? Again, is the Government sincere when it claims that it wants the railways to provide better services? I contend that an examination of the timetable for the Melbourne-Geelong service will reveal that the Minister of Transport has ignored his responsibilities. If the Government refuses to provide services for the benefit of the community, without placing undue emphasis on cost accountants' figures, it has no right to claim that it has the confidence of the people. I hope that my comments will go some distance toward inducing the Minister of Transport to change his mulish attitude, and that he and other members of the Government will adopt a broader approach to the question of providing services for the community.

**The Hon. A. K. BRADBURY** (North-Eastern Province).—Much has been said regarding the amount expended on education during the last financial year, and I compliment the Government upon its effort to improve educational facilities which will benefit not only those who are now living, but future generations also. I shall link my remarks particularly with agricultural education. I claim that insufficient funds are being allocated for that purpose. Although I

support the policy of developing secondary education, both high and technical, with the passage of time our nation is becoming more dependent on primary industries for its economic survival. The wool industry is contributing more than any other Australian industry to the establishment of our national credit overseas, but the small amount being spent on agricultural education in the State of Victoria is lamentable. When one visits our agricultural colleges and research stations, one is appalled at the lack of accommodation and facilities and the absence of protection for valuable implements. I again appeal to the Government to make a considerably larger allocation next financial year to agricultural colleges and research stations.

I pay tribute to the principal and staff of the Dookie Agricultural College for the magnificent job they are doing and for the calibre of the graduates. Those graduates benefit the Department of Agriculture and the rural industries of the Commonwealth. Last year there were 156 resident students at the Dookie Agricultural College and another 308 persons received short-term rural training for periods ranging from one week to eight weeks. The courses which they undertook included those specially designed for women and in addition, poultry, tractor and farm machinery, agricultural, farmers', irrigation, and farm management courses. Thus, many persons engaged in rural pursuits were afforded an opportunity to become more proficient and to familiarize themselves with up-to-date methods of farming. The college is conducted on particularly efficient lines and to a degree it is self-supporting. Last year it produced a wool clip amounting to 122 bales, shorn from 3,728 adult sheep. The top price obtained was 93d. a lb. and the total return amounted to £10,255 1s., which, I think, is very creditable.

**The Hon. W. O. FULTON**.—How many acres are used for grazing?

**The Hon. A. K. BRADBURY**.—Several thousand. At the college there is also a stud herd of Ayrshire cattle which last year produced 57,975 gallons of milk and provided 3,423 lb. of butterfat for internal needs and 9,513 lb. for sale on the

open market. Likewise, the poultry section produced 23,539 dozen eggs for internal purposes and for sale, and the hatcheries raised 8,630 chickens, many of which were retained for internal purposes, the remainder being sold throughout the State. Hence it will be seen that the college is rendering a worth-while service in the wool growing, dairying and poultry sections. Unfortunately, however, in the pig section the animals became infected with the virus of pleuropneumonia, and the piggery had to be closed down. New piggeries will have to be erected in the near future.

At the present time, the number of applicants for training exceeds the accommodation that is available, and so the number of students must be restricted. On 18th December, 1956, there were 309 applications for admission to Dookie college and 85 for Longerenong college, making a total of 394 young people desirous of broadening their education in agriculture. It is a lamentable fact, however, that this year Dookie college could take only 46 first-year students and thirteen second-year students, making a total of 59.

The Hon. W. O. FULTON.—Does that number include university students?

The Hon. A. K. BRADBURY.—Yes. The intake has not improved for about 100 years. At Longerenong college 28 first-year students and eight second-year students—a total of 36—were admitted out of 85 applicants. The total for both colleges was 95 admitted out of 394 applicants. Agricultural education is of great importance to the State.

The Hon. W. O. FULTON.—It is as important as technical education is in other spheres.

The Hon. A. K. BRADBURY.—It is probably more so. In the long run the economy of the State and of the nation depends greatly on our agricultural products and purchasing power overseas consequent on their sale.

The Hon. G. L. CHANDLER.—Both colleges are a reflection on all past Governments.

The Hon. A. K. BRADBURY.—I agree with the Minister. I am not criticizing the Government, but I am asking for a definite commencement of a programme to develop the colleges.

The Hon. G. L. CHANDLER.—The Government has already agreed to begin the building of additional accommodation this year.

The Hon. A. K. BRADBURY.—I am happy to hear that and will look forward to seeing progress made. The Federal Government has appealed for improved production and lower costs of primary products for sale overseas. I am keenly interested in the colleges and trust that soon their facilities will be increased to enable a greater intake of students to be made. Such a provision will contribute ultimately in an important measure to the national effort. Inducements should also be offered to attract staff to the colleges. Both colleges are understaffed and at the end of last year Dookie was short of nine men. No doubt it is difficult to obtain staff because of the isolation from large centres. However, I urge that incentives be offered to attract trained personnel, including married men, and that the new building plan mentioned by the Minister of Agriculture will be undertaken in the forthcoming financial year. The students themselves should also receive encouragement in another direction. Dookie lacks a college chapel, and last year the students inaugurated their own building fund for that purpose. During the last session, when discussing child delinquency, I referred to the importance laid by Mr. Justice Barry in his report on young people in the community being given the benefit of Christian education. I hope that provision will be made in the rebuilding programme for the incorporation of a chapel at Dookie. At the end of last year 33 students passed out of the college. Of these the following number went directly to the industries named—

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Farming—Sheep or wheat ..     | 8 |
| Dairying .. ..                | 5 |
| Teaching (Education Dept.) .. | 6 |
| Other Departments ..          | 1 |

An analysis of the requirements of the eleven students who desire positions is as follows—

|                               |    |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Farming—Sheep or cattle farms | 4  |
| Dairying .. ..                | 3  |
| Departmental—A.B.C. ..        | 1  |
| Commercial—                   |    |
| Agricultural Implements       | 2  |
| Agricultural Tractors ..      | 1  |
|                               | —  |
|                               | 11 |

The other two students intend to continue their agricultural education.

Another point to which I direct the attention of the Government is the unfair competition offered by State Electricity Commission showrooms throughout the State to private enterprise. Many municipalities, although levying the maximum permissible rate, are finding it difficult to meet their commitments, yet the State Electricity Commission showrooms have not paid any rates until recently. I do not say they were exempt; I realize that there is a difference of legal opinion in relation to the matter. Much pressure has been brought on the State Electricity Commission to pay rates.

The Hon. G. L. CHANDLER.—A good deal of pressure was brought on the Government that introduced the original legislation, but it did not agree.

The Hon. A. K. BRADBURY.—As a result of the pressure mentioned, the Minister of Electrical Undertakings has advised municipalities that, without prejudice to the general question of the Commission's liability for rates, it will make an *ex gratia* payment to those councils in whose areas it conducts a showroom in conjunction with a branch or district office. The amount to be paid will be on the basis of 25 per cent. of the rates which would be payable on these premises if they were normally rateable.

For purposes of comparison I shall quote some rates in my own town, where I am a councillor. They relate to business properties in Reid-street,

Wangaratta, near showrooms owned by the State Electricity Commission. The details are—

| Firm.               | Business.     | Frontage. | Unimproved Valuation. | Rate.    |
|---------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------------------|----------|
|                     |               | ft.       | £                     | £ s. d.  |
| Webster ..          | Electrical .. | 11½       | 805                   | 48 12 9  |
| Motor               | Automotive    | 23        | 1,840                 | 111 3 4  |
| Spares              |               |           |                       |          |
| Graham ..           | Hairdresser.. | 23½       | 1,880                 | 113 11 8 |
| Colonial Gas Co.    | Gas supply..  | 12½       | 1,260                 | 76 2 6   |
| Patersons Pty. Ltd. | Furniture ..  | 39        | 4,680                 | 282 15 0 |

The State Electricity Commission has a 28 foot frontage, and the valuation is £3,640. If this property were owned by private enterprise, the rate would be £219 18s. 4d., but the instrumentality, under the very generous proposal of the Minister, pays only £55.

The Hon. I. A. SWINBURNE.—The council does not put a footpath in front of those premises, does it?

The Hon. A. K. BRADBURY.—There is the same type of footpath as for adjoining business houses. With the exception of one tenant, who has a frontage of only 11½ feet, the State Electricity Commission pays the lowest amount of rates of any firm or organization in Reid-street, Wangaratta—£55 compared with £48 12s. 9d. for the property with the smaller frontage. This is grossly unfair. A great State undertaking pays only a pittance of a rate but receives the same benefits as ratepayers who pay an equitable amount. A similar situation applies throughout the State; the State Electricity Commission has showrooms in a number of big centres.

The Hon. BUCKLEY MACHIN.—Is it not true that the State Electricity Commission is putting something into the town, whereas private enterprise is taking something out of it?

The Hon. A. K. BRADBURY.—The State Electricity Commission has followed private enterprise after it has built up the town, and it is deriving a benefit from the fact that private ratepayers have paid large amounts in rates.

The State Electricity Commission is thus operating on an unfair basis. I appeal to the Government to inquire into the matter. It is of no use any municipality testing this matter—upon which there are two schools of legal opinion—in the courts. Even if a municipality engaged in litigation and succeeded, it is possible that, as has occurred in other instances, involving the Grain Elevators Board and other State undertakings, the Government would legislate to exempt the State Electricity Commission from the payment of rates. I urge the Government to ensure that municipalities receive fair treatment. None should know better than the Government that Victorian municipalities are confronted with many difficulties, including shortage of finance. Justice should be done to these local governing bodies and to business houses.

A matter in which I am particularly interested is the draining of Lake Corangamite, a subject raised by Mr. Ferguson. This was considered an urgent question by the Public Works Committee, of which I had the honour to be chairman last year. That Committee made a special visit to Colac to investigate the problem at first hand, and its members were appalled to see the distress caused by the loss of farms and homes—some of them completely—as a result of the flooding of Lake Corangamite and Lake Gnarpurt. With the co-operation of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, the Public Works Committee endeavoured to speed up its inquiry and report so that relief could be given to the persons affected. An area of 17,300 acres of some of the best and most fertile pasture land in the State has been inundated by Lake Corangamite and 1,100 acres by Lake Gnarpurt, a total of 18,400 acres. Some of the best strawberry clover in Victoria is to-day under water as a result of the swelling of these two lakes.

Various schemes were propounded for removing the excess water, particularly from Lake Corangamite. Mr. Nevill, senior lecturer in mining at the University of Melbourne, submitted a scheme for the draining of the water by means of a tunnel under the Otway ranges. The

*The Hon. A. K. Bradbury.*

Public Works Committee considered this a plan of too great magnitude because of the money involved and other difficulties. It would cost a minimum of £3,000,000 and could run into £7,000,000, and it might take ten years effectively to drain Lake Corangamite. Mr. Horsfall, Assistant Chief Designing Engineer of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, submitted a scheme for the draining of Lake Corangamite by the diversion of the Woody Yaloak river, at a cost of £446,000. If that scheme were implemented, all the freehold land that is at present inundated would be reclaimed within five years, and the level of the lake would be maintained at a constant height, according to the average rainfall of past years.

If immediate benefit was to be received from Mr. Horsfall's scheme, it had to be commenced at the latest by March or April of this year, because during the summer period and the early autumn there would be very little flow into the Woody Yaloak river. The initial work he wanted to undertake when there was a small flow of water down the river was the construction of the Cundare barrage. Once that was completed, the other work could have proceeded during the winter, and the ultimate objective achieved in the shortest possible time.

The Public Works Committee recommended the adoption of Mr. Horsfall's scheme before Christmas 1956, hoping that the Government would act expeditiously. I was amazed and somewhat disappointed to-night to hear the reply given to Mr. Ferguson to the effect that this scheme had now been referred to the landowners with information regarding the basis of a subsidy the Government was prepared to grant and the contribution expected of the landowners.

The Hon. G. S. McARTHUR.—That is normal.

The Hon. A. K. BRADBURY.—I shall answer the interjection shortly. The fact is that many of the unfortunate people concerned will not be in a position for many years after their land has been reclaimed to contribute

anything. The Government has been generous enough to recognize their plight by making available to them, through the Rural Finance Corporation, financial assistance to enable them to carry on. Yet the Government proposes to add insult to burden by advising the farmers that they must contribute immediately towards the scheme. That is in the light of our brave Premier's generous gesture that he would provide the money required. On the 17th February, 1956, the *Sun News-Pictorial*, which never misquotes the Premier, published a report stating—

GOVERNMENT WILL PAY FOR LAKES  
WORK.

Colac, Thursday.—Schemes for reclaiming Lake Corangamite as a national project will be investigated, the Premier, Mr. Bolte, said here to-day.

Mr. Bolte said that even if 70 of the lake's 113 square miles could be drained it would be a major project.

A deputation, which included representatives from Colac Shire Council and the Corangamite-Gnarput Lakes' Committee, told the Premier that flooding of the lake had cost £1,000,000 in production over the past four years.

If it has cost the State £1,000,000 in production in four years, surely it is worth while for the Government to spend £446,000 to enable the farmers to resume production.

The Hon. I. A. SWINBURNE.—During the last election campaign, the present Premier promised that an amount of £10,000,000 would be spent on the project.

The Hon. A. K. BRADBURY.—The report continues—

They said that in four years the circumference of the lake had grown from 90 to 150 miles.

Mr. Bolte said that he would be prepared to spend £7,000,000 or £10,000,000 on a scheme to reclaim the lake if the investigation recommended it.

He said that he could not see any difference between reclaiming land and irrigating it for production. Any scheme must be a national one and as such would be financed by the Government.

I direct the attention of the Minister of Forests to the fact that the work was to be financed by the Government and not by the landowners. The Premier

stated at that time that if a scheme could be formulated the landowners would not be called upon to contribute towards it. However, I feel that he did not believe that it would be possible to put forward a satisfactory solution of the problem. I give due credit to Mr. Horsfall for his contribution in suggesting a scheme which, I believe, will drain Lake Corangamite and reclaim the very fertile land which has been flooded. Had the Premier believed that such a scheme was possible I feel sure he would not have been so rash as to promise that the Government would be prepared to spend from £7,000,000 to £10,000,000 on this national project. I appeal to the Premier to fulfil a promise which he gave and thus help to bring back into production some of the most fertile dairying land in the State. I am confident that the land can be reclaimed; its contribution to the economy of the State cannot be estimated in pounds, shillings and pence, but it will be much greater than the estimated £446,000 required to implement the work.

The Government must face the fact that it was the opinion of the Public Works Committee—this was stated in its recommendation—that if the work is not undertaken and the State is unfortunate enough to experience another extremely wet winter such as occurred last year, neither the Government, the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission nor anybody else will be able to control the flooding of Lake Corangamite. At the present time, the level of the lake is 1 ft. 6 in. higher than it was at this time last year and an increase of only 3 ft. 6 in. in that level is required to allow the water in the lake to overflow into the Barwon river and course down that waterway uncontrolled, flooding further thousands and thousands of acres of valuable land. The high saline content of the water in the lake would pollute the waters of the Barwon river and have disastrous effects on industries in Geelong as well as on primary producers whose properties are situated along the river and who are dependent on its water for stock and domestic purposes. I appeal to the Premier to take immediate action to implement the

plan that has been formulated in order to give relief to people in the Colac area who are in dire straits to-day.

A short time ago along with other members of this Parliament, I had the privilege of inspecting the vast project being undertaken by the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority, and I am sure that all of us were greatly impressed by its magnitude and the efficient way it is being accomplished. Of course, that has been contributed to by virtue of the fact that almost unlimited sums of money are available to the Authority, but that is not the point I wish to make. I intend to issue a word of warning to the Government that the State of Victoria could suffer as a result of the completion of the scheme unless steps are taken to safeguard the interests of settlers in the upper reaches of the Murray and also those farther down stream. With my colleague, Mr. Swinburne, I was present at a conference held at Walwa recently, when delegates from the Upper Murray Protection League and from the Upper Murray Headwaters Protection League discussed this position. Consideration was given to what would happen if there was an unrestricted outflow of water from the Snowy mountains scheme into the Murray. If that position is not closely watched, and the level of the River Murray is allowed to rise too steeply, settlers in the areas I have mentioned will be in great difficulty. Thousands of acres of very fertile river flats could become swamp lands. Therefore, I caution the Government that before any agreement between the Commonwealth and the States of New South Wales and Victoria is signed, steps should be taken to see that the interests of Victoria are carefully protected.

The Hon. W. O. FULTON.—Any agreement concerning that scheme should come before Parliament.

The Hon. A. K. BRADBURY.—I believe that it will ultimately, but the point I make is that it should be brought before Parliament before it is signed so that at that stage members have the opportunity of discussing its implications

rather than merely considering the ratification of an agreement which has already been signed.

Another matter of concern in the north-east is that people living in Corryong, Walwa, Cudgewa and surrounding districts are "out on a limb" so far as the provision of supplies of current by the State Electricity Commission is concerned. Because of the geographical situation of the area I have mentioned, the Commission contends that it will be some 20 to 30 years before it will be able to offer supplies of electricity from the present system. When I inspected the Snowy mountains scheme, I asked Sir William Hudson whether it would be possible for the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority to make available at the border supplies of low-voltage electricity so that the area to which I have referred could be served. He said that his Authority would be prepared to bring supplies to the river border if the State Electricity Commission of Victoria was prepared to take them across the river and into the towns concerned. Such a scheme would reduce the waiting time from perhaps 30 years to a mere two years. I appeal to the Minister of Electrical Undertakings to discuss this matter immediately with the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority in order that the residents of the Corryong-Cudgewa area may enjoy the benefits of electricity supplies as soon as possible.

I conclude my remarks by urging the Government to endeavour to meet the requests I have made.

**The Hon. PAUL JONES** (Doutta Galla Province).—Firstly, I wish to add my tribute to the mover and the seconder of the motion for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply. It was not my intention to participate in the debate, but as Parliament has been in recess for a long period, I find that there are many matters which I should bring forward. I have raised the issue of the removal of the Newmarket sale-yards and abattoirs in this Chamber on many occasions. I believe that the first inquiry about the possibility of shifting these facilities from the metropolitan area was held as

far back as the time when Mr. Hogan was Premier of Victoria. The result was that their removal was recommended. However, they are still there. I occasionally visit Flemington racecourse and thus pass these eyesores. Whether one travels by train, tram or by car, they cannot be avoided and I often wonder what visitors from abroad must think of the approach from the city to the beautiful Flemington racecourse. From what I have seen in the press recently, it appears that the Melbourne City Council is awaiting the next move by the Government so far as the removal of the sale-yards is concerned. There have been numerous stampedes of maddened bullocks at Newmarket and after every incident the question of why the sale-yards and abattoirs should not be removed has been debated. A deputation to the Premier some time ago now was told that at long last they were to be shifted from the metropolitan area. Nevertheless, nothing has been done. I wish to know what steps the Government has taken since the Premier heard the deputation to which I have referred.

Another matter which has "hit the headlines" in the newspapers relates to the land in the Flemington district known as Debney's paddock. Only last month we were shocked to learn that a movement was afoot to give six-year leases to certain business interests which had temporary occupation of part of that land, notwithstanding that the Melbourne City Council itself had twice—in 1941 and in 1951—declared that the whole of the land should be reserved as parkland. This latest proposal came from the Town Hall and Properties Committee, and although it was to have been submitted to the council, that has not yet been done.

About three weeks ago I saw the Premier personally in this building and also put the case to him in writing as a parliamentary representative of the area in question. I personally congratulated Mr. Bolte on the stand he had taken against the filching of parklands. It was reported in the *Herald* on the 22nd April that the Premier had said, "While I am Leader of this

Government there will be no filching of parklands anywhere." That was an unequivocal statement upon which I congratulated the honorable gentleman at the time. I further expressed the hope that he would maintain his stand in regard to Debney's paddock, and I left him with the assurance, as I thought, that he would be consistent in the view he had expressed.

The Premier was reported also to have paid a tribute to the pioneers for their foresight in reserving such large areas for parklands around Melbourne. Every member of this Chamber will join with the honorable gentleman in that sentiment. We have only to go to the Fitzroy and the Treasury Gardens and to visit again our lovely Botanic Gardens to appreciate what the pioneers did in this respect. However, the Premier further stated that there was actually a smaller acreage of parklands to-day than 50 years ago. That is not a good sign, and now we are faced with the prospect of another blot upon the record in respect of Debney's paddock.

As I have said, I congratulated Mr. Bolte on the good work his Government had done in removing the Camp Pell eyesore. I am prepared to give credit where credit is due. That has always been my policy. I give credit to the Bolte Government for having removed the Camp Pell blot and for restoring Fawkner Park to the people. As for Albert Park, the views that have been expressed by the Leader of the Government lead us to the hope that something will be done in the direction of removing those Federal establishments that at present occupy portion of the park. I think steps will be taken in that direction. It is encouraging to note that certain fences which had been erected in Albert Park have been taken down. We want to be assured that they will never be re-erected and that charges will never again be made to the public for entrance to the reserve. Our parks belong to our people, who should ever have free access to them.

My party is totally opposed to the filching of parklands and to the charging of fees for entrance to enclosed

areas of parklands. In congratulating the Premier regarding his attitude to the situation at Debney's paddock, I sought an assurance that every possible step would be taken to counter the narrow viewpoint of granting six-year leases and to ensure that the whole of the land should be retained for the people. However, I did not receive that assurance. The reply given to me was to the effect that I would notice in the press that a committee of inquiry would be appointed. That was far from satisfactory and I was greatly disappointed.

I still hope that the Premier will be consistent. It is pleasing to know that while the matter of Debney's paddock is in abeyance pending an inquiry there will be no alteration of the monthly tenancies granted to certain interests established there. In my letter to the Premier, I expressed the view that the proposed granting of leases was the thin end of the wedge and that in the granting of leaseholds the people concerned would obtain a firmer grip—the longer they remained the more difficult it would be to remove them. It has been said that possession is nine points of the law. I am convinced that the longer these private interests remain at Debney's paddock the harder it will become to remove them. Now is the proper time to act, and I trust that the Premier will stick to his guns and maintain his expressed principles.

I wish to refer now to certain matters concerning education. Six or seven years ago, I had the privilege of accepting an invitation from the then Minister of Education, Brigadier Tovell, to spend a full day in visiting a number of schools in the Essendon district. I enjoyed a very interesting day in the course of which the Minister was able to obtain first-hand information from teachers and others regarding the needs of education in that area. One school with which I was especially impressed occupied a high position and was surrounded with spacious grounds and an ideal sports area. I believe that that was the Strathmore school. The people of Strathmore have since sought the establishment of a high school. Litigation was proceeding at one stage

between the Lands and Education Departments, and the Broadmeadows City Council was also involved.

I was accorded the courtesy of an invitation from the present Minister of Education, Mr. Bloomfield, to inspect certain sites in question. The Minister mentioned to me the matter of pending litigation and expressed the hope that as short a period as possible would intervene before a decision was reached. I thanked him and emphasized that the people of Strathmore were education minded and were hopeful that the Government would do its best for them. I was greatly pleased therefore to hear to-day, in an official reply on the matter to my colleague, Mr. Slater, that a decision has been reached. I am sure that this will be welcomed by the people of the district.

I now wish to refer to a very dangerous railway crossing at the Kensington station. Representations were recently made to me that I should personally investigate this situation, and I examined it in the company of a number of neighbouring residents. They pointed out that the existing subway is one consisting of steps on either side of the line. I subsequently proposed to the Minister of Transport that there should be constructed a subway which would do away with the steps and a ramp substituted. I pointed out that the district was a growing one; that the line and the subway had been constructed many years previously, and that while the subway, with its steps, might have catered for the requirements of the district years ago, this type of crossing was now outmoded.

In my letter to the Minister, I expressed the opinion that he was anxious to modernize the railways. In this connexion, I remembered that I had often been told by a former member of this House that if I wanted a thing done I should proceed as though I had a cat in my arms and was stroking it so as to make it purr. He used to say, "Get your cat purring and you'll get what you want." I am sure that the Minister of Transport wants to see the railways improved so that they will pay. I reminded him of this in the hope

*The Hon. Paul Jones.*

that I might make him purr. However, I received a reply that the Commissioners felt that they would not be justified in incurring the expense of converting the subway in the way desired. I have since made further inquiries from the police, and have been informed that at certain periods a policeman is stationed there to take charge of the traffic. On occasions, the press of people coming from the races at Flemington is such as to cause very serious congestion, so much so that at times three policemen have been required to control that traffic. Under present conditions women with babies and old people particularly are greatly inconvenienced and at times endangered. I hope that the Minister will further examine the whole situation and that he may be able to peruse the report of the police. I would impress upon him that the matter is one deserving of special consideration.

The next matter on which I desire to comment is the provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Acts. Some years ago I referred to the case of a young man who enlisted in the Army and intended to be married and settle down when he returned. During his absence from Australia his father bought a house for him. In the meantime, another returned soldier rented the dwelling. In due course, the son returned from the war and was married, but could not obtain possession of his home because the tenant was a returned serviceman.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—That position will be remedied shortly.

The Hon. PAUL JONES.—Recently, I was informed of a case in which a young couple bought a house on a deposit of £300 with repayments of £3 a week. The tenant was a returned soldier and was given the opportunity to buy the house on the same terms, but declined. The people who bought the home were informed by a solicitor that they could obtain possession after they had owned it for twelve months. At the end of a year they again consulted a solicitor and were advised that because he had remained in

the forces for two years after the war the tenant was a protected person. I have given the details of the case to the Premier and the Chief Secretary. As the Government announced that the Landlord and Tenant Acts were to be amended, I strongly urge the Chief Secretary to consider making an alteration in the law that would remedy a situation similar to that to which I have referred.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—That is being done.

The Hon. PAUL JONES.—It is long overdue. I wish also to refer to the form of commemorating Anzac Day. Much dissatisfaction exists at the present time concerning the manner in which we observe that day in Victoria. The agitation is growing.

The Hon. D. J. WALTERS.—The returned soldiers' league does not think so.

The Hon. PAUL JONES.—If a vote of all former servicemen were taken, I know what the result would be.

The Hon. D. J. WALTERS.—You would be wrong.

The Hon. PAUL JONES.—Are the residents of Canberra, Sydney, Adelaide and Hobart less mindful of the sacrifices made by the men and women of our fighting forces than we are in Victoria?

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—You do not know the circumstances under which the change was made in the other States.

The Hon. PAUL JONES.—After the end of the first world war I was appointed A.I.F. sports officer in France. I suggested that we celebrate Anzac Day, 1919, by holding a big sports meeting. I put my proposal to the commanders of the various units, and no one objected. My job was to organize camp sporting events in order to occupy the minds of the men who were awaiting embarkation to Australia. Programmes were printed at a cost of £100 and good prizes were awarded for various events. Members of the women's service competed in tug-of-war contests and there were inter-allied competitions. Thousands of soldiers attended to cheer on their teams. We had erected in a

natural amphitheatre a wrestling ring and we conducted a wrestling contest between an American champion and Billy Meeske, the A.I.F. champion. A firm from Paris took moving pictures of the events and the day was a complete success. I point out that no objections were raised.

It has been suggested that a poll of the people should be conducted to determine how Anzac Day should be commemorated. The Premier is inclined to agree with the view of the returned soldiers' league, but in my opinion the vote taken by that body represents only the opinions of those delegates who attend the annual conference.

The Hon. D. J. WALTERS.—They vote according to the instruction they receive from the branches they represent.

The Hon. PAUL JONES.—All returned soldiers should be given a vote. I am sure that I know what their views would be. I referred to this matter some years ago and stated that the parade and church services could be held in the morning and sporting events could be conducted in the afternoon. In the *Herald* of 26th April, the past president of the Camberwell central branch of the returned soldiers' league, Mr. H. W. Givern, is reported to have said—

Melbourne's Anzac Day should move with the times—a parade and memorial service held in the morning, leaving the afternoon free for sports events, the profits from which should go to returned soldiers' welfare organizations and kindred bodies.

Those views coincide with mine. Previously, I suggested that a race-meeting be held in the afternoon and the profit be donated to Legacy—the work of which I admire—or a similar organization. Recently, a report appeared in the *Age* to the effect that there was growing dissatisfaction with the way in which Anzac Day was commemorated in Victoria. I agree with that statement.

I take this opportunity also to refer to kindergartens. As honorable members know, these institutions are doing very valuable work. There are 36 of them in the province that I represent. Each year a certain amount of money is allocated for kindergarten buildings, but

in my opinion the sum granted should be increased considerably because the value of the £1 is much less to-day than it was some years ago. I expressed this view last session, and I again ask the Minister of Health to keep the matter in mind. Many of the women who assist at kindergartens do so voluntarily and conduct bazaars and street stalls to raise money to make ends meet. I ask the Minister to do everything possible to increase the annual allocation to kindergartens.

The Hon. R. R. RAWSON (Southern Province).—I would not have made a contribution to the debate at this late hour had it not been such an important occasion. Many subjects have been referred to during the debate, and I think there is a tendency to forget the motion that is now before the House, which is for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the speech delivered by his Excellency the Governor last year on the occasion of the centenary of the first sitting of the Victorian Parliament under responsible government. I compliment the proposer and the seconder of the motion on the addresses they gave and the sentiments they expressed, so far as they were able to voice them in the short time available. The occasion was probably more festive than legislative and they had time to make only short speeches.

I think it is time that we did a bit of stocktaking. Victoria has made a great deal of progress, both economically and politically, during the last century. If we investigate the progress made in the political sphere, it must be admitted that this Chamber has contributed little towards the advance. As a matter of fact, it has done everything possible to sprag the wheels of democratic progress. Whenever it has acquiesced in any advancement of democratic processes, it has caused wonder. The first occasion on which the Council did so was in 1857 when it agreed magnanimously to members of another place being elected by manhood franchise, and also removed property qualifications.

The other outstanding occasion was in 1950 when this House agreed to adult franchise for elections for the Legislative

Council. Even to-day historians are wondering why that proposal was concurred in almost without debate. The only contribution made was by the then unofficial Leader of the House. It was understandable that neither the Country party nor the Labour party would take part in the debate because they were sponsoring the measure. It is puzzling that in the middle of the twentieth century no one from the Opposition benches was prepared to commend the Government for its very democratic action in this regard.

I propose now to narrate to the House some of the history of the role undertaken by this Chamber in impeding the progress of democracy in Victoria. First of all, it refused on two occasions—in 1873 and 1885—the right of the Assembly to enlarge itself. Furthermore, in 1860, 1865, 1867 and 1869, this House rejected the principle of payment of members of the other House. In 1870, it accepted, for a trial period of three years, the principle of payment of members, and this practice became permanent in 1880.

The abolition of plural voting for the Assembly was unwillingly accepted in 1899, after there had been six requests for it since 1888. The suggestion that women be permitted to vote was rejected no fewer than eleven times, from 1891 onwards. Furthermore, on three other occasions, the other House voted in favour of women being permitted to vote, but apparently it did not have the heart to send the Bill to this Chamber. It should be remembered that women have had the right to vote in the Commonwealth since 1901, but, due to the attitude of the members of this Chamber, it was not until 1905 that similar rights were granted to women in Victoria. In fact, Victoria was the last State in the Commonwealth in which the franchise was given to women. That is typical of the reactionary attitude adopted by this House.

Dealing now with social legislation, a similar pattern is evident. This House opposed legislation to legalize trade unions between 1882 and 1886. Some of the outstanding legislative Acts in this State, of which all parties are proud, are the factories Acts of 1873, 1885 and

1893. In 1896, a factories Act was passed for three years. In 1899, the same measure was brought forward again and, on this occasion, this Chamber submitted 50 amendments to 52 clauses. Finally, after a consultation between the two Houses, the Bill was passed. The Honorable T. D. Wanliss thought that the title of the factories Bill should be altered to, "A Bill to complete the destruction of industry and trade in the colony of Victoria." He proceeded to say, *inter alia*—

There was less sweating in Victoria than in almost any other country; this was an interference with the right of the poor to earn their bread in their own way.

During the same debate, the Hon. D. Melville stated, *inter alia*—

This Bill would destroy personal rights and liberties which had been secured and maintained at the cost of bloodshed in bygone days.

From 1927 to 1932, when a Labour party Government under Mr. Hogan was in office, this House rejected 29 Bills. They were not revolutionary Bills, the titles of some being: Farm Produce Agents' Bill, Milk Board Bill, Transactions in Dried Fruits Bill, Farmers Relief and Marketing of Primary Produce Bill, Wheat and Flour Acquisition Bill, Co-operative Freezing Works Bill, Fair Rents Bill, Metropolitan Milk Supply Bill, Workers Compensation Bills, and Bills imposing duties on bills of exchange, and stocks and shares transactions. In the six years of Labour party Government from 1919 to 1949, this House rejected 37 Bills. In the 24 years of non-Labour Government, 21 Bills were rejected.

Since the introduction of adult franchise in 1950, the Council has gradually been brought more into keeping with democratic principles. However, it is far from being a model institution and at this stage of our history we should give consideration to the question of taking steps to bring it into line with the precepts of democracy. It is very important in this age when we are expecting people to look to us for a lead and to turn away from totalitarianism to democracy for guidance, that we should be thinking just how we can make this a more acceptable institution. There is a wide divergence of opinion

on this matter, but I suggest for the consideration of the House two approaches to the question.

In view of the fact that members of this Chamber are elected for six years as compared with a possible three years in the other House, and that the majority of Ministers are in the Lower House, the Council should consider whether it is proper to reject money Bills, thereby destroying the Government. Another suggestion is that when a Bill declared by the Government to be vital is rejected, both Houses should be dissolved and all members "go to the country." My ideas are not revolutionary in any respect. If adopted, they would bring this Chamber a little nearer to an ideal for which we all profess to stand.

My suggestions were motivated by the fact that, beginning a second century of responsible government, we are more or less on trial before the world. From now on, people will not be satisfied just to listen to our platitudes about democracy; they will wish to see them put into practice in the fullest sense of the word. I have participated in this debate because I desired to convey thoughts that are in keeping with the spirit of the times.

**The Hon. A. J. BAILEY** (Melbourne West Province).—I join with other speakers in congratulating the mover and seconder of the Address-in-Reply motion. The contributions they made, as the newest members of this House, augur well for their future. The matter to which I wish to direct the Government's attention concerns an area in my province, namely, the Albert Park reserve. To-day, I asked the Minister in charge of the House a question concerning motor car racing-carnivals at Albert Park, and the information he furnished is very interesting. However, I point out that my question was not answered in full. The Minister did not state whether an auditor's certificate was received by the responsible Government Department and, if so, the date of its receipt. Furthermore, I asked what amount was distributed to individual charities, and, whilst I have been given a list of the sums allotted to various public bodies by the Albert Park committee—the members of which

are regarded as trustees—I cannot visualize that all such bodies are charities, and consequently, I feel that an erroneous view of the position could be taken. It was stated by the Minister that the Albert Park reserve was set aside permanently as a site for a public park. That is a very important statement—it is something that I have contended for some time.

**The Hon. BUCKLEY MACHIN.**—For how long?

**The Hon. A. J. BAILEY.**—At least five years. This question has been debated in the Australian Labour party, and if the records were produced, it would be apparent that in the opinion of the Labour movement the reserve is a public park. The bone of contention during the last two years has been the erection of a fence around the Albert Park reserve and the imposition of an admittance charge on certain days of the year. An examination of the consolidating Land Act 1928, reveals that two sections apply to reserves of the type now under consideration. Section 181 provides for the Board to make regulations for the control and management of public parks and reserves. Section 182 prescribes that the trustees of public parks may make regulations with the approval of the Governor in Council. It contains an exception as to recreation reserves vested in the City of Melbourne, and public parks. Section 181 was repealed and replaced by section 9 of the Lands Act 1941 which, to me, as a layman, is virtually the same as the section repealed. That applies to reserves not vested in trustees. However, the Albert Park reserve is vested in trustees and I maintain that it should be administered under section 182 of the principal Act. I contend that the people should be able to use the land, and they should not be called upon to pay an entrance fee.

**The Hon. BUCKLEY MACHIN.**—Would you contend that the same set of conditions should apply to Olympic Park?

**The Hon. A. J. BAILEY.**—Although I am speaking of Albert Park, I shall be happy if my statement results in any

other park for which a charge is made for admission becoming available to the people. I realize that may include the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—That ground operates under a special Act of Parliament.

The Hon. A. J. BAILEY.—That may be so, but I would make the same submission even though it resulted in the management committee of that ground or any other football ground being precluded from charging for admission. I consider that under section 182 of the Land Act no trustees can charge an admission fee to a public park. Paragraph (c) of sub-section (1) of section 182 provides that the trustees of public lands may make regulations with the approval of the Governor in Council, amongst other things—

For the collection and receipt by such trustees of tolls entrance fees or other charges for entering in or upon such land or any specified part or parts thereof. Provided that the foregoing provisions of this paragraph (c) shall not apply to any lands granted by the Crown to or vested for recreation reserves in the council of the City of Melbourne either alone or jointly with the Board nor to any public parks.

I maintain that provision precludes the trustees of Albert Park from charging an admission fee or asking for a donation for admission on any occasion.

The Hon. C. S. GAWITH.—Does that prevent the provision of a fence around the park?

The Hon. A. J. BAILEY.—A fence is erected only so that people will have to pass through a gateway at which there are collectors requesting an admission fee. A park should not be enclosed by a fence. Albert Park was so enclosed from November of last year to the 24th or 25th March this year so that an admission fee might be charged on certain occasions. I feel strongly on the matter, and I trust that as a result of my representations the Government will take action to prevent the trustees from permitting the fence to be re-erected in the future.

The Hon. BUCKLEY MACHIN.—I admire your zeal, but I think you should include the fence around Olympic Park in your remarks.

The Hon. A. J. BAILEY.—With Mr. Machin I represent the Melbourne West Province, and because Albert Park is within my province I am interested in it. I shall be pleased to hear the honorable member's comments later. The fence that was erected around Albert Park was the culmination of a number of efforts by the trustees over a period of years. First, a part of the park was enclosed, and finally a fence was erected around the whole area. Originally, a fence was erected around that portion where night golf is played, the excuse for the fence being that persons were stealing golf balls. The trustees got away with that.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—What is your opinion concerning the closing of the road?

The Hon. A. J. BAILEY.—I am opposed to it, and I mentioned the closing of the road to the Premier on the 2nd April when I introduced a deputation concerning the matter.

The Hon. A. K. BRADBURY.—Do you want a Royal Commission?

The Hon. A. J. BAILEY.—I do not think there is a necessity for one. If the Land Act is administered properly the matter will be rectified.

The Hon. BUCKLEY MACHIN.—You wish to keep everyone off the park who has not a right to be there?

The Hon. A. J. BAILEY.—If the legislation is administered properly, all the evils that apply in other parks will eventually disappear.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—Would you be in favour of Senator Kennelly being kept off the park?

The Hon. A. J. BAILEY.—I do not know whether Mr. Galbally is being facetious but I am trying to keep personalities out of this.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—I was wondering whether you have heard of him?

The Hon. A. J. BAILEY.—I know the gentleman. If Mr. Galbally wants me to bring in personalities, I can do so. I notice Mr. Galbally is again leaving the House. I feel he should wait and hear my answer. He makes a habit of running away. Earlier to-day I asked the Minister of Transport a question

concerning the amount of entertainments tax paid in respect of the motor racing carnivals at Albert Park, and in his reply he stated *inter alia*—

No entertainments tax has been paid in respect of the motor racing carnivals on the dates specified.

The Albert Park reserve is permanently reserved as a site for a public park. It is controlled by a committee who could be said to represent the community as a whole. Accordingly, it is accepted that the committee of management of the Albert Park reserve are trustees for the community and the lands and improvements, being available for the use of the community generally, are public property, and any expenditure thereon is for a public purpose within the meaning of section 16 of the Entertainments Tax Act 1953.

Briefly, section 16 provides that where the Commissioner is satisfied that the whole of the net proceeds of the entertainment are, or will be, devoted to public, patriotic, philanthropic, religious or charitable purposes, and that the whole of the expenses of the entertainment do not exceed 60 per cent. of the receipts, he shall repay to the proprietor the amount of the entertainments tax in respect of the entertainment.

If the park is public property the people should be able at all times to enjoy its benefits, without being charged a fee for admission. By preventing people from entering the property, the trustees are jeopardizing their exemption from the payment of entertainments tax. That does not apply only when motor-racing takes place, but on every occasion that night golf is played.

Moreover, there is adjacent to the section of the park on which golf is played a cycling track which over a period of years has been in the process of being fenced. As a result of an agitation the fence was not completed but every year a few more panels are erected. During the last twelve months, 50 additional panels have been built. On 12th April, 1954, more than three years ago, I, as a representative of the area, received a request from the South Melbourne council, signed by the town clerk. It reads:—

Dear Sir,

At the last meeting of the council a report was received that the Albert Park committee of management had decided, at its last meeting, to partially fence the northern end of the cycle track in Albert Park, which is adjacent to the area

*The Hon. A. J. Bailey.*

occupied by Defence buildings, and the following resolution was adopted by the council:—

"That the report be received and the State Government requested through our local members of Parliament to veto the proposal to erect a fence around the cycle track at Albert Park, and, further, that the State Government be urged to bring pressure to bear on the Federal Government to remove the buildings and fences which are an eyesore at the Middle Park end of the Defence area."

For the information of Mr. Machin, I might say that I was very interested in the matter at that stage, over three years ago. I made representations to the then Minister of Lands, the Honorable J. H. Smith, and the then Premier, the Honorable John Cain. At that time, there was a Labour council in office at South Melbourne, and I received a request from that body.

The Hon. A. K. BRADBURY.—What was the result?

The Hon. A. J. BAILEY.—Construction of the fence was stopped but the portion which had been built was not pulled down. The fence has not been completed in the meantime, but each year a few panels are added and eventually, if appropriate action is not taken, the fence will enclose the cycling track just as until March of this year the whole of the area was fenced. The chairman of the committee of management wrote to the South Melbourne council answering some queries that were raised by the secretary of the Middle Park branch of the Australian Labour party—a branch that remained loyal to the old executive of the party. With respect to the complaint that the toilet facilities were totally inadequate for the large number present—estimated by the press at 200,000—the chairman of the committee stated—

The question of toilet facilities was discussed between the Health Department officers and the engineer of the Albert Park Trust prior to the days of racing and the facilities provided were considered to be adequate. There was only one temporary toilet (urinal) used. During the last twelve months there has been two new convenience blocks constructed consisting of seven and two ladies' and four and two men's toilets respectively, together with urinal facilities in each case.

I attended the car-racing on 17th March of this year and claim that the conveniences provided were insufficient, although the attendance on that occasion was smaller than it was last November. I have not been supplied with particulars of the gross receipts and expenditure for the meetings on 17th and 24th March. I understand that an extension of time until 30th April 1957, has been granted by the entertainments tax office for the furnishing of a return. I remind the Minister of Transport that to-day is April 30, and if the relevant particulars were furnished to-day to the Department concerned they should have been made available to me in the House this evening. However, I shall take steps to have another question placed on the Notice Paper so that the Minister will have the opportunity of submitting them to the House after the next day of meeting.

As to the complaint that the committee of management had no legal right to permit the organizers to demand a donation to enter the park, the chairman of the committee stated—

Under the park regulations of which the council has a copy, the committee of management has authority to close the park and to set any sum it desires as a donation for entertainment on a Sunday.

I know that regulations were promulgated by the previous Government in 1953 or 1954, but I maintain that under section 182 of the Land Act 1928, they are invalid.

The Hon. A. K. BRADBURY.—You should refer the matter to the Sub-ordinate Legislation Committee.

The Hon. A. J. BAILEY.—I should be pleased if that body or the Law Department would investigate that aspect. I believe the matters I have raised concerning Albert Park are very important, especially to those people who live in the immediate vicinity. Many of them are now precluded from enjoying the facilities of the park. In support of my contention that local residents resent the action of the committee in erecting a fence, I would mention that this year a petition containing more than 800 signatures was submitted to the South Melbourne council. The public are

interested in the matter and they are entitled to an inquiry into the various aspects I have mentioned.

Mr. Jones, from the Middle Park branch of the Australian Labour party who made representations to the South Melbourne council, contended that printed tickets were not used prior to 17th March of this year. I know that tickets were used on that date because I have one in my possession. The chairman of the committee commented on that aspect in the following terms—

Tickets were printed by J. J. Miller Printing Company Proprietary Limited and by Sands and MacDougall Proprietary Limited. Letters from each firm state the fact that all tickets were consecutively numbered.

It was not stated, however, whether those tickets were used. I maintain that they were not used prior to 17th March. Another point of interest is that the matters referred to by Mr. Jones of the Middle Park branch of the Australian Labour party and the replies submitted by the chairman of the committee were brought before the other place by the honorable member for Port Melbourne and not by the honorable member for Albert Park who, incidentally, is the local member and a vice-president of the committee. One would have thought that he in particular would have placed the details before the Assembly. However, he was strangely silent. I claim that local residents are not being given the service to which they are entitled and that a more representative body should be appointed to control the park. I do not wish it to be thought that I am advocating the sacking of any members of the committee, but I believe it would be possible under the present legislation to appoint representatives of cricketing clubs, rowing clubs, and other bodies that use the park.

Mr. Jack Barry, a former member of the South Melbourne City Council, rendered yeoman service as a trustee. On his retirement from the council he was obliged to relinquish his position on the committee. He received a letter from the secretary of the organization commending him for the work that he did. Whilst he did not always agree with the chairman and other members, he repre-

sented a point of view which was consistent with the opinions of the people of the area in which he resided concerning the use of the park facilities. He is again prepared to offer his services as a member of the committee if the Government is willing to enlarge the present representation.

**The Hon. BUCKLEY MACHIN** (Melbourne West Province).—I should like to convey my deep sense of loyalty and affection to Her Majesty the Queen and to His Excellency the Governor of Victoria. I have been challenged by Mr. Bailey in regard to certain matters relating to Albert Park, and I would be remiss in my duty if I did not correct the erroneous statements that have been made. I inform Mr. Bailey that my time is largely taken up in looking after the needs of the people of South Melbourne, many of whom are living under bad conditions. They are the people who want help, and if Mr. Bailey is looking for an eyesore he should investigate the housing conditions in the locality instead of criticizing an area of land which has been transformed from a dump or a tip to a beautiful parkland.

**The Hon. J. A. LITTLE**.—It looked like a tip the day after motor-racing.

**The Hon. BUCKLEY MACHIN**.—I have seen the Melbourne Cricket Ground look like a tip after a large sporting event has been conducted there, but it has been quickly cleared. Much has been said about inadequate toilet facilities at Albert Park. Are there adequate conveniences at any sports ground in Melbourne when a large crowd is in attendance? Credit must be given to the people who transformed Albert Park and who have been criticized to-night. It is common knowledge why they have been singled out and attacked.

**The Hon. A. J. BAILEY**.—Tell us why.

**The Hon. BUCKLEY MACHIN**.—I do not tell wise people anything.

**The Hon. T. W. BRENNAN**.—Do not squib it.

**The Hon. BUCKLEY MACHIN**.—I have never squibbed anything.

**The PRESIDENT (Sir Clifden Eager)**.—Order! I ask that Mr. Machin be allowed to continue without interruption.

**The Hon. BUCKLEY MACHIN**.—A statement has been made that tickets were issued for the motor races at Albert Park, and much has been said about those tickets being numbered consecutively. I do not know what is behind the statements. Reels of tickets are printed for any sporting event, and I do not think they would be idly cast aside. I have attended official gatherings at South Melbourne when cheques have been handed over for various charities by the chairman of the Committee of Management of Albert Park. People in South Melbourne who need help have benefited considerably through the efforts of that body.

I am neither condoning nor condemning the closing of Albert Park. I think all parklands are the property of the people and should be treated as such. If one area is to be singled out and certain officials criticized, let us be honest and say that it is because we do not like someone on the committee. Earlier in the evening, Mr. Paul Jones expressed his views concerning the commemoration of Anzac Day and suggested that sports meetings should be held. He referred particularly to a race-meeting. No doubt such an event would be held at Flemington race-course, which is Crown land, and apparently there would be no objection by those who have criticized the trustees of Albert Park. If a member of this Chamber wishes properly to represent the people who elect him, there are hundreds of ways in which he may do so without criticizing the closing of a park for one day a year.

Much has been said about the fencing in of the cycling track. If that action had not been taken, it would not be possible for amateur cyclists to race on the area.

**The Hon. A. J. BAILEY**.—How many cycling meetings have been conducted there?

**The Hon. BUCKLEY MACHIN**.—I spend my time doing good work for my constituents and do not worry unduly about such matters. I am sure that 800 of the 801 people who signed a certain petition will agree that the Albert Park committee has done an excellent job in transforming the site from an eyesore into a thing of beauty. Through

the efforts of that committee the land has been filled in and reclaimed. Only last year a new building was erected to provide further facilities for the youth of the area. The building was erected in memory of the late Sir Frank Beaurepaire. The committee which has been trenchantly criticized to-night, has improved the area considerably. If we are prepared to criticize, we should be prepared to listen to commendation of those who have done well.

**The Hon. T. W. BRENNAN** (Monash Province).—I join in the felicitations incidental to this occasion, also in a spirit of universal brotherhood and goodwill, concerning the efforts of the mover and seconder of the Address-in-Reply. I have played the Australian game of football at Albert Park, and did so before certain gentlemen who commenced to run the affairs of that park. In those days Albert Park functioned quite well as a sporting arena, although the facilities were not wonderful. Luckily we were able to obtain temporary headquarters accommodation in the kiosk. The game was fairly willing, as is the civilized game of Mr. Machin's that has been brought from across the ocean. Our own unexcelled Australian game was evolved by Australian youth as a blend of the Irish and English codes.

I remember when the Exhibition gardens were enclosed by a railing with spikes, when the State Parliament functioned there. To-day those gardens with the railings down are fairer for those lovers of the eclectic and the beautiful than they were when surrounded with those impediments. Not long ago I had occasion to take a taxi through Albert Park and was horrified at the wires and hawsers lying about, in connexion with the motor-racing. The Albert Park lake district is a real gem, developed from what ages ago was a swamp. I commend the efforts of the committee to improve the facilities, but reprehend anything of an arrogant attitude to the effect "I will do it whether you like it or not." When standing for the forces of democracy we must be ready to impeach him who opposes our rightful purpose. I learned

my football playing on rough allotments like Debney's paddock with a rag football or jam tin.

I am glad when I reflect that in modern Melbourne the accent has been placed on the removal of the restrictions and barriers. I was amazed at the great parklands I found in outer and inner London. In certain residential suburbs, however, I found enclosed garden squares or easements. I should have liked to climb into them, but they were all hedged with iron spikes and are apparently sacred allotments for the people of various districts such as Bloomsbury. Local residents have a key to them and may enjoy themselves while all the world, in the words of the Frenchman, stares from outside. We want places in which young people can play. Mr. Slater wishes to protect the rights of the people near Debney's paddock, and I support the attitude of the people living around Albert Park. I was astounded to learn that a lady had had to buy a ticket in order to be able to pass barriers to visit a place of worship in Albert Park. In the name of the people I protest against any attempt made in their so-called interest, whether by officialdom or "brass hats," to restrict the activities of the majority of citizens from doing what they like in a park, whether it be playing football, cricket or golf, or merely walking in the open air. I hope we will see public opinion massed on the side of those who think a park is a place of general amusement and enjoyment.

The motion for the adoption of an 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 may wish to accompany him.

#### TRINITY COLLEGE BILL.

This Bill was received from the Assembly.

**The PRESIDENT** (Sir Clifden Eager).—I have examined this Bill, and am of the opinion that it is a private Bill.

**The Hon. G. S. McARTHUR** (Minister of Forests).—In another place this Bill was ruled to be a private Bill, but was

treated as a public Bill. I propose that the same procedure should be followed in this House. I move—

That this Bill be treated as a public Bill. The motion was agreed to.

**The Hon. G. S. McARTHUR** (Minister of Forests).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a first time.

The motion was agreed to.

#### VERMIN AND NOXIOUS WEEDS (FINANCIAL) BILL.

This Bill was received from the Assembly and, on the motion of the **Hon. E. P. CAMERON** (Minister of Health), was read a first time.

#### VICTORIAN INLAND MEAT AUTHORITY (FINANCIAL) BILL.

This Bill was received from the Assembly and, on the motion of the **Hon. G. L. CHANDLER** (Minister of Agriculture), was read a first time.

#### MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN BOARD OF WORKS (CONTRIBUTIONS) BILL.

This Bill was received from the Assembly and, on the motion of the **Hon. G. L. CHANDLER** (Minister of Agriculture), was read a first time.

*The House adjourned at 11.44 p.m.*

### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

*Tuesday, April 30, 1957.*

The **SPEAKER** (the **Hon. W. J. F. McDonald**) took the chair at 4.6 p.m. and read the prayer.

#### ASSEMBLY ELECTORAL DISTRICTS. VOTERS ENROLLED.

**Mr. GUYE** (Polwarth) asked the Chief Secretary—

How many voters are enrolled for each electoral district for the Legislative Assembly?

**Mr. RYLAH** (Chief Secretary).—The answer to the question is in the form of a lengthy return and, subject to the concurrence of the honorable member for Polwarth and the House, I suggest that it be incorporated in *Hansard*.

*The answer was as follows:—*

Enrolments are now on the basis of the electoral districts which are to come into force at the termination of the present Parliament.

The latest statistical return shows that the respective numbers of electors enrolled for such electoral districts, as at the 29th March, 1957, were as follow:—

| Electoral District      | Number of Electors. |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Albert Park .. .. .     | 20,703              |
| Ballaarat North .. .. . | 21,692              |
| Ballaarat South .. .. . | 21,109              |
| Balwyn .. .. .          | 24,376              |
| Benalla .. .. .         | 20,604              |
| Benambra .. .. .        | 21,485              |
| Bendigo .. .. .         | 21,505              |
| Box Hill .. .. .        | 22,611              |
| Brighton .. .. .        | 21,594              |
| Broadmeadows .. .. .    | 25,746              |
| Brunswick East .. .. .  | 19,485              |
| Brunswick West .. .. .  | 22,076              |
| Burwood .. .. .         | 21,588              |
| Camberwell .. .. .      | 21,239              |
| Caulfield .. .. .       | 22,334              |
| Coburg .. .. .          | 22,086              |
| Dandenong .. .. .       | 26,003              |
| Dundas .. .. .          | 21,641              |
| Elsternwick .. .. .     | 21,666              |
| Essendon .. .. .        | 22,107              |
| Evelyn .. .. .          | 23,550              |
| Fitzroy .. .. .         | 21,196              |
| Flemington .. .. .      | 20,487              |
| Footscray .. .. .       | 20,964              |
| Geelong .. .. .         | 21,344              |
| Geelong West .. .. .    | 22,666              |
| Gippsland East .. .. .  | 20,697              |
| Gippsland South .. .. . | 21,445              |
| Gippsland West .. .. .  | 21,522              |
| Grant .. .. .           | 26,771              |
| Hampden .. .. .         | 20,748              |
| Hawthorn .. .. .        | 20,801              |
| Ivanhoe .. .. .         | 23,304              |
| Kara Kara .. .. .       | 20,045              |
| Kew .. .. .             | 21,770              |
| Lowan .. .. .           | 20,386              |
| Malvern .. .. .         | 20,610              |
| Melbourne .. .. .       | 19,878              |
| Mentone .. .. .         | 23,065              |
| Midlands .. .. .        | 22,147              |
| Mildura .. .. .         | 20,076              |
| Moonee Ponds .. .. .    | 21,235              |
| Moorabbin .. .. .       | 24,007              |
| Mornington .. .. .      | 22,415              |
| Morwell .. .. .         | 20,496              |
| Mulgrave .. .. .        | 27,409              |
| Murray Valley .. .. .   | 21,608              |
| Northcote .. .. .       | 22,393              |
| Oakleigh .. .. .        | 22,115              |
| Ormond .. .. .          | 23,769              |
| Polwarth .. .. .        | 21,970              |
| Portland .. .. .        | 21,498              |
| Prahran .. .. .         | 20,268              |
| Preston .. .. .         | 24,060              |
| Reservoir .. .. .       | 23,986              |
| Richmond .. .. .        | 20,838              |
| Ringwood .. .. .        | 25,234              |
| Ripponlea .. .. .       | 21,060              |
| Rodney .. .. .          | 21,057              |
| St. Kilda .. .. .       | 20,846              |
| Sandringham .. .. .     | 23,992              |
| Scoresby .. .. .        | 24,717              |
| Swan Hill .. .. .       | 19,685              |
| Toorak .. .. .          | 20,152              |
| Williamstown .. .. .    | 20,861              |
| Yarraville .. .. .      | 22,150              |
| <b>Grand Total</b>      | <b>1,452,943</b>    |

## ARGUS AND AUSTRALASIAN LIMITED.

ELIZABETH-STREET BUILDING.

**Mr. SCULLY** (Richmond) asked the Premier—

1. Whether the Government or any Government Department or instrumentality has given any consideration to the purchase of the *Argus* building at 365 Elizabeth-street, Melbourne; if so, whether purchase has been decided upon?

2. If it is proposed to purchase the building—(a) for what purpose it will be used; (b) whether any purchase price has been discussed or agreed upon; and (c) what are the terms and conditions of the proposed purchase?

**Mr. BOLTE** (Premier and Treasurer).—The answer is—

The Government is aware that the *Argus* building is for sale; but, even if negotiations for the purchase of this or any other building were in progress, it would be inadvisable for any Government to dis-close its hand in the matter.

## HOUSING COMMISSION.

### SALE OF LAND.

**Mr. SCULLY** (Richmond) asked the Minister of Housing—

Whether the Housing Commission intends selling land which it previously purchased or obtained by compulsory acquisition; if so—(a) when such land will be sold or be available for sale; (b) what areas are proposed to be sold and how many building blocks are comprised therein; (c) whether the land will be sold solely to intending home builders; and (d) whether the first opportunity to purchase will be given to the previous owners from whom the land was purchased or acquired by the Commission?

**Mr. PETTY** (Minister of Housing).—The answer is—

It is the intention of the Government to present to the House in this session legislation which will make it possible for the Housing Commission to sell building lots to genuine home builders desirous of erecting houses for their own personal use, and every safeguard will be considered in order to achieve this end.

## MARGARINE.

### SALE IN VICTORIA.

**Sir HERBERT HYLAND** (Gippsland South) asked **Mr. Fraser** (Honorary Minister), for the Minister of Agriculture—

1. Whether the Government is aware that 675 tons of margarine are to be dumped on to the Victorian market during

the next few weeks and that a large sum of money is to be spent on advertising this product, the sale of which will adversely affect the dairying industry?

2. Whether the Government will give urgent consideration to the enactment of legislation on the basis of the South Australian Act regarding the manufacture of margarine?

**Mr. FRASER** (Honorary Minister).—The answers supplied by the Minister of Agriculture are—

1. No, but some Victorian manufacturers holding licences under the Victorian Margarine Act for the manufacture of table margarine have manufactured, during the past nine months, considerably less than their appropriate portion of their legitimate quotas.

It is understood that these manufacturers intend to manufacture the balance of their quotas, approximating the figure quoted in the question, before the end of June when licences expire.

The Government has no information as to what these firms propose to do in the way of advertising.

2. The Government has given careful consideration to the preparation of legislation that would control the introduction of table margarine into Victoria from other States, but has received legal advice that, because of section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution, legislation on the lines indicated would be declared invalid by the High Court.

## LANGI KAL KAL TRAINING CENTRE.

### REPORT OF BOARD OF INQUIRY.

**Mr. RYLAH** (Chief Secretary) presented, by command of His Excellency the Governor, the report of the Board of Inquiry into the Langi Kal Kal Training Centre.

It was ordered that the report be laid on the table and be printed.

## DRIED FRUITS (AMENDMENT) BILL.

**Mr. FRASER** (Honorary Minister) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to amend section 15 of the Dried Fruits Act 1938.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

## ABORIGINES BILL.

Mr. RYLAH (Chief Secretary).—  
I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time. For more than 70 years successive Victorian Governments have recognized that a practicable policy in relation to the welfare of aborigines must have as its ultimate objective the social, cultural and economic integration of these people into the general community. Many of the aborigines are established as respected fellow-citizens but, unhappily, there is still a considerable number of them who have not been able to attain the required standard and who have been left to become a depressed class apart. Thus an "aboriginal problem" remains with us, notwithstanding over half a century of official efforts. The Government is convinced that determined action to accelerate progress towards the solution of the "problem" can no longer be delayed. This Bill is presented to the House in the firm belief that it offers a charter for a "new deal" for our aboriginal population.

Mr. CAIN.—How many aborigines are there in Victoria?

Mr. RYLAH.—I shall deal with that point later. In his report, Mr. Charles McLean, C.B.E., sets out the numbers and locations of aborigines as far as he was able to ascertain. The measure embodies recommendations submitted by Mr. McLean, in a comprehensive report following a thorough investigation into aboriginal welfare matters throughout the State made by him over a period of several months last year as a Board of Inquiry appointed by the Government to investigate the current situation. Provision of the essential administrative means by which aborigines, and especially their children, can be assisted to raise their status within the community is the central purpose of the Bill. Honorable members will appreciate that much will depend upon the co-operation of the aborigine himself and also upon the degree of sympathetic understanding of his peculiar problems shown by white fellow-citizens. However, so far as it is possible for laws to contribute to the removal of any obstacles in the way, I commend this measure to the House

as a positive and well-considered step forward towards speedy achievement of the goal of assimilation of aboriginal people.

While it is unnecessary to dwell upon the history of aboriginal protection in this State, with which members of this House will be generally familiar, I think that I should place the subject in perspective by drawing attention to salient features of past endeavours. Since the year 1860, when the first Aborigines Board was set up in Victoria, Governments have been concerned with the position of the aborigines and their descendants in relation to the general community. Previously church missions and similar bodies had been left to do what they could—at least to soften the impact upon the aboriginal inhabitants of the expanding settlement of the State by white people. However, as time went on it became increasingly obvious that the resources of these organizations were falling far short of the demands being made upon them. Governments were looked to for help, and there arose a system of administration through subsidized missions assisted by official "guardians" and "protectors" of aborigines, comprising members of the Police Force, other Government officials, and selected white settlers.

In 1869, an "Aborigines Protection Act" was passed. The legislation, amongst other things, reconstituted the Board under its present name, with the Chief Secretary as chairman, and gave it statutory authority. The policy expressed in the Act and followed by the Board was entirely protective and charitable. It might be said that segregation of the aborigines was the keynote. Large areas of Crown land in various country districts were set aside as aboriginal reserves, and, on some of them, stations under resident supervision arranged by the Board were established. The aborigines were encouraged to congregate on these areas by the provision there of housing, rations, clothing and blankets. Materially, the conditions of the aborigines improved, but from the viewpoint of their social and moral advancement, the system left much to be desired.

In addition, although the living conditions on the reserves were based on the best of charitable intentions, they disrupted the nomadic tribal life of the primitive aborigines. Frustrated and afflicted by illness and disease, they rapidly declined in number, and, by 1880, the majority of the aboriginal residents of the reserves were half-castes. The Board had been disappointed in its hopes that the stations would become self-supporting, little success being achieved in inducing the residents to do the necessary work, for which white labour had to be employed. The Board had to contend with the unsettling influence of indolent and socially irresponsible residents on the stations on the one hand, and public criticism of its "protective" policy on the other. While it did not hesitate to expel the most persistent and flagrant offenders, it felt that were all the half-castes turned adrift to shift for themselves, family ties would be broken and much unhappiness would ensue.

However, in 1884, following changes in its personnel, the Board recorded its "unanimous opinion that all able-bodied half-castes capable of earning their living should be merged as soon as possible in the general population." Specific recommendations to that end were made to the Government of the day, and they were adopted in a revised Aborigines Act of 1886. The essential provisions of that Act are those which have remained in force up to the present time. All who were only partly of aboriginal blood were grouped together as "half-castes" and were to be excluded from the stations unless they were then over 34 years of age, or were licensed by the Board to reside on a particular station, or were wives of accepted residents. An exception was made in the case of children unable to earn their own living. Those so allowed to remain on or be admitted to the stations, together with all full-bloods, were defined as "aboriginals," and they alone became fully eligible for the protection or relief which the Board was empowered to provide. To meet cases of extreme hardship for the time being amongst the half-castes who were required to leave the stations, the Board

was authorized to supply them with rations, clothing and blankets for specified limited periods.

As the population of stations progressively decreased to the point where their continuance under the management of a resident staff was not warranted, they were closed. In 1917, the Board decided that, in order to enable it to discharge its responsibilities with the maximum of advantage to the aborigines, it was necessary to concentrate on the development of one reserve. Lake Tyers was chosen as the most suitable site and the remaining stations at Framlingham, Lake Condah, and Coranderrk—Healesville—were closed, temporary provision being made for a few elderly residents who refused to be disturbed. Lake Condah and Coranderrk have since reverted to the Lands Department and are now soldier settlement areas. As I have indicated, virtually no alteration of the law has taken place since 1886, so that, by the passage of time, the only "aboriginals," as defined, for whom the Board for the Protection of Aborigines now has statutory power to provide are the remaining twenty-odd recorded full-bloods who were born in Victoria, and about 150 having a lesser degree of aboriginal blood in their veins, who have been admitted to reside at the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station.

However, it is of no avail in the year of 1957 to spend our time bemoaning past failures. We are challenged with the pressing need for positive, constructive action, legislative and otherwise, in line with modern thought and the outlook of a civilized community of the present day in relation to the welfare of aboriginal people. Bringing his trained judicial mind to bear upon an extremely complex, and, in many respects, abstract subject, Mr. McLean has been able to ascertain the facts with which we have to concern ourselves to-day and they have been clearly presented to us in his report. I should like to pay a tribute to Mr. McLean's work in this direction. He made a very thorough, personal survey of the problem and he is to be highly commended for the report he produced as a result of that investigation. He found that there are some 1,340 persons in Victoria who

could be regarded as aborigines for the purposes of his inquiry. The figure of 1,340 may not be exact, but it would be approximately correct. A proportion of them, of course, have risen above their old surroundings and are generally living up to their responsibilities as citizens. But there are approximately 150 men, women and children in the metropolitan area, and many hundreds of others scattered in the various country districts who, in the majority of cases, are living under appalling conditions in shanty settlements close to towns where seasonal work is available, and to a river, on which they depend for their water supply.

Two such settlements inspected by Mr. McLean are located at Mooroopna and are fairly typical of the set-up in similar communities of what are referred to as "caste" people in other parts of the country. One of them is located on the shire rubbish tip and the other closer to the bank of the Goulburn river, where their camp is subject to periodical flooding. Fifty-nine adults and 107 children were found living on those areas in most squalid conditions. Their "humpies" are mostly constructed of old timbers, flattened kerosene tins and hessian. They are not weather-proof, have earthen floors, very primitive cooking arrangements and no laundry or bathing facilities except the river. The sanitary conveniences are ramshackle structures with all kinds of containers as pans, and the campers are left to dispose of the contents as best as they can nearby. Most of the huts are overcrowded, as might be expected in these surroundings, and many of the children are dirty, undernourished and very irregular in their attendance at school. While some amelioration of the shocking conditions is provided by the exertions of a trained nurse, who has been installed at Mooroopna as a welfare officer by the Save the Children Fund, a much more thorough-going and authoritative approach to the situation is urgently called for.

I emphasize that under existing legislation there is no power for the Board for the Protection of Aborigines to do anything about these people, although I do not mean that the Govern-

ment cannot act. Successive Governments have attempted to improve conditions but there is insufficient power at present to deal with this type of problem. The powers contained in the present Act are limited to the people who are located at Lake Tyers. The settlements at Mooroopna are typical, and I do not propose to weary the House by elaborating on the conditions that exist at other settlements. Many such places have been visited by members of this House and have been adequately described in Mr. McLean's report.

Of the people of aboriginal descent living in the metropolis, the percentage in regular employment is greater than it is in country communities. The general average of their living conditions is naturally better also, but all the same, with few exceptions, they live, mainly in Fitzroy, in overcrowded slum surroundings, and frequently in "condemned" houses. There must be a way to a greatly improved state of affairs. The McLean report supports the opinion of most present-day authorities on the subject that there is no racial inferiority of intelligence in the aborigine. Due probably to the historical background of the aborigine and fostered by the continuing existence of unsavoury settlements such as those I have mentioned, there has grown up in the minds of a number of white people a preconceived idea of the aborigines as sub-standard in every respect. There has been a readiness to regard the failings of many as common to all and this has led to a preference for white labour and a disposition to refuse to accept aborigines as tenants of houses of a type in which they can rear their children in an uplifting environment. In Mooroopna, not far from the settlement, there are two families within the category of aborigines under this type of legislation who are very happily established in Housing Commission homes, and the homes are a credit to them. Some employers, Mr. McLean observed, exploit aborigines by under-payment on seasonal work and do not consider it necessary to provide any accommodation for them, so that they are left to shift for themselves and their families in improvised camps.

*Mr. Rylah.*

I turn my attention now more directly to the provisions of the Bill. It is proposed to replace the existing Aborigines Act with a measure framed along lines which reflect the trend of modern thinking on the subject of aboriginal welfare. The system of administration through a statutory Board will continue, but in the constitution of the Board and in the definition of its functions, considerably more emphasis than in the past will be placed on positive action in respect of housing, education, and employment. I should like to pay a tribute to the work of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines. Since I have had the opportunity to be in contact with its members, as chairman of the Board for the time being, I agree very substantially with most of the statements of Mr. McLean, contained in his report, but I do not agree with his somewhat unkind criticism of the Board. I think it was based largely on the fact that its meetings had not been as frequent as might be thought necessary. But I desire to state that the members of the Board have always been ready and willing to confer and consult with me, as Minister, and, although the record does not show that there have been many official meetings in the last two years, there have been not only a number of unofficial meetings of members of the Board when they have been in Melbourne, but also various discussions between the Minister, as chairman, and individual members on particular aspects of the problem.

Sir ALBERT LIND.—Lake Tyers station does not look too bad, does it?

Mr. RYLAH.—No. I pay a tribute also to the honorable member for Gippsland East, who has been a member of the Board for many years, and to the Honorable Ronald Mack, M.L.C., who has recently become a member of the Board and has carried out a tremendous amount of work in connexion with the Framlingham settlement, near Warrnambool, which I shall mention later.

In the place of the present protection Board, there will be an Aborigines Welfare Board of nine persons, comprising a nominee of each of the Departments of Chief Secretary, Education, Housing, and Health, and five

other members, one of whom will be an aborigine and one an expert in anthropology or sociology, if, in either case, there is such a person available and willing to accept appointment.

Mr. CAIN.—Why one aborigine?

Mr. RYLAH.—The view of the present Board and of the Board of Inquiry is that the practice of having one aborigine member, as hitherto, is adequate. This Bill seeks to carry out the recommendations of the expert Board of Inquiry, and I believe it should do so. I am firmly of the opinion that it is fruitless for a Government to appoint an expert to make an inquiry, and then take action different from the recommendations.

Mr. CAIN.—The Government is doing so regarding rents.

Mr. RYLAH.—I suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that he wait until he sees the relevant Bill before commenting. The Board will be incorporated, and be empowered for the purposes of the proposed new Act to acquire and dispose of property. Subject to a quorum of five members being present at a meeting and all questions being decided by a majority vote, the usual provisions are made for the Board to regulate its own proceedings. The primary function of the Board as it is set out in the Bill is to promote the moral, intellectual and physical welfare of aborigines with a view to their assimilation into the community. In the present Aborigines Act only aboriginal natives of Victoria—that is to say, full-bloods—and certain categories of persons of aboriginal descent to whom I referred earlier—come within the definition of aboriginals; that is, those under licence. In future, irrespective of place of birth, every full-blooded aboriginal native of Australia and all persons of aboriginal descent will come within the scope of the Board's responsibilities, whether or not they are living on reserves.

That does not mean that anyone in no way requiring the Board to be concerned with his affairs, will be exposed to interference by the Board or its officers. However, the Board will have full power to manage and regulate the use of reserves, and any other land

which it may require for the use of aborigines, subject to the consent of the Chief Secretary and the Board of Land and Works being necessary before an unused reserve or part thereof is leased. The Board will also be empowered particularly—

(a) to apply to the best advantage moneys appropriated by Parliament and any other funds it acquires, by the sale of reserve produce, for instance, for the relief or benefit of aborigines;

(b) to arrange for the supply of clothing, bedding, rations and medical or other attention needed by aborigines and not otherwise obtainable by them;

(c) to acquire land and have houses erected and sell or lease them to aborigines.

The methods and system of the Board's administration will be prescribed in regulations to be made by the Governor in Council and laid before both Houses of this Parliament in the usual manner. Such officers as are required to give effect to the Board's work will be appointed under the provisions of the Public Service Acts, but the Bill specifies that one of them shall be a Superintendent of Aborigines Welfare, who shall be the executive officer of the Board. It will be the immediate duty of the superintendent to survey extensively all aboriginal localities throughout the State and report on such matters as housing conditions, health, and employment as well as the existing evidence of local practical interest in aboriginal welfare. Later, he will be responsible for establishing where necessary and maintaining close contact between the Board and local bodies, such as civic authorities, the Save the Children Fund, Apex Club and others which have taken an interest in this problem. He would, for example, investigate applications for housing, furnish recommendations to the Board and exercise subsequent supervision of successful applicants. He would assist aborigines in obtaining employment, advise them, and personally concern himself with all matters bearing on their interests generally. To provide finance for the Board's operations an Aborigines Welfare Fund will be established at the

*Mr. Rylah.*

Treasury. Into this fund will be paid moneys appropriated by Parliament for the purpose and all income which the Board may receive from the sale of stock, produce or otherwise.

The foregoing statements summarize the substance of the Bill. There are one or two additional features I should like to mention, and the first concerns housing. Some members of the House may ask, "Why do all this with regard to housing when the Housing Commission is in existence?" Mr. McLean has made a specific recommendation that the Housing Commission may well be the authority to provide the houses, but that it is not a suitable body to accept the responsibility of collecting the rents and ensuring that a person to whom a house is allotted looks after it. Therefore, that function is proposed to be given to the Board. It will be the task of the Superintendent of Aborigines Welfare to help the family not only to look after the property and live in it in a way that will be to its interest, but also to help the family to meet the sums, by way of rent or instalment of purchase, payable to the protection Board.

Provision is made in clause 8 for the setting up of local committees representative of the community and for those committees to be assisted in their aboriginal welfare work. That proposal is additional to the recommendations contained in the McLean report, and it is provided for because of the success of the Framlingham committee. A small amount of money has been made available by the Treasurer to a number of good people in the Warrnambool district who have taken an intense interest in what can be described as the remnants of the old Framlingham settlement. They have raised a considerable amount of money in the area, and a Government grant has been of great encouragement to them to continue with their good work. They are accepting a responsibility by improving the cottages occupied by aborigines in the area, and by helping them in the same way as, I believe, the Superintendent of Aborigines Welfare will be able to help every settlement when empowered to do so under

the proposed legislation. The provision is included so that if local people in other areas become interested, they can be given similar encouragement and their efforts used to good effect to help solve this problem.

There is abroad a general idea that in this State aborigines are under certain citizenship disabilities. It is important that I should try to clarify this position once and for all. On page 19 of his report, Mr. McLean states—

On this subject,—

That is the question of legislative and administrative provisions—

it seems desirable to remove some misapprehension which exists as to the citizen-rights of aborigines. In Victoria, aborigines, including full-bloods, have the same right and obligation in law to enrol as electors, and to vote at Commonwealth and State elections, as other citizens. All Commonwealth Social Service benefits, including unemployment relief, are equally available to them, except that while they are being maintained by the State (i.e., resident on Lake Tyers station), they are not regarded as eligible for pensions or child endowment. Some uncertainty also exists as to the scope of the prohibition of the supply of intoxicating liquor to aborigines. The provisions as to this are contained in section 12 of the Aborigines Act and section 177 of the Licensing Act. Under existing conditions, they apply only to proved full-bloods, though, if the system of "licences" to reside at Lake Tyers is reintroduced,—

Of course, it will not be.

the former section would also apply to half-castes so licensed, but the latter probably would not. In my opinion, this semblance of prohibition might well be abolished. It causes resentment, leading to an attitude of defiance towards what is regarded as a "white man's law," and it tends to foster surreptitious drinking of the more harmful cheap wines and methylated spirits. Further, its enforcement is almost impossible, owing to the difficulty of legal proof.

To enforce that law, it is necessary for proof to be furnished that the aborigine concerned is a full-blood or under licence from Lake Tyers. As there are only twenty known full-bloods in the State—and I do not think it would be unkind to say that that figure may be doubtful—and there are none under licence, it is virtually a dead letter. Mr. McLean continued—

The psychological aspect which I have mentioned prompts me to refer also to the outdated provision of section 69 (1) of the

Police Offences Act, under which any person "not being an aboriginal native or the child of an aboriginal native, who is found lodging or wandering in company with any of the aboriginal natives of Victoria" is *prima facie* deemed an idle and disorderly person, and liable to be imprisoned for twelve months. This might well, in view of present-day conditions, be also repealed.

The same problem as to proof arises. The Government has adopted Mr. McLean's recommendation and included the repeal of these obsolete and ineffective provisions.

I commend the Bill. To facilitate the consideration of it by members of the Opposition and of the Country party, I have arranged that detailed notes on the clauses will be distributed later. I ask the House to give the Bill a speedy passage, because I believe that we owe a duty to the aboriginal natives in this State. We should therefore get on with the job and empower someone to tackle the problem of their assimilation into the community as decent citizens, as many of them already are. I suggest that the debate on the measure be adjourned for a fortnight, but if the Opposition is not ready to proceed at that time, I shall be pleased to agree to a further period of adjournment.

**Mr. SUTTON** (Albert Park).—I move—

That the debate be now adjourned.

The goodwill of the Chief Secretary is appreciated. This is a brand new Bill, therefore it deserves attention, which perhaps should have been bestowed on older measures. Humanitarian, social and anthropological questions are involved, and the Opposition would appreciate an opportunity to help the Government to do what is best for these people and, of course, for the State.

The motion for the adjournment of the debate was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, May 14.

#### POUNDS (FEES) BILL.

**Sir THOMAS MALTBY** (Minister of Public Works).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time. This measure is brought forward in response to requests from the Municipal Association of Victoria, regional municipal associations and many municipal

councillors. To my recollection, I have not received any contrary submissions. The fees and charges in respect of cattle impounded in municipal pounds were fixed in 1874, and have not since been amended. In those days an unsealed letter was carried anywhere in Victoria for, I think, ½d. The cost of administration in those days was very much less than it is to-day. All members are aware that because of enhanced prices of stationery, typewriters and stamps and the higher salaries paid to staff, the cost of answering correspondence has increased tremendously. It is amazing that in a period of 83 years the fees relating to the impounding of cattle have not been amended.

This Bill provides for increased pound fees, trespass rates for impounded stock, and also higher payments for certain inspections, registrations, and so on. Section 9 of the Pounds Act 1928 empowers councils, with the approval of the Governor in Council, to fix, among other things, trespass rates to be payable by the owner of impounded cattle to the persons on whose land the cattle trespass. The trespass rates may vary according to the description of the cattle trespassing, and according to whether the land trespassed on is or is not tillage land, or is or is not enclosed with a substantial fence. However, the Act fixes a maximum trespass rate in respect of land other than tillage land enclosed with a substantial fence of 1d. for every sheep and 5s. for every other head of stock so trespassing. Under the Bill, these rates are increased to 3d. for every sheep and 10s. for every other head of stock.

The low rates have encouraged people to allow stock deliberately to wander and forage on roads; the charges are so low that it amounts to cheap agistment. In these days of motoring and increased use of the roads, what at one time did not matter greatly has now become a menace to public life and property. It is intended that the fees will make it unprofitable for persons to agist sheep and stock on public highways. Where the animal trespassing is an entire horse, a bull or a ram, an additional

trespass rate not exceeding £5 may be claimed by the person on whose property the trespass occurs. All well-informed members will understand the reason for that provision.

Mr. LOVEGROVE.—What is the reason?

Sir THOMAS MALTBY.—I should think an entire horse would be liable to do far more damage if it got loose among other stock than one not so endowed. It would not matter if the animal were a thoroughbred, but it may not be. This additional rate is being increased to £10. Section 19 of the Pounds Act provides for a fee of 6d. to be charged any person desiring to inspect the pound-book. Under paragraph (c) of clause 2, this rate is increased to 2s. 6d. Obviously the reason for the increase is the time occupied by the poundkeeper in producing the book and finding the entry. The cost of administration must have increased fivefold as compared with the amount involved 83 years ago. Probably the fee will do little more than meet the cost of the service provided.

Section 21 provides for the poundkeeper to register brands and marks used in branding and marking cattle, on payment of a fee of 2s. 6d. It is proposed that this charge shall be increased to 5s. The schedule to the Pounds Act contains a statement of charges to be levied by the council on impounded stock and for various services rendered in connexion with such impounding. These charges are also increased. The pound fees payable to the council by the owner of impounded stock are 1d. for every head of sheep impounded and 5s. for every head of other cattle. The Bill increases these charges to 3d. per sheep and 10s. per head of other cattle. The charge of 2s. 6d. for writing and delivering, or sending by post, any notice is increased to 5s., and the charge for inserting any notice of impounding and proposed sale in the *Government Gazette* or a newspaper is likewise raised from 2s. 6d. to 5s., in addition to the actual cost of the insertion.

Mr. CAIN.—That could mean anything.

*Sir Thomas Maltby.*

Sir THOMAS MALTBY.—Yes, according to the fancy of the town clerk. Generally speaking, it will be seen that the existing rates are being doubled. I am not quite sure that even if the charges are increased as proposed they will be sufficient to deter people who deliberately allow their stock to wander so that they may obtain cheap agistment on public highways. However, the amendments that I am now submitting are in conformity with the wishes of those bodies representing the municipalities which will impose the charges. Probably the councils in agreeing to the proposals have had regard to the desires of the ratepayers.

On the motion of Mr. CAIN (Leader of the Opposition), the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, May 7.

#### CEMETERIES (FINANCIAL) BILL.

Mr. PORTER (Honorary Minister).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time. The Bill has been presented primarily to enable the trustees of the New Melbourne Cemetery, Fawkner, to borrow for developmental purposes a sum greater than the £15,000 which those trustees may now borrow for such purposes under the provisions of section 80 of the Cemeteries Act 1928. The New Melbourne Cemetery, Fawkner, was established early in this century by the Northern Suburbs Cemetery Act 1904. Provision was made in that Act for the trustees of that cemetery to borrow from time to time moneys not exceeding at any one time the sum of £15,000. In 1904 such a provision was generous and quite adequate to the purposes of the New Melbourne Cemetery. Repayment of the loans was a charge against the future revenue of the cemetery. Similar provisions had been provided in the previous year in the Act which constituted the Necropolis at Springvale—The Necropolis, Spring Vale, Act 1903. The substance of that Act, and the Northern Suburbs Cemetery Act 1904 was incorporated in the Cemeteries Act 1915, which was re-enacted by the Cemeteries Act 1928. The original provisions now form Divisions 1 and 2 of Part III. of the last-named Act. In 1931, all cemeteries

other than the Necropolis, Springvale, and the New Melbourne Cemetery, Fawkner, were given authority by the Cemeteries Act 1931 (No. 4006) to borrow money on the security of their revenues. No upper limit to this borrowing power was fixed. As an amount of £15,000 was still deemed adequate in 1931, no change was made in the law relating to the special borrowing powers for Springvale and Fawkner and they were specifically exempted from the provisions of Act No. 4006 by subsection (5) of section 2 of that Act. In 1940 the authority of the Necropolis, Springvale, to borrow money was increased from £15,000 to £20,000 by the Cemeteries (Spring Vale Necropolis) Act 1940 (No. 4778).

The trustees of the New Melbourne Cemetery, Fawkner, have now asked that they be authorized to borrow up to £60,000 for works relating to that cemetery. Repayment of such a sum is quite within the capabilities of the trustees of the Fawkner Cemetery but no legal power exists for any bank or other lending authority to advance an amount in excess of £15,000.

Mr. SHEPHERD.—Would works carried out at the cemetery include the purchase of land?

Mr. PORTER.—I cannot say. To enable the trustees of the Fawkner Cemetery to raise such a loan this measure has been prepared. In preparing this Bill opportunity has been taken to clean up also the provisions relating to the borrowing powers of the Necropolis, Springvale. Sub-clause (1) of clause 2 repeals sections 76 and 80 of the Cemeteries Act 1928 thus removing the special borrowing authorities of the trusts of the Necropolis, Springvale, and the New Melbourne Cemetery, Fawkner. The repeal, by sub-clause (2) of clause 2, of sub-section (5) of section 2 of the Cemeteries Act 1931 which specifically exempts the Necropolis, Springvale, and the Fawkner cemetery from the borrowing authority contained in that Act will enable those cemeteries in future to use the powers applied by that Act previously to all other cemeteries. Sub-clause (3) of clause 2 repeals consequentially the

Cemeteries (Spring Vale Necropolis) Act 1940 which amended section 76 of the Cemeteries Act 1928. The effect of the legislation, if approved by Parliament, will be that the two largest cemeteries in Victoria will have the same borrowing powers as are enjoyed by all other cemeteries throughout the State.

On the motion of Mr. SHEPHERD (Ascot Vale), the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, May 14.

#### MORNINGTON LAND BILL.

**Mr. K. H. TURNBULL** (Minister of Lands).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time. The Mornington Land Act 1930 provided for the sale of an area of Crown land, comprising 3 roods 10 perches situated near the railway station, which had been reserved for market purposes since as early as 1863, and out of the proceeds from the sale an amount not exceeding £1,190 was to be paid to the Shire of Mornington in reimbursement of money spent by it in the purchase of another more suitable site of 4 acres 1 rood 6 perches abutting the Nepean Highway and adjacent to the Tanti Hotel. The sale of the 3 roods 10 perches near the railway station, however, never took place and the council has therefore not been reimbursed. Now, after 27 years of development, the site adjacent to the Tanti Hotel is inadequate, and the council desires to acquire a larger area to be used for the combined purposes of abattoirs and sale-yards.

Subsequent to the passing of the 1930 Act, the 4 acres 1 rood 6 perches was surrendered by the council to the Crown and the area then became unalienated Crown land, although actually purchased out of council funds. The Crown therefore now holds the two areas. The purpose of the proposed new Act is to straighten out the existing confused situation and it will repeal the 1930 Act, provide for the grant of the site near the Tanti Hotel to the council, which will in turn dispose of it again, and re-reserve the 3 roods 10 perches near the railway station as a children's playground. The council will make its own financial provision for the acquisition of a new combined site.

On the motion of **Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL** (Brunswick West), the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, May 14.

#### POLICE OFFENCES BILL.

**Mr. RYLAH** (Attorney-General).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time. This is a consolidating measure. It has been examined by the Statute Law Revision Committee, which body has reported to the House that the Bill is a true consolidation. However, because of the treatment that the Police Offences Act has received—being divided into two measures for the purpose of consolidation—I intend to offer to the House some brief explanatory remarks.

The existing Police Offences Acts—of which there are many—present in some respects an extremely complex picture. This is particularly so in regard to the provisions relating to racing. That is not surprising because, since 1928, racing has been the subject of active and changing legislative policy. From a narrow base consisting of only three sections in the Police Offences Act 1928, an imposing and complex structure of racing legislation has been erected during the last 30 years. During that time, there have been passed many Acts which, though allied to the police offences racing provision, do not form part of the Police Offences Acts. This allied legislation includes, for example, Acts relating to totalizators, the registration of bookmakers, and dog-racing. It would have been possible, of course, to have consolidated in the Police Offences Bill all those Acts relating to racing which amend, or are read and construed with, the Police Offences Acts, and then to have consolidated, in separate measures, various other Acts relating to racing. This would have resulted in the considerable body of law relating to racing being dispersed, instead of compacted, in consolidation. I discussed the problem with the Director of Statutory Consolidation, and it was decided that he would try to dissect out of the various Police Offences Acts all provisions relating to racing, and then

combine them, in a single new Racing Bill, with other racing legislation collected from the statute-book.

Therefore, in the Racing Bill—which will be before the House later this day—the law relating to racing has, for the first time, been assembled, rearranged and presented as a single compact measure. Naturally, it has not been possible to accomplish this by a purely mechanical process. It requires drafting skill and experience, a good deal of care and a considerable time. But when the result is a Bill which, though substantially altered in shape and arrangement, presents the statute law without alteration in substance in a more concise, accessible and intelligible form, then I am sure that members will agree that the effort has been worth while. The measure now in the hands of members covers the Police Offences Act 1928 and the many amending enactments since the 1928 consolidation except in so far as the original provisions of the 1928 Act and the subsequent amendments have been concerned with racing, this being a general term which includes racing, gambling, totalizators and the like.

**Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL.**—Are they all covered by the Racing Bill?

**Mr. RYLAH.**—Yes.

**Mr. SHEPHERD.**—I take it that the Police Offences Bill contains provisions with respect to street betting.

**Mr. RYLAH.**—That is so. The measure is presented in the normal consolidation form with an explanatory table and an explanatory memorandum. The table shows the enactments to be repealed and where they appear in the new measure.

On the motion of **Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL** (Brunswick West), the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, May 7.

#### **RACING BILL.**

**Mr. RYLAH** (Attorney-General).—  
I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time. I do not propose to speak on this Bill at length, as, when explaining the previous measure, I mentioned how it came about. The explanatory paper attached to the Bill sets out clearly how the consolidating

process was effected. The Bill collects and presents, in consolidated form, existing legislation from various sources dealing with horse, pony, trotting and dog-racing and allied subjects. Legislation from these sources is represented in the Bill in six parts dealing respectively with racecourses and race-meetings, trotting control, dog-racing, registration of bookmakers and bookmakers' clerks, totalizators, and payments to racing clubs.

There is a good deal of inter-connexion between the various statutory sources; and, although considerable rearrangement of existing provisions has been effected in the course of the consolidation, it has not been found possible to segregate completely the various subject-matter sources in the different parts of the Bill. The Bill has been approved by the Statute Law Revision Committee as a true consolidation.

On the motion of **Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL** (Brunswick West), the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, May 14.

#### **FORESTS BILL.**

**Mr. RYLAH** (Attorney-General).—  
I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time. This measure is a true consolidation, as found by the Statute Law Revision Committee after examination. The explanatory paper attached to the Bill is in the usual form and directs attention to any unusual features of the measure.

On the motion of **Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL** (Brunswick West), the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, May 14.

#### **JUSTICES BILL.**

**Mr. RYLAH** (Attorney-General).—  
I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time. This is an extremely important consolidating measure, because the principal Act is in constant use in all sorts of places in the community, and is one of the hardest to understand. That is not surprising because the consolidation covers 23 separate enactments as set out in the schedule. The explanatory paper

issued with the Bill describes the consolidation in a far better manner than I could. The measure has been examined by the Statute Law Revision Committee and found to be a true consolidation.

On the motion of Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL (Brunswick West), the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, May 14.

#### TRINITY COLLEGE BILL.

The debate (adjourned from April 10) on the motion of Mr. Bolte (Premier and Treasurer) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

**Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL** (Brunswick West).—This is a short but important Bill as far as Trinity College is concerned. That college occupies land which was reserved under the Land Act of approximately 1866. By the *Government Gazette* of 24th July, 1866, at page 1531, 10 acres 12 perches of land was reserved for the Church of England to provide a site on which to establish a college affiliated with the University of Melbourne. Subsequent to that reservation the Church of England erected buildings costing about £500,000 for Trinity College and the Janet Clarke Hall. The church now desires to erect further buildings valued at £70,000, having in hand towards that expenditure the sum of about £25,000. In order to complete the work the church requires security on which to borrow the balance of the money.

I should have thought that any bank would be prepared to lend money to an organization such as the Church of England without security. But the bank desires to have its security—to get its pound of flesh—in case things do not go as expected. If the Church of England was to fail, the bank security would not be of much value. But apparently that is the way in which banks carry on their business. The Government has brought down this Bill to enable the church to pledge the college land, upon which stand buildings valued at £500,000, in order to borrow the sum of approximately £50,000. It seems an unfortunate position, but there it is.

The University of Melbourne, like the English universities, has colleges conducted by the various churches—Trinity by the Church of England, Ormond by the Presbyterian Church, Queen's by the Methodist Church, and Newman by the Roman Catholic Church. In former days, the only persons who could afford to attend universities were the sons of squatters and of people engaged in commerce, represented by members on the Government side of this House. It was a great advantage for a student to be able to enter one of the colleges and to obtain the tuition given there. A publication entitled *The University of Melbourne—A Centenary Portrait*, issued in 1956, states—

Although the academic success of college students is still high, they have long ceased to monopolize university prizes and scholarships: partly because they now form a smaller proportion of the university's students, and partly because their tutorial system has been imitated by the university in many faculties—particularly Arts. Each college—

This is the important part which the colleges play in university education—

has twenty or so tutors, most of whom are young graduates, university lecturers, or distinguished medical and legal men from the city. Their weekly tutorial or lecture, usually lasting an hour, is open to resident and non-resident students; it supplements the lectures given at the university. The quality of these tutorials varies greatly, but in the medical subjects the college tuition is often outstanding.

Another passage in the book states—

The university discreetly refused to teach Christian doctrine, but there was no reason why independent colleges could not fulfil this important function of a university.

Persons who have desired to be ordained as preachers in one of the four churches have obtained tuition from and passed examinations at the appropriate college. The extract proceeds—

Since the 1850's, some of the churches had hoped to use part of the university grounds for the erection of colleges where they could train candidates for the ministry and provide residence, religious guidance, and additional tuition to students of the university, many of whom were living in suburban lodgings, exposed to "the temptations of this wicked city." For years the 40 acres of land allotted to the four leading denominations had remained unused—except by the bolder residents of Carlton, who broke the fences to gather firewood and graze their goats and horses.

In 1871, an Act providing for the abolition of State aid to religion dealt with the various lands at the university vested in the churches. Without going into the subject deeply, I understand that the legislation enabled the church trustees to obtain a title under the Transfer of Land Act, and to pledge it to borrow money from financial institutions. The Church of England did not avail itself of the legislation, but in 1927 it incorporated a body known as the Trinity College (Melbourne) Trusts Corporation under the Companies Act for the purpose of holding land and property. In that year a Bill was passed by Parliament providing for a Crown grant of land to the corporate body named. That deprived the Church of England of the ability to borrow as other churches could.

The purpose of this Bill is, in effect, to put the Church of England into the same position as the other churches. Trinity College has a number of students in residence and extends the privilege of scholarships to certain students. It is hoped that, as a result of the passing of the measure, new residential premises, enabling a further 48 students to be accommodated, will be erected. At present, including those at Janet Clarke Hall and in Trinity College, there are 134 in residence and approximately 60 non-resident students. The passing of this proposed legislation will mean much to students who desire to enter the college.

Trinity College is fairly liberal regarding scholarships. Of the 218 students who attend the college, 55 have open scholarships worth amounts from £20 upwards. I understand from the church authorities that if a person is awarded a scholarship and is unable to pay for the full cost of his residence, the church does not insist upon payment of the amount due, about £240.

Clause 2 will enable the Trinity College (Melbourne) Trusts Corporation to mortgage the college lands to borrow approximately £50,000. It distresses me to find in a Bill a provision enabling a church to pledge its land to a bank in order to secure this very modest sum. I should have thought that any bank would be prepared, on the fair name of

the Church of England, to advance that amount without compelling it to submit to the indignity of entering into a mortgage in the same way as a private individual does.

Mr. BLOOMFIELD.—Shameful, isn't it!

Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL.—It is shameful. I do not think the Minister of Education made his interjection in all sincerity, but my statement is sincere. Under the Bill, the Church of England will be compelled to execute a mortgage in the same manner as a member of the public. I repeat that, if the Church of England cannot repay £50,000, the mortgage will not be of much use to the mortgagee.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and passed through its remaining stages.

*The sitting was suspended at 5.47 p.m. until 7.20 p.m.*

#### COAL MINE WORKERS PENSIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL.

The debate (adjourned from April 10) on the motion of Mr. Mibus (Minister of Mines) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr. CAIN (Leader of the Opposition).—This is a small Bill dealing with the pensions of coal miners. Legislation was introduced in Victoria about 15 years ago to provide for the retirement of coal miners upon a pension; it largely followed the pattern of an enactment by the mother State of New South Wales. The adoption of measures of this kind by Australian Parliaments has been very largely due to strong agitation over a great number of years in the course of which it was pointed out that the coal mining industry was of a hazardous character and that, therefore, there ought to be special provision made for those working in the industry. It was decided that the retiring age for coal miners should be fixed at 60 years, which is five years earlier than in the case of average retirements, particularly those in the Public Service.

As an outcome of this legislation general satisfaction has prevailed, I believe, in the industry itself. It is true

that coal mining is by no means as buoyant in Australia to-day as it had been up till a few years ago. Probably the industry in New South Wales has been much impeded by the development of the brown coal industry in Victoria and by the production of inferior grades of coal in other States, including South Australia. The outcome has been what might be described as a recession, an easing up in the industry. Unemployment has been feared. Men have been laid off and the industry in Australia as a whole has faced somewhat of a crisis. I am not here to argue that it is not a good thing that we should be able to live without so much coal production. In this State the industry has not been of considerable proportions. Undoubtedly there have been losses over the years at Wonthaggi, but there is no industry in this country that has been so badly managed as the coal-mining industry. In the old days particularly, thousands of tons were left lying underground so that it became impossible to work a particular area later. Losses were sustained because of the unsatisfactory methods by which mining was carried out. There was, in fact, a state of war over a great number of years between the mine owners and the miners.

It takes a long while to bring about reform in any direction, but finally the Australian people and their Governments—I am referring especially now to those in the two major States—decided to apply the principle embodied to-day in the miners' pension legislation. That principle has its application to the coal mining industry alone; there is no other section of industry in which it applies, and it does apply very largely because of the hazardous nature of the occupation. Without doubt, working underground is unhealthy. It is an unfortunate fact that the health of the coal miner is often impaired at an earlier age than in the case of men working on the surface. This small amending measure proposes an extension of the existing provisions of the Victorian Act. Gradually over recent years we have witnessed the growth of inflation and nobody has been able to stop it.

*Mr. Cain.*

An HONORABLE MEMBER.—You do not want it stopped.

Mr. CAIN.—The interjection is completely disorderly, but I realize that if I had to make a choice between the inflationary system as we see it to-day and a rapid decline in costs and in the value of money, I would be faced with some serious repercussions. There are many people who do not share my views in politics but who would disagree with the interjector. They believe—and they include a number of financiers—that if there is to be continuing development there must be a certain amount of inflation. I agree that the inflationary tendency has developed to an unnecessarily high mark, particularly since 1950. Whether it would be wise to stop it I will not continue to discuss, because you, Mr. Speaker, would stop me, and I would hate that to happen. In view of the lower purchasing power possessed by the community to-day it has been a wise move to increase progressively the contributions made in the interests of the miners. Persons in receipt of miners' pensions can obtain also in certain circumstances a share of the age or invalid pension. I emphasize that the contribution in the interests of the coal miners has been largely that made by the mining industry, and it has been a particularly good provision on the part of mine owners to allow the workers to retire at an earlier age than normally.

This Bill embraces a slight improvement on the existing legislation. The Minister of Mines has informed me of his intention to submit an amendment to clause 2 bearing upon the circumstances of certain mine workers who do not remain in the industry. The Minister has advised me that a similar amendment has been made in the New South Wales legislation.

Mr. MIBUS.—The ultimate result will be the same if the proposed amendment is inserted in this Bill.

Mr. CAIN.—This proposed alteration of a measure that has only just come before us is a further indication of the wisdom of not rushing things.

The Minister of Mines delivered his explanatory second-reading speech on

this Bill less than a fortnight ago, yet he now considers it necessary to amend the measure. The Opposition has no strong objection to an amendment if it is justified. Since the Minister explained the Bill, I have contacted parties interested in coal mining in both New South Wales and Victoria, and I have been informed that its provisions are satisfactory. However, if the Bill is amended—

**Mr. MIBUS.**—It will still be satisfactory.

**Mr. CAIN.**—I do not doubt that, but I will not have the opportunity of discussing the amendment with those interested. I am sure that the Minister appreciates the difficulties involved. However, in my opinion the honorable gentleman can usually be relied upon to do the right thing, and in the circumstances I shall not adopt an unreasonable attitude. I merely point out that it is necessary for the Opposition to thoroughly investigate all measures that are introduced in this House. Probably the proposed amendment is necessary because the Minister misinterpreted the New South Wales legislation.

The Bill gives effect to decisions made by all parties engaged in the coal industry and ratifies an agreement entered into many years ago. For those reasons I do not propose to delay its passage any longer than necessary. I trust that when the Minister moves his amendment during the Committee stage, the Opposition will be given the opportunity of examining it thoroughly to ensure that in principle the Bill remains in conformity with the New South Wales legislation.

**Mr. COCHRANE** (Gippsland West).—The Country party is in agreement with the provisions of this Bill. The original Coal Mine Workers Pensions Act was passed by the Dunstan Government in 1942. The basis of the present pension scheme is that the Government provides three-sevenths of the total contributions, the coal mine owners three-sevenths, and the miners one-seventh. The employees each pay approximately 7s. 6d. a week into the fund, which is administered by a tribunal of five, consisting of two members nominated by the coal mine owners,

two by the miners themselves, and a Government nominee as chairman. Section 7 of the principal Act provides, amongst other things, that a miner shall be entitled to a pension if he is permanently incapacitated whilst following his occupation. Clause 2 of the Bill provides that a pension will be payable for permanent incapacity arising outside of a miner's employment, provided that the injury is not caused intentionally, and also that the recipient has served in the industry for 20 years and has paid into the fund for at least five years. I consider that any man who has worked in the industry for 20 years is entitled to the benefit proposed.

Under the terms of the principal Act, a pensioner is entitled to earn £2 10s. a week without suffering any reduction of his pension. That provision was inserted in the legislation in 1948. Clause 3 of the present Bill proposes that the amount of £2 10s. be increased to £5 10s. Considering the decrease in the purchasing power of money during recent years, the amendment proposed is most reasonable and will bring the principal Act into line with legislation in other States.

At present the coal miners' Federation operates a disability fund from which payments are made to miners who are unable to work because of injury. The amount received by a miner from that fund is not deducted from payments made under the Workers Compensation Act. However, if an employee is permanently incapacitated, the amount paid from the disability fund is deducted from his compensation, and that is, to my mind, an unreasonable principle. I understand that the provisions of this Bill will remedy that situation to some extent.

In Victoria the main mining areas are Wonthaggi and Korumburra, which are in the electorate that I have the honour to represent. The coal miners at Wonthaggi in particular have given excellent service to Victoria. Frequently statements are made in this House that the State Coal Mine at Wonthaggi is losing thousands of pounds. In that regard, I ask honorable members to bear in mind that a few years ago Victoria was importing coal which cost £12 a ton

landed in this State, yet it was being produced at Wonthaggi at a much cheaper rate. Apparently, little credit is now given to the State Coal Mines for that achievement. The mines at Wonthaggi kept industry and the Victorian Railways supplied with coal for many years. Consequently, I consider that the losses sustained are only book entries and should not be harshly criticized.

Officials of the coal miners' Federation at Wonthaggi have informed me that they are pleased that the Government has introduced this amending legislation. On behalf of the coal miners of this State and of the Country party, I trust that the Bill will be given a speedy passage.

**Mr. SHEPHERD** (Ascot Vale).—Any measure introduced by the Government to broaden the social service privileges of coal miners will receive the whole-hearted support of the Opposition. That fact has been adequately outlined by my Leader. A close reading of the second-reading speech of the Minister of Mines indicates that the Bill contains certain pertinent provisions that, whilst not being revolutionary, are new to the coal mine workers' pension scheme that operates in Victoria. It is true, as was pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition and the honorable member for Gippsland West, that over the years the coal-mining industry has played an important part in the development of industry in Australia. It has assisted materially in balancing the price of coal purchased by the Victorian Railways.

The mines at Wonthaggi are entirely different from those in other parts of Australia and it is necessary to use a different technique in mining the coal. In New South Wales, the working face is frequently 40 to 50 feet, whereas at Wonthaggi it is often only 18 inches and the maximum is approximately 5 ft. 3 in. Generally speaking, that means that the work of a Victorian coal miner is more dangerous than that of his counterpart in other States. I have visited and inspected the mines at Wonthaggi, as have other honorable members, and I consider that even as visitors we took unnecessary risks when crawling about in confined spaces. It is

logical to assume, therefore, that a coal miner in Victoria suffers greater inconvenience and is more likely to be injured than miners in the other States and even in England. I mention England merely to point out that the Bill contains a provision which will make it possible for a miner who is receiving a pension to visit England and for the first eighteen months he will be paid the English equivalent in currency of the amount of pension that he would draw in Australia. Doubtless, many Victorian coal miners migrated from England many years ago and may desire to spend their retirement in their homeland. Therefore, they will benefit from the provisions of this measure. During the Committee stage I should like the Minister of Mines to inform me whether such people will have to participate in the contributory pension scheme that operates in England or whether the coal miners' pension scheme in that country gives reciprocity to Australians.

As has been pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition, the honorable member for Gippsland West, and the Minister, it is necessary for a miner who is incapacitated to have been a contributor to the scheme for five years and to have worked in the industry for twenty years before he is eligible to receive a pension. I do not know what is intended by the amendment foreshadowed to clause 2, but that clause, in regard to the degree of incapacity, is somewhat related to the provisions contained in the various pensions Acts of the Commonwealth. Previously, a mine worker had to be totally incapacitated before he was eligible to receive a pension. The broadening of the concessions, as pointed out by the honorable member for Gippsland West, is indicative of the fact that the Government believes in social service of the type that has always been advocated by the Labour party. Despite the Government's opposition to the easing of the means test, it is prepared on this occasion to follow the lead of the New South Wales Government and ease the restricting provisions to provide greater advantages to those engaged in the industry.

Another pertinent point which, no doubt, would be covered by the honorable member for Oakleigh if he were present, concerns former mine workers who are receiving pensions and who have been committed to mental institutions. Upon committal to a mental institution, pension benefits have to be surrendered, but it is the Government's intention that in future a pension shall be paid to the wife on the same basis as if she were a widow. Opposition members support this principle.

In coal mining, as in gold mining, many of the disabilities, such as silicosis and pneumoconiosis are not brought about as a result of accidents, but are due to the prevailing conditions and poor management of the industry. Unfortunately miners must work under bad conditions and owing to the thickness of the seams, it is necessary to drill through more rock than coal. Consequently, miners phthisis is more prevalent in Victoria than elsewhere.

Opposition members wholeheartedly support this measure, firstly because of its humanitarian aspect, and secondly, because of the extra benefits that will be made available to those people who will be forced to seek the benefits of the Coal Mine Workers' Pensions Acts. The honorable member for Gippsland West pointed out that contributions to the total cost of the scheme are paid in the proportions of three-sevenths by the Government, three-sevenths by the employer, and one-seventh by the miner. Under this scheme, having regard to the fact that the Government controls the coal mines at Wonthaggi, six-sevenths of the total cost of the pensions will be provided by the Treasury and the remaining one-seventh by the miner. The Minister has foreshadowed an amendment which Opposition members hope will further broaden the benefits of the scheme and provide greater protection to those mine workers who are forced to retire from the industry. We support the measure.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clause 1 was agreed to.

#### Clause 2—

At the end of sub-section (1) of section seven of the principal Act as amended by any Act there shall be inserted the expression—

“or, alternatively, if he proves to the satisfaction of the Tribunal—

- (d) that he is to the degree of not less than eighty-five per centum permanently incapacitated for work otherwise than by an intentional self-inflicted injury;
- (e) that by reason of such incapacity he is unable to continue in employment as a mine worker;
- (f) that he has been engaged as a mine worker in Victoria for a continuous period of not less than twenty years immediately preceding his cessation of employment as a mine worker by reason of such incapacity; and
- (g) that he has paid contributions to the fund for a period of at least five years”.

**Mr. MIBUS** (Minister of Mines).—I move—

That the following sub-clause be added:—

(2) No person shall be eligible for a pension by reason of the amendment to the Principal Act made by the last preceding sub-section if his employment as a mine worker ceased before the commencement of this Act by reason of the incapacity.

In clarification of this amendment, I point out that it was the intention that no miner who had left the industry because of a disability prior to the operation of “this Act” should participate in the benefits being conferred in clause 2. The amendment will ensure that the intention of the Government is carried out. The ultimate result will be the same as in New South Wales, in which State the principal Act differs from that in Victoria.

**Mr. CAIN** (Leader of the Opposition).—The principal Act has already been amended on several occasions and, like many others, it is becoming somewhat of a jig-saw puzzle. Sub-section (1) of section 7 of the original Act provided that a mine worker shall be eligible as from the date from which he ceased to be employed in or about a coal mine, or where his incapacity arose after 31st December, 1941, for a pension of £2 per week—it is £5 2s. 6d. per week now—if he proved certain things to the satisfaction of the tribunal. The effect of the amendment is that no person who ceased work as a mine worker before the

implementation of this measure shall receive the additional benefits contained in the Bill. That will apply whether he has retired only one day or one week prior to the enactment of the legislation. I understand that the Parliamentary Draftsman was responsible for this amendment because he was not sure whether or not it would be retrospective. The amendment makes it clear that notwithstanding anything that the tribunal may do, a mine worker cannot receive the extra benefits envisaged if he ceases to be a mine worker before the commencement of the operation of the amending provisions. In other words, if something should happen to a worker between now and the proclamation of this measure, he will not be entitled to receive the extra amount, but he will receive payment under the old rate.

Mr. MIBUS.—That will apply also to anyone who ceased work six years or ten years ago.

Mr. CAIN.—It does not go back as far as that, as there have been several amendments to the principal Act since then. Originally, the rate of pension was £2 per week, but it was later increased to £4 10s., then to £5 2s. 6d., and under this proposal it will be £5 10s. weekly. In other words, there will have been four amendments since 1942. I am sorry that it is to be made mandatory now. The mine workers studied this Bill and accepted it as satisfactory—apparently they informed the honorable member representing Wonthaggi that it was satisfactory to them.

Mr. SHEPHERD.—The honorable member for Gippsland West said that the Coal Miners Federation was satisfied.

Mr. CAIN.—That is so. They were satisfied with the Government's proposal, but it is now intended to amend it. The mine workers have not seen the amendment and it may not be acceptable to them. Apparently the Parliamentary Draftsman considered the amendment was desirable as the question of retrospectivity was not clear. To put the matter beyond doubt, it was decided to insert this amendment, which provides, in effect, that should any person become incapable of performing his duties before the Act is proclaimed he will not receive the advantages under

it. I am not satisfied that this provision has been accepted by the New South Wales Government and by the miners' association in that State. If I had that assurance, I would be happy.

Mr. MIBUS.—That is the position.

Mr. CAIN.—I should not like to be guilty of accepting an amendment that will make the proposed legislation less effective from the point of view of the miners than the New South Wales Act. In the present circumstances, it would be wise to postpone further consideration of the amendment until next week so that the miners might be consulted. If they are satisfied with it, all will be well. I think members are entitled to know the facts before they agree to the amendment.

Mr. COCHRANE (Gippsland West).—As I stated previously, I consulted representatives of the miners at Wonthaggi and submitted to them a copy of the Bill and of the Minister's second-reading speech. I was informed that they were happy with the proposed amendments and that it was hoped the Bill would be supported by all members. However, I consider that we should be afforded an opportunity of discussing with those directly concerned the implications of the amendment to which the Leader of the Opposition has just referred, and, with that end in view, I ask the Minister to delay further consideration of the matter until next week.

Mr. MIBUS (Minister of Mines).—I have given an assurance that the amendment in question will bring clause 2 into line with the New South Wales provision. However, honorable members have indicated that they wish to be assured from other sources that that is the position, and I agree to the suggestion that has been made. I know that the miners will be satisfied to accept the amendment I have submitted, because they have asked that the legislation concerning this particular matter should be brought into line with that operating in New South Wales. In the meantime clause 2 should be postponed.

By leave, the amendment was withdrawn.

The clause was postponed.

Clauses 3 to 6 were agreed to.

Progress was reported.

# VERMIN AND NOXIOUS WEEDS (FINANCIAL) BILL.

The debate (adjourned from April 10) on the motion of Mr. K. H. Turnbull (Minister of Lands) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

**Mr. STONEHAM** (Midlands).—This is certainly a short measure, and in his explanatory speech the Minister of Lands treated it as such. The substance of the Bill is contained in clause 2, which provides—

In sub-section (1) of section 28 of the principal Act as re-enacted by any Act for the words "Seven hundred thousand pounds" there shall be substituted the words "Nine hundred thousand pounds."

The outline of the measure, as given by the Minister of Lands, is one of the shortest I have ever seen; it occupies only about 3 inches in *Hansard*. As the subject of vermin and noxious weeds does not come before the House frequently in the form of a Bill, there may be a tendency by some sections of the community to underestimate the importance of the matter. Consequently, I wish to take the opportunity of explaining fully what the Bill actually means. It amends section 28 of the principal Act, as amended by sub-section (1) of section 9 of Act No. 5804. Sub-section (1) reads—

For section 28 of the principal Act as amended by any Act there shall be substituted the following section:—

28 (1) The Treasurer of Victoria may under the authority of this Act issue and apply out of the Loan Funds amounts not exceeding in all the sum of Seven hundred thousand pounds.

(2) The amounts so issued and applied shall be applied for or towards the purposes of the last two preceding sections.

The words "the last two preceding sections" refer to sections 26 and 27 of the principal Act, No. 5431.

Section 26 provides for advances to farmers to finance destruction of vermin and noxious weeds if the Minister is satisfied that they are unable to comply with any notice requiring the destruction of vermin or the destruction and suppression of noxious weeds because of their inability to finance the payment

for labour, materials or equipment. Sub-section (1) of section 26 provides, *inter alia*—

The Minister may, out of moneys available for the purpose, make to such owner or occupier advances from time to time for carrying out the work involved.

Of course, the applicant must expend the moneys so advanced upon such work as the inspector for the district directs, and the advance has to be repaid in four equal quarterly instalments. If the Minister chooses, no interest need be paid, but if he decides that interest shall be charged a rate of up to 4 per cent. can be imposed.

Section 27 reads—

(1) The Superintendent from funds made available for the purpose shall in each district provide and maintain such tools and equipment and storage therefor as are required for the effective control of vermin and noxious weeds,

(2) Such tools and equipment may be hired out by the inspector in charge of the district to any owner or occupier of land at such nominal charge as is fixed by the Superintendent.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister of Lands stated that the present provision of £700,000 is likely to become inadequate in the near future to meet all requirements. He referred especially to work being done in connexion with the eradication of ragwort and stated that it was estimated that during the next three years a further sum of £200,000 would be needed.

As I remarked previously, it is possible that some people do not appreciate fully the important work being performed by the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Branch of the Lands Department. I think honorable members generally realize the responsibilities of Parliament in relation to the agricultural potentialities of Victoria. There is no doubt that we have a serious duty to ensure that the maximum productivity is obtained from our land. One has merely to traverse practically any part of Victoria to realize that we are still confronted with serious problems associated with the destruction of noxious weeds. Perhaps it would be as well if I reserved my comments with respect to vermin until the Rabbit (Biological Destruction) Bill is under discussion. Recently I noticed in the *Victorian Wheat and Woolgrower*, which

is the official organ of the Victorian Wheat and Woolgrowers Association that today, April 30, has been set down for discussion by the Superintendent of the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Branch of the Lands Department, Mr. McIlroy, with representatives of the various primary producers organizations, the seriousness of the present position concerning saffron thistle. It is interesting to note that in the advice sent to various organizations to be represented at the meeting, Mr. McIlroy stated—

Saffron thistle is proclaimed a noxious weed for the whole of the State except the metropolitan area. It has a big hold in large areas of the State, particularly in the north and it is still spreading.

Opinions on control of the weed vary, some being of the opinion that the Department should enforce the Act more strictly as far as this weed in concerned and others want controls relaxed.

In the past, for various reasons, the Act has not been as strictly enforced as it might have been but the time has come when something definite has to be done regarding control measures.

Mr. McIlroy proceeded to suggest various alternatives which, no doubt, were discussed fully at the meeting today. Possibly before the second-reading debate on this measure terminates the Minister of Lands will inform the House of the result of those discussions. I stress the importance of giving proper attention to this problem, and that necessarily implies the provision of adequate finance for the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Branch of the Lands Department to enable it to play its proper part in ensuring that our agricultural lands will not be rendered unproductive because of the incidence of noxious weeds. I think all members who have studied this problem closely will concede that when Labour Administrations have been in office the amount provided for the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Branch has been increased, and I am glad to state that since the last Labour Government went out of office only slight reductions—if any—have been made.

The spread of some noxious weeds has become more serious in recent years due to the altered method of transporting livestock. In days gone by, most stock was in the charge of drovers who had to move the animals long distances

*Mr. Stoneham.*

on foot, but nowadays beasts are loaded on to motor vehicles and within a few hours they are moved hundreds of miles away. Frequently seeds of noxious weeds are on their bodies, resulting in the nuisance being widespread.

Although undoubtedly in the past good work has been done and much progress has been achieved by the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Branch, it must be recognized that the difficulties of the Branch have increased in recent years. I understand that in various parts of the State in addition to the saffron thistle and ragwort which have already been mentioned, skeleton weed constitutes a serious problem. I am certain that anyone who is prepared to study the matter and obtain first-hand information will readily agree that the Government is doing the right thing in making this additional financial provision for the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Branch.

**Sir ALBERT LIND** (Gippsland East).—There is no need for a lengthy debate on this measure. However, I am pleased that the Government is mindful of the grave danger associated with noxious weeds—particularly ragwort. I admit frankly that when I was Minister of Lands the Department was unable to control the menace. This was due largely to shortage of finance but was aggravated by the fact that many landowners were not aware of the serious danger that was ahead of them. When I was Minister of Lands, possibly I acted wrongly in encouraging departmental officers to go over fences and enter private properties in certain districts, but I realized that patches of ragwort in high places constituted a danger to surrounding country. Ragwort has a seed that is air-borne. Such seed has been carried by air from the Strezlecki ranges, north of Rosedale, to places as far away as the Lakes Entrance district. That may be hard to believe, but my statement is true. If the movement of the ragwort menace in Gippsland is followed it will be discovered that on the eastern slopes of a mountainside there are a few scattered plants. On the western side, where the wind is felt to a greater extent than on the eastern side,

the seed would come down. My own son has co-operated with officers of the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Branch in respect of Crown lands and forest lands north and somewhat east of Bairnsdale, and in one day which I remember well, 26 plants were found 40 miles away from the source of the infestation. Members can well imagine what could happen in this State if proper steps were not taken to control noxious weeds.

Personally, I would not hesitate to go beyond the provisions of this measure. If it is discovered that there are danger areas on private properties in elevated situations from which wind might carry seed a long way, I would favour entering private property, particularly where the owner is unable to cope with the weed himself. I emphasize that to-day many people do not recognize ragwort on their properties. They save up money to buy a farm property only to find later when the plants come into bloom that their property is infested with ragwort, and they have no option but to get out. Anything that can be done by the State to arrest the spread of noxious weeds will tend toward obtaining wealth from the soil for the benefit of the nation.

I support the measure and trust that the Minister of Lands will be enabled to release more of his staff to assist in the eradication of noxious weeds, particularly in view of the fact that the rabbit problem has practically been solved by the introduction of myxomatosis. The Branch is doing good work in controlling the spread of blackberries by the use of hormones, but hormones would be uneconomic, particularly for private farmers, in dealing with the ragwort menace because of the density of growth. I trust that the financial assistance to the Branch will result in its good work being performed more expeditiously than has hitherto been possible.

**Sir HERBERT HYLAND** (Gippsland South).—I strongly support the measure but would like to see much more activity in the eradication of what is known in Gippsland as the yellow peril. I refer to ragwort. It has been stated that one ragwort plant can produce 4,000 seeds, all of which are capable of being airborne. All of those seeds, of course, will

not germinate because some will lodge in trees and other unfavourable places, but those that fall on soil will grow to maturity.

Recently at Binginwarrie, near Welshpool in South Gippsland, a protest meeting concerning noxious weeds was held, after which the local newspaper published an article headed, "Yellow Peril must and can be eradicated. Landowners launch campaign." The report proceeds—

There was a determined note evident at a meeting of representative farmers who gathered on Monday night to declare war on the yellow peril—ragwort. "There is one thing certain. We will have to fight this or we will lose our land," declared the chairman, Mr. Ross.

Mr. Ross is a reputable citizen in the district. The article criticized the holders of blocks—some of them absentees—who allow their land to become infested, while their neighbours try to keep their properties clean. A request was made also for an effective spray to be supplied at reasonable cost instead of at the present price of £7 a gallon. For some reason unknown to me farmers have been called upon, over the years, to pay almost twice the price that is charged to the Government. The ragwort problem is not confined to a small section of the countryside. It is spreading to the most valuable properties in Gippsland.

One can imagine what happens when the wind scatters the seed—soon yellow flowers cover the countryside. Sprays assist to keep the weed down. The people to whom I have referred are determined that something shall be done, and I urge the Government to take appropriate action. The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization and other similar bodies are hard pressed to find an answer to the problem. Not only Victoria, but also New Zealand, America and Great Britain are affected. For some time the Lands Department has been working on the Cinnabar moth. Honorable members will recall how the prickly pear took control of land in the Roma district of Queensland. The *Cactoblastis cactorum*, which originated in South America, was imported from South Africa to clear up the infestation. That insect burrows into prickly pear, and

eats the inside, so that ultimately the plant cannot breathe and dies. Another bug or moth of that nature is required to deal with ragwort. Most insects are killed by their natural enemies, such as birds, before they are able to kill the weed. I have been in touch with Mr. A. W. McIlroy, Superintendent of the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Branch, for about twelve months in connexion with this matter. On the 24th April, Mr. McIlroy wrote to me as follows:—

In reply to your query of the 17th instant, relating to the progress being made with the establishment of the Cinnabar moth in Victoria, I wish to advise you that considerable work has been carried out on this project over the past few months.

As you are no doubt aware it was originally planned to build up a large population of the Cinnabar moths over the past season for possible liberations this year.

Unfortunately several factors have interfered with this programme, such as the very damp conditions at a critical stage in the life cycle and severe attacks by scorpion flies at a vulnerable stage. This has meant that large numbers of the moths could not be produced although it was possible to continue the experimental work which had been arranged and to breed sufficient material so that under normal circumstances a large number should be produced next spring.

It is felt that at this stage the best course will be to use all the moths produced next season for building up a still greater population for possible liberation the following year. The future programme will depend of course on the numbers which emerge next year.

The insects are at present in the pupal (resting) stage and are not expected to develop into moths until next November or December. These moths will lay eggs which hatch into caterpillars which will then attack the ragwort in early summer.

The eradication of ragwort is as vital to Victoria as was the destruction of the prickly pear in Queensland. I appeal to the Premier and the Minister of Lands to endeavour to have a plan produced to assist the men who are battling it out in the hill country, by providing sprays at a reasonable cost and by augmenting the number of men in the Lands Department working on the problem. Wonderful country is being taken almost out of production. Once the weed gets through the Western District the countryside there will suffer too. From small patches this weed has spread over hundreds of square miles in

*Sir Herbert Hyland.*

Gippsland. As the honorable member for Gippsland East mentioned, this yellow peril is a snare and a delusion to many men. They purchase land when the weed is not in evidence, but when the ragwort comes out later in the year they realize they have lost their money. It will take years to achieve the objective we have in mind, but it is well worth while, and I commend the staffs of the Lands Department and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization for what they have already done.

**Mr. MITCHELL** (Benambra).—I support the measure because, unfortunately, the yellow peril mentioned by the honorable member for Gippsland South is not the only yellow peril in Victoria today. In the north-east, behind Beechworth and Wodonga and down the Kiewa river, there is a yellow peril which is, if anything, more deadly than the ragwort in Gippsland. I refer to St. John's wort. The situation, as the Minister of Lands knows following his personal visit, is particularly desperate around Beechworth. On account of the spread of this weed, land is going completely out of production. Too much faith has been placed in one of these "wonder bugs," the *Chrysomela hyperci*. Under certain circumstances that beetle will destroy St. John's wort; it eats not only the leaves but also the bark off the stems. When in New Zealand I visited the Cawthron Institute at Nelson in the South Island. There I was informed that a section of the life cycle of the *Chrysomela hyperci* beetle is as yet unknown to science. Therefore, we are working with something we do not completely understand and we are foolish to put full faith in it. The insect is temperamental; it likes peace and quiet. It is inadvisable to stock paddocks too soon after the beetle has been liberated. In addition, foxes relish the insect as an item of diet. I urge the Government to use the money authorized by the Bill to provide more men, more sprays and more equipment, because those of us on the land in the north-east are fully seized of the danger of this yellow peril that menaces us. If sprays are provided at reasonable cost and the Department

assists generally with the loan of equipment, we are prepared to throw ourselves into the battle to save our land.

I should like to warn the Minister of Lands and the House that there is a feeling throughout the rural areas of my district that money is being wasted by the Lands Department in ill-advised purchases of machinery and in the duplication of tractors and plant where a smaller quantity would suffice; and that repairs of equipment, which is being sent to a particular firm, are being carried out needlessly. It is also hinted that if the Public Accounts Committee investigated the activities of the Lands Department it might find, as it did in relation to the Forests Commission, that money is being squandered on useless spare parts and in the duplication of machinery. It is of no use passing a measure like this with an air of sanctimonious virtue if the people's money is to be squandered by bad management of the machinery purchased by the Department. I think a careful personal examination of the log books of some of the tractors and machinery by the Minister of Lands would prove interesting to the honorable gentleman.

We have another enemy in the north-east—skeleton weed. As the Minister is aware, his Department admits that it is completely beaten on how to deal with skeleton weed in grasslands, although a good deal of success has been achieved with sprays on cultivated land. The only time one can deal with the weed is in the rosette stage. In pasture land there is no hope of seeing it in that condition until the plant has grown beyond the effective action of any known spray.

Great thought and research must be applied in the expenditure of the funds dealt with in the measure, otherwise not only will our wheat lands be ruined by skeleton weed but also a good deal of pasture lands will suffer. A large sum of money is being granted for the estimable purpose of eradicating noxious weeds, but I cannot understand the situation concerning Russian comfrey. The Minister of Agriculture has informed me that there is still considerable doubt about the behaviour of this

plant, which has recently been imported from England. It is too like the noxious weed known as Paterson's curse—especially in habit—for my liking. One good thing in our favour is that we have no bumble bees in Australia to spread this potentially dangerous plant; but it can spread in other ways. The Minister of Agriculture has admitted that he does not know what the Russian comfrey plant is, yet it is advertised for sale on the Mornington peninsula. The Minister should assure himself that the plant is indeed harmless in Australia before it becomes widespread. As honorable members are aware, many of our noxious weeds have gained a hold because someone started growing them in a garden and threw them over the fence when they took possession of flower beds. The St. John's wort started because it was used as an abortifacient by an old German midwife in the Ovens valley. She threw away her articles of trade and as a result we have a second yellow peril. I commend the Bill, but urge the Minister of Lands to examine closely the points I have mentioned.

**Mr. COOK** (Benalla).—Little has been said in the debate about the rabbit pest. Because of the introduction of myxomatosis, the rabbit population has greatly declined, and it is not as great a menace to-day as it was a few years ago. Care must be taken lest landholders become apathetic and minimize the danger. I remind the Minister of Lands, while the subject of vermin and noxious weeds is being discussed, that the rabbit pest should not be forgotten. While their numbers are few, inspectors should concentrate on their destruction.

My colleague, the honorable member for Benambra, referred to the menace of St. John's wort, a noxious weed that grows in the north, which he compared with that found in Gippsland. It has caused much trouble in the past, and is still spreading. I trust that too much reliance is not placed on the beetle which has been spoken of as being a sure means of its destruction. I am not convinced of the efficacy of this method. A few months ago the Minister of Lands visited the part of the north-east of Victoria to which I refer, and was impressed with the fact that there was a serious outbreak

of St. John's wort, not only in the Beechworth and Bright districts, but also farther to the south and south-west.

Doubtless, the Department has the outbreak in the area under review. Complete eradication is necessary, and if the beetle is not successful, sprays and other methods should be used before the weed gets out of hand completely. I assure the Minister that the country people support him. There is a fine band of organizations willing to co-operate with the Department to the fullest extent in an endeavour to destroy this weed.

**Mr. BALFOUR** (Morwell).—I support the Bill which, although small in size, is of great importance to country residents. The statements of the honorable members for Gippsland East and Gippsland South about ragwort are unfortunately true. It is amazing how quickly it is spreading to the good flat land. Many persons have had to relinquish their farms in the hills because of its ravages. It would be deplorable if the flat land became infested with this noxious weed. Some ten years ago, in my electorate, ragwort was rare on the north side of the railway line. Unfortunately, to-day the plants are increasing in numbers, and I have reason to believe that they have penetrated into somewhat inaccessible places in some Crown lands and forest areas, where eradication by machinery is difficult. Any measures that can be taken regarding the use of the beetle, to which reference has been made, would be helpful in those localities.

Since the introduction of hormone sprays, officers of the Lands Department and farmers have taken measures successfully against blackberries. It is hoped that extra money and plant will be made available to the Department for this purpose and that, if necessary, plant will be hired to individual landholders. In 1949, provision was made for the Department to take over the control of noxious weeds on certain roadways. As time went on, the roadways were to be classified, and it was intended to destroy the blackberries growing thereon. Previously, it had been the responsibility of the adjoining

farmers to do this work. Now the position is uncertain. It is difficult to ascertain which roads have been classified. Moreover, officers of the Lands Department will spray a roadway one year, but not the following year, and the farmer does not know whether to spray or not. A more definite understanding could exist between the Department and the landholders in this regard. I compliment the Government on having brought in this Bill.

**Mr. K. H. TURNBULL** (Minister of Lands) (*By leave*).—Several members have made constructive suggestions and they deserve an explanation regarding the activities of the Lands Department. The honorable member for Midlands referred to a conference held in my office to-day of representatives of rural organizations and departmental officers. The discussion centred around saffron thistle, because practically the whole of the Mallee, consisting of thousands of square miles, is heavily infested with this noxious weed, as well as many square miles in the north. It is not easy to know where to start and where to stop. We know that saffron thistle is a noxious weed.

**Mr. SHEPHERD**.—You know it is handy sometimes, too.

**Mr. K. H. TURNBULL**.—Yes. Saffron thistle seed is found in wheat and subjects the grain to dockage. It would be physically and financially impossible for farmers to obey if the Department issued an order that every plant on farm properties must be cut. In the Mallee, many farmers have at least 3,000 acres of land. To spray the whole area would cost £1 per acre, and it would be necessary to do it not for one year only, but year after year. Every farmer would be financially embarrassed if this was required. Before effective results can be obtained in the destruction of noxious weeds, the Department must have the co-operation of the landholders. It was for that reason that to-day's conference was held. I should like organizations representing the farming community to co-operate with the Department, and, in effect, to be the public relations officers between the farmers and the Department. I consider that what occurred

to-day will lead to a better understanding and that rural organizations will urge their members to co-operate in every way with the Department.

Mr. SHEPHERD.—How will they co-operate—in getting rid of saffron thistle or by better land usage?

Mr. K. H. TURNBULL.—Both. Better land usage means getting rid of saffron thistle. In the Mallee, thousands of acres of land are sown to lucerne. Any person who had not been there in recent years would scarcely believe he was in the Mallee if he went to certain parts of it to-day. Instead of seeing wind-swept sand ridges, he would find hundreds of acres of lucerne in paddocks carrying stock, all in fat condition, whereas in the valuable land of Gippsland, where rain is badly needed, stock are in poor condition and the country looks desolate by comparison. Moreover, Mallee farmers are practising pasture improvement, which tends to eradicate saffron thistle. However, it is impossible in a wheat-growing area for the whole of a farm to be under lucerne or legumes. If land upon which clovers are growing is sprayed, the clovers will be killed in the process. It is a difficult task to arrive at a sensible course to adopt. Great benefit would accrue to the State from the elimination of these weeds, but the ability of the individual farmer to undertake the necessary work varies. Saffron thistle will in time be brought under control, but the Act in its entirety cannot be enforced immediately; it must be done progressively.

The honorable member for Gippsland East referred to ragwort. To indicate that the Department is fully seised of the desirability of drastic steps being taken in that district, I should like to say that one-third of the Department's tractors and one-third of its spray units are concentrated at present in the ragwort areas of Gippsland. The Department has a total of 950 spray units, and 308 of them are being used as stated. Fortunately, we have the answer to ragwort, but, as mentioned by the Leader of the Country party and others, the purchase of sprays to cover big acreages, plus their application, is costly. The Department co-operates with the

landholders. Where they have no machinery, the Department will do the spraying work at the farmer's expense, and he will be given a reasonable time to pay.

The honorable members for Benambra and Benalla referred to St. John's wort. I agree this noxious weed will have to be tackled seriously. Although the seed is not wind-borne, it is spread by animals and perhaps by birds. In heavily infested districts it has been proved that the weed will not grow under pine trees and it was suggested by the Lands Department that the Forests Commission might plant a zone of pine trees around the entire infested area in the north-east, comprising approximately 30,000 to 40,000 acres. That would tend to prevent the weed getting on to the better class country. However, the Forests Commission feels that it has not sufficient staff to undertake the work and that its resources would be better employed planting trees in more suitable areas, although pines would thrive in the area in the north-east to which I have referred.

Mr. SHEPHERD.—How wide would it be necessary to make the belt of trees you envisage?

Mr. K. H. TURNBULL.—A belt of trees 3 to 5 chains wide would give some form of protection. Perhaps it could be arranged to use the labour of some of the prisoners now held on open farms to plant the areas I have suggested.

Mr. WHITE.—I am sure we would be glad to lend you some of the inmates of Langi Kal Kal.

Mr. K. H. TURNBULL.—However, the troubles in the north-east have not been neglected. There is not such a large area infested, and since my visit 120 spray units have been employed in an effort to eradicate St. John's wort. That indicates that the Department is fully apprised of the seriousness of the situation and I feel sure that the pressure will be sustained in an effort to finally control what is a highly-dangerous weed.

Mr. COOK.—Has any success been achieved with the beetles?

Mr. K. H. TURNBULL.—Not a great deal. They are like human beings; one cannot predict what they will do. One season the results are good and another they are not.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and passed through its remaining stages.

### VICTORIAN INLAND MEAT AUTHORITY BILL.

The debate (adjourned from April 16) on the motion of Mr. Bolte (Premier and Treasurer) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr. STONEHAM (Midlands).—This is another short Bill. It was explained at length by the Premier and Treasurer when he introduced it. Clause 2 seeks to increase from £200,000 to £300,000 the maximum amount which the Treasurer may advance to the Victorian Inland Meat Authority by way of temporary advances and guarantees. The Premier informed honorable members of those difficulties which the Authority had experienced in obtaining financial accommodation to cover its activities in the 1956-57 season. Of course, members of the Opposition welcome the measure and entirely agree with the change in the financial provision provided in an attempt to assist the Authority in its operations. However, we are disappointed that neither in the Bill nor in the Premier's speech is there reference to a matter which has been given a great deal of attention in recent years. I refer to the unsatisfactory conditions which prevail at the metropolitan abattoirs. It has been proposed that the time is overdue when the Victorian Inland Meat Authority should establish in the metropolitan area a modern dead-meat market.

I should like to direct the attention of honorable members to statements in the Annual Report of the Melbourne City Council for the year 1955-56. The Lord Mayor has indicated that this is the first report of its kind published by the council. In a section dealing with the activities of the abattoirs and markets committee, there is clearly set out the absolutely deplorable conditions which exist at those works at the present

time. One has only to study the report to realize what a wonderful chance the Government has to ensure that the Victorian Inland Meat Authority does not miss a unique and heaven-sent opportunity to expand its activities. At page 16, referring to the transfer of the abattoirs, the report states, *inter alia*—

It would take ten to fifteen years to transfer the abattoirs to a new site. Meanwhile, the existing establishment, which could barely cope with present demands, would be called on to deal with the still heavier demands of a continually increasing population which, it had been estimated, would reach 2,500,000 in Melbourne and suburbs by 1980.

Stock handled by the city abattoirs in 1916, the year in which the last major expansion was completed, numbered 708,320 and in 1954, 1,948,752. The number of cattle handled in the cattle markets had also increased from 132,610 in 1916 to 395,960 in 1954, and sheep and lambs from 1,913,241 to 4,903,183.

Facilities which were sufficient to cater for requirements in 1916 could not possibly hope to cater for the requirements of the future. At present, approximately 25 per cent. of the total number of sheep and lambs slaughtered for human consumption at the abattoirs could not be chilled owing to the insufficiency of the chilling chambers. These were taken away hot to retail shops or the Metropolitan Meat Market—an undesirable but unavoidable procedure. Beef, however, could not be taken away before it was chilled and at times 90 bodies of beef were crowded into chambers designed to accommodate 60. In such circumstances it was quite impossible to give a satisfactory chilling service and inadequately-chilled meat was a potential danger to health.

It was emphasized to the Premier that the situation was acute and the council could not stress too strongly the need for an agreement with the Government to enable the council to discharge its responsibilities as the abattoir authority in a more satisfactory and hygienic way.

That constitutes a very serious indictment of the Government for its failure to indicate to the House what it intends to do in connexion with reform of abattoir conditions in the metropolitan area. The Premier in his second-reading speech gave a good account of the activities of the Victorian Inland Meat Authority since its establishment in 1943, and he brought out clearly the adverse conditions with which the Authority has had to contend. He revealed that in seven of the fourteen

years of its operations profits have been shown, but that in the aggregate the losses have exceeded the profits by £175,744. The difficulties of the Authority are very real, but I feel sure that it will have a bright future if both it and the Government are determined to make the absolute maximum use of the very modern and hygienic establishments the Authority owns at Ballarat and at Bendigo. The continued high price of wool and the long series of favourable seasons have caused many big fluctuations of fortune in the meat industry and that has confronted an export body such as the Victorian Inland Meat Authority with many difficulties. As an indication of that, the *Herald* newspaper of to-day's date contains the following news item:—

Because of continued dry conditions, graziers in areas north of Mildura are being forced to sell some of their sheep.

More than 17,000 sheep are to-day on their way to Yelta, about 14 miles from Mildura, where a special sheep sale will be held to-morrow.

Some of the stations between Mildura and Broken Hill have had no useful rain for nearly five months.

Mr. J. Maynard, of Allanvale station, said to-day that many graziers were frightened of the drought.

There was plenty of dry feed, but no green feed at all, and most of the dams are drying up fast.

Graziers with stations fronting either the Darling or Murray rivers were moving their sheep in from outback areas to conserve as much feed as possible.

At Bellevue station, 10 miles north of Wentworth, 18 points of rain fell on Saturday, but the rain was not enough to promote grass growth.

It is not necessary for me to impress upon honorable members how serious the situation might become over a very widespread area in the short space of a few weeks. It could very quickly alter the fortunes of an export body such as the one we are now considering. I feel that the Premier was guilty of neglect in making no reference to the fact that the Authority has been pressed in recent years to do something about the establishment of this dead-meat market in Melbourne. I have previously referred to the fact that in the United States of America, where the meat industry has been developed to an extraordinarily high

degree of efficiency, the definite pattern has been to slaughter the stock as close as possible to the point of production. It has been made even more clear in New Zealand that there is great value in adopting that course if meat is to be marketed in prime condition.

The honorable member for Murray Valley some years ago went to New Zealand particularly to study this problem, and no doubt there is much that he could tell the House. I have in my possession, by courtesy of the Trade Commissioner for New Zealand in Melbourne, a brochure entitled *Primary Production in New Zealand*. As the pages open before me there are maps of the north and south islands, and it is set out in the letterpress that, in regard to the export trade—and everybody knows the enviable reputation New Zealand meat enjoys on the London market for its uniformly high quality—meat intended for export from New Zealand is killed at slaughter houses of which 38 are at present operating.

Mr. BOLTE.—Are those inland or at ports?

Mr. STONEHAM.—There are quite a number situated inland. New Zealand can carry out the principle of slaughtering stock as near as possible to the point of production and still have those places on the seaboard. In quite a number of instances, however, the export slaughterhouses are situated away from the coast. I notice in this brochure that the abattoirs which kill all the meat required by the urban centres and large provincial towns number, in this little Dominion, a total of 43. So there is an entirely different pattern there from that which exists in this State. The fact that a modern dead-meat market operating in Sydney is a huge success emphasizes that the Government of Victoria is failing to tackle this particular problem.

Another matter as to which I should like an indication of the Government's intention arises from the campaign being waged to secure the release for breeding purposes of the very highly bred and valuable cattle on the farm of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works at Werribee. In

a case presented recently to the Government by the Victorian Wheat and Wool Growers' Association, the following statement is made in reference to our export beef trade:—

From the above figures it can be seen that unless our production of meat increases in comparable ratio to population, export surpluses will disappear and finally we will be required to import meat.

To make matters worse, a large proportion of our beef exports is shipped as piece beef in boxes or cartons, to avoid the overfat heavy appearance of our old carcasses, which are most unpopular on the United Kingdom market.

At Werribee approximately 4,500 pure-bred calves from selected parentage are branded each year, and it is considered that if these were later made available to graziers for breeding purposes, Victoria could in the course of a very few years have good young beef of the right type for local requirements and our export surplus for overseas.

**The SPEAKER (the Hon. W. J. F. McDonald).**—I think the honorable member is departing considerably from the Bill.

**Mr. STONEHAM.**—I am trying to indicate that, so far as the proposed financial assistance to the Inland Meat Authority is concerned, the Government should be alive to the opportunities existing in this State for the development of the meat industry. I shall have other opportunities to go more fully into the matter of the release of stock from the Werribee farm but the fact is that we are not producing the right type of meat at present; the opportunity to improve the position is in our grasp and we are failing to take it.

I stress particularly the unique opportunity at the present time for the Victorian Inland Meat Authority to push on quickly with the establishment of a modern dead-meat market in Melbourne. It is obvious that the Newmarket sale-yards must go, but it is equally obvious that the transfer will take some time. Those facts, coupled with the deplorable conditions existing at the metropolitan abattoirs—as evidenced by the paragraphs I have quoted from the annual report of the abattoirs and markets committee—make it plain that if a dead-meat market is established on proper lines and there is efficient management, it cannot be other than a superb winner

financially. It will open up the way for the maximum possible development of output from the country abattoirs to be supplied to the metropolitan dead-meat market, thereby reducing the size of the sale-yards that will eventually have to be built as a substitute for Newmarket.

It would be a crime of great magnitude if the Government were to assume that the problem calls for the setting up of another sale-yard system elsewhere that would be just as big as Newmarket. We must see that the new sale-yards and the abattoirs that go with them are reduced to the absolute minimum, and that on the other hand the inland establishments are magnified to the greatest possible extent and the metropolitan requirements satisfied by medium of refrigerated transport.

I trust that members who have not already studied the excellent speech of the Premier when he submitted this Bill will do so, for they will gain a clear understanding of the difficulties that the authorities have had to contend with. I feel that in all the circumstances they have given a reasonable account of their stewardship, and if the suggestions I have offered are adopted I am certain that there is a bright future in store for the Victorian Inland Meat Authority.

**Mr. MOSS (Murray Valley).**—The Country party supports this measure, which is only a small amendment of the existing legislation but provides the opportunity for members to speak concerning the general set-up of the activities of the Inland Meat Authority. In spite of some losses sustained by the activities of the Authority during one or two years, I would remind this House of the many occasions when it has paid its way from the point of view of annual operations. It is proving very valuable to the livestock industry. I think that Victoria could benefit very materially by the establishment of further centres in some of the country areas. Some years ago the Authority carried out an investigation and reported to the Government of the day on the advisability or otherwise of the establishment of further killing centres. It then recommended that works be established in the Goulburn valley, in the north-east and in Gippsland. If those recommendations were

examined by the Government now with the view of acting on the advice then given, the Government would be serving a very useful purpose. The Bendigo and Ballarat works are operating very successfully. It is true that those centres are the only ones the killing Authority is operating. In Bendigo particularly the butchers buy and have their meat treated. It is delivered in the morning and hung up in the butchers' shops, and all they have to do is to cut up their meat on arriving at their premises. That arrangement is highly successful, and a similar situation is operating in Ballarat. The Ballarat works are now being conducted in a fairly substantial way and, I repeat, successfully.

The honorable member for Midlands referred to the fact that I had had the privilege some years ago of examining the industry in New Zealand. He stated also that there are approximately 38 killing works in New Zealand. In some parts of that country there may be two or three works close together, but generally speaking they are well distributed in the lamb producing areas. That is a desirable state of affairs because in New Zealand stock do not have to travel the long distances that have to be covered in Victoria and in other parts of Australia. On the average, in New Zealand the distance that stock travel is 60 miles. Moreover, the climate is much milder. Consequently, stock can be brought into the killing works and slaughtered within 24 hours of leaving the paddocks.

A strong theory was advanced some years ago in Victoria that stock should be slaughtered within five or six hours after leaving the paddocks, but subsequent investigation revealed that the carcasses are better if the stock are allowed to stand for ten or twelve hours after arriving at the killing works. Whilst I do not agree with the principle of the system that is operating in New South Wales, an excellent job has been done in the establishment of seven or eight killing centres in certain areas. I was fortunate to be present at the opening of the works at Wagga. Other establishments have been put into operation at Bathurst, Bourke and several towns in the Northern Rivers District.

The distribution of the works is quite good and they are serving the industry admirably. I urge upon the Government the necessity for giving consideration to the report that was prepared by the Victorian Inland Meat Authority in which it recommended the establishment of more inland killing centres in this State. The Authority is of the opinion that such action would be of immeasurable benefit to the industry. I trust that the Government will examine the report to which I refer and will inform the House in the near future that it proposes to pursue a policy of establishing more inland killing centres. Ultimately, as the honorable member for Midlands stated, the stock sale-yards in the metropolitan area must be abolished and a dead-meat market established in their stead. Such a market could be supplied by the various killing works in country areas.

The Bill makes provision for an additional £100,000 to be advanced by the Treasurer to the Victorian Inland Meat Authority and amends the Companies Acts to provide for the registration of the mortgage debenture, and I commend it to the House.

**Mr. WHITE** (Ballarat North).—I join with my colleague, the honorable member for Murray Valley, in supporting this Bill. In doing so, I wish to congratulate those responsible for conducting the killing works operated by the Victorian Inland Meat Authority at Ballarat and Bendigo. This is the type of industry that could well be established in country areas and would be an excellent way of continuing a policy of decentralization. The works at Ballarat and Bendigo supply carcasses not only to the whole of Victoria and Australia but also for export. More finance should be provided to permit the extension of the scheme.

**Mr. SHEPHERD**.—Is not part of the Ballarat works leased?

**Mr. WHITE**.—No, the plant at Ballarat is in full operation now. It provides meat for the population of the whole of Ballarat and district as well as for export, and is playing an important part in the meat trade of Melbourne.

Mr. SHEPHERD.—Is not part of the work carried out by a man named Gilbertson?

Mr. WHITE.—No, the works are operated by the Victorian Inland Meat Authority. If inland killing centres can be successfully operated at Ballarat and Bendigo, then I know of no reason why they could not be established in other parts of the State. Sheep and cattle should be killed where they are raised and not sent to the abattoirs in Melbourne. Many years will elapse before the Newmarket sale-yards are shifted, and instead of expanding this area the Government should endeavour to foster killing centres throughout country areas of this State. The Premier knows that one firm in Ballarat is killing 600 sheep and 50 head of cattle a week and delivering the carcasses to Melbourne. The job is being done better in Ballarat than it can be done in Melbourne. More than one firm in that city is killing locally-raised sheep, lambs, and cattle.

The purpose of the Bill is to increase the amount that the Treasurer may advance to the Victorian Inland Meat Authority from £200,000 to £300,000. If the same conditions prevail during the next few years it will be necessary to increase that amount further. I trust that a large sum of money will be made available to the Authority to establish more works in country areas. A few years ago the future of the Ballarat centre was in doubt, but now it is the most important inland killing works in Victoria. It produces meat of a better quality than that killed in Melbourne and at a cheaper price. Therefore, this is an opportunity for the State Development Committee to investigate the possibility of further implementing this scheme so that stock can be killed in other districts where they are raised. If such a scheme is adopted the public generally will benefit and there will be more jobs available for residents of country areas. I understand that a cement works has been closed in the Western District and the former employees will have to seek employment in Geelong or Melbourne. If an inland killing centre were

established in that area the men would be able to obtain employment and would not have to leave the district. In addition, the State would benefit materially.

Mr. SCOTT (Ballarat South).—I join with other honorable members in commending this Bill to the House. As the honorable member for Ballarat North has stated, the inland killing centre at Ballarat sends a large quantity of meat to Melbourne. Much has been said in this House concerning decentralization, and the Government could bring its plans in that regard to fruition by establishing killing works in country towns. Stock that is raised in the country should be killed there and then transported to Melbourne for consumption. It is well known that beasts killed before travelling long distances make far better meat than those which have travelled, and transport costs are less because it is much easier to carry a carcass than it is to transport a live body.

I believe that the works at Ballarat and Bendigo could provide all the meat that is consumed in the metropolitan area if full capacity were maintained. The honorable members for Ballarat North and Bendigo led a deputation to the Minister of Agriculture regarding inland killing facilities and they produced figures that proved that both the Ballarat and Bendigo works were operating at only 50 per cent. of capacity. The manager of the Ballarat works was asked whether, if both centres operated at full capacity, the output of all metropolitan abattoirs could be achieved, and he replied that it could. What can be done in Ballarat and Bendigo can be done in other country centres, and decentralization would be fostered. I am sure that an inland killing works in a country town near a stock-raising centre would not be a white elephant. Sheep and cattle should be killed near the area in which they are raised. Instead of constructing new abattoirs in Melbourne, consideration should be given to establishing more inland killing centres where the job can be done efficiently. I commend the Bill to the House.

The motion was agreed to, and the Bill was read a second time.

**Mr. BOLTE** (Premier and Treasurer) 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.

The Bill was passed through its remaining stages.

#### MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN BOARD OF WORKS (CONTRIBUTIONS) BILL.

The debate (adjourned from April 10) on the motion of Sir Thomas Maltby (Minister of Public Works) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

**Mr. CAIN** (Leader of the Opposition).—This is another Bill which, in all probability, the Government could have introduced twelve months ago, since it provides for certain payments to municipalities to be made retrospective. The measure is designed to extend for a further period of ten years an arrangement whereby the Board of Works pays contributions to certain municipalities in which its undertakings are located. The late Mr. Everard, a former member for Evelyn, and the honorable member for Scoresby, raised this matter many years ago, and, as a result, a controversy arose concerning the responsibility of the Board to municipalities. It was then agreed that certain contributions should be made by the Board to the councils concerned. Those contributions continued for approximately ten years, until about twelve months ago. This Bill is designed to continue the practice for a further ten years.

Under the Bill it is proposed that a contribution of £5,625 shall be made to the Shire of Werribee, whereas previously, the amount was only £2,500. Similarly, in the case of the Shire of Upper Yarra, £4,140 will be allocated under this measure, as compared with £1,840 for the preceding ten years. For the Shire of Healesville, the amount of

£3,966 is to be allocated whereas previously, the amount was £1,500, and the respective figures for the Lillydale Shire are £450 and £200, for the Shire of Whittlesea, £787 and £350, and for the Shire of Corio, £1,687 and £750. No exception could be taken to the Bill as the principles contained in it were established many years ago. When the original legislation was debated, there was much controversy, and many points of view were expressed on behalf of the Board of Works and the various municipalities. However, all parties now appear to be satisfied. It is wonderful how principles become established as a result of custom. Principles which may have been strenuously contested at one time, become matter of fact things to-day. There appears to be no controversy over this measure, and for the reasons I have enumerated, Opposition members will not oppose the Bill.

**Mr. FLOYD** (Williamstown).—The short period devoted to this measure by my Leader and the Minister of Public Works discourages me—a newcomer—from unduly prolonging the debate. The principle embraced by the Bill appears to be the perpetuation of a long-established practice. However, whilst my Leader pointed out that certain established customs must be adhered to, I feel that it is sometimes wise to consider whether they should be prolonged just because they have been adopted in the past. It appears to me that much of our time in this Chamber is devoted to debating measures in connexion with the Board of Works. Legislation dealing with this body has become so complex that many municipalities do not know just where they stand, and I doubt whether the Board fully appreciates its own position.

As already indicated, this is just another of those Bills that are brought forward from time to time to extend the operation of legislation that has been enacted in the past. However, I consider it is time that we paused to consider whether this matter could not be embraced by the new town planning legislation. I know that it will be argued that town planning applies only to the metropolitan area, but in view of the great

sprawl of the City of Melbourne, it would appear that Werribee must almost qualify to be classed as a metropolitan suburb. It is difficult to know why measures of this type should be extended. Surely they could be consolidated into one Act. I cannot refrain from being parochial in connexion with certain matters, and I have noted that this measure does not apply to the municipality of Williamstown. In the Williamstown district there is the big sewage pumping station alongside which runs an extensive concrete road. Consequently, I should like to know why some contribution is not made by the Board to the Williamstown City Council. No doubt, there is an effective answer to my question.

The pumping station at Spotswood is no ornament to the district, particularly at peak periods. It is alleged that at certain times the station cannot handle all the sewage and that some of it is turned into the river. Because of those disabilities Williamstown could quite easily be placed in the same category as the shires of Werribee and Corio and other municipalities. Perhaps I should not refer to Werribee and Corio which are in the electorate of the Minister of Public Works. Probably the honorable gentleman will say that this Bill is only a re-enactment of an agreement that was made ten years ago. That may be so, but I agree with my Leader that we should get away from custom now and again. When legislation is renewed, it should be brought up to date and adequate compensation given to municipalities in which there are installations of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. In my opinion, the management of the Board is becoming somewhat complex, and sooner or later the Minister of Public Works will have to try to incorporate all the Acts dealing with the Board in one consolidation containing power to declare roads, to pay compensation and so on, without the necessity of renewing existing arrangements. I shall be interested to learn why the City of Williamstown receives no compensation in respect of the installation at Spotswood.

*Mr. Floyd.*

**Mr. SHEPHERD** (Ascot Vale).—I am prompted to speak on this measure only because the honorable member for Williamstown has raised certain points that perhaps are new to many members who were not present when this legislation was discussed ten years ago. Some pertinent points are contained in this Bill, and I should like the Minister of Public Works to enlighten the House on whether they are new provisions or a re-enactment of features contained in previous legislation providing for certain payments to the various shires named. Clause 3 indicates that there is some differentiation of policy. I consider that now is the time to bring these matters under the notice not only of the members of this House but also of those people concerned with municipal government. Of course, a vital and important point governs this legislation, namely, an *ex gratia* payment by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works in lieu of rates on lands that would have been liable to be rated had they not been taken over for the purpose of catchment areas or for the operation of the sewage farm.

It appears that the topography of the various areas governs the way in which the money paid to the shires is spent. In the areas where there is a poor rainfall, such as the shires of Werribee and Corio, where there is no run-off to afford a benefit for water storage purposes, the allocations of the Board may be spent on the construction, renewal, repair or maintenance of streets or roads in the municipal district and not otherwise. That is a fairly broad provision. It means that the shires of Werribee and Corio, which in particular are concerned with channels to bring the sewage from Melbourne to the Metropolitan Farm and the farm itself, may spend the money allocated by the Board in any part of the shires. However, there is a distinction so far as the shires of Broadford, Healesville, Lillydale, Upper Yarra and Whittlesea are concerned. Under this measure, those municipalities shall apply any sum received by them under the legislation towards the construction, renewal, repair or maintenance of roads in or adjacent to lands, watersheds, catchment areas or reservoirs of the

Board in the municipal district thereof and not otherwise. In the one case it is not mandatory for the municipalities to spend their allocations near the Board's installations; in the other case, the money must be spent near the Board's works, and the municipalities must provide roads strong enough to take the heavy traffic generally associated with some of the works of the Board, particularly in the Upper Yarra and Lillydale areas. At present many of the roads that would normally be maintained by the municipalities of Upper Yarra and Lillydale are being destroyed by heavy traffic, but in those shires the allocations must be spent on roads adjacent to the properties of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works.

There is also a distinction concerning what shall be rateable property. Clause 5 provides—

Where contributions are paid pursuant to this Act by the Board to the several shires referred to in this Act—

- (a) In the case of the shire of Corio and the shire of Werribee—the fact that such contributions are paid shall not be deemed to limit or affect the operation of section two hundred and forty-nine of the Local Government Act 1946;
- (b) in the case of any shire (other than the shire of Corio and the shire of Werribee)—any land in the shire which is vested in fee in the Board shall not be deemed to be rateable property under Division one of Part X. of the Local Government Act 1946 notwithstanding that the same is leased or occupied for any private purpose.

Clause 4 states that where communities of houses for its workmen are established by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works and they abut on any road in the shires of Werribee or Corio, those houses are liable to be rated as if they were ordinary property of householders, but that is not the case with the other shires. Perhaps that is brought about by the fact that the allocations to the shires other than Corio and Werribee must be spent on roads adjacent to watershed areas. However, if there is on the watershed areas a community of residences or buildings for other purposes belonging to the Board in municipalities other than Corio and

Werribee, they are exempt from being rated as would normally be the case under the Local Government Act. Probably this scheme was worked out years ago and is acceptable to the various municipalities. However, I should say that many of the councils would be afraid to “buck” those stringent conditions, and that the shires of Werribee and Corio would not object to the very liberal provisions provided as they can spend the money where they like. It must be extremely gratifying to know that a certain sum will be available during this year and each of the following nine years.

The councils are taking a risk, of course, because the cost of road construction, repair, and maintenance may increase in the next ten years, but no doubt they are hoping that there is a steadying effect and that in the next ten years road-making costs will not exceed those that apply to-day. It was mentioned earlier by my Leader that probably there has been a steadying of the economy of the country, but we would not like to see a quick falling off in values as that would affect many people harshly. It is more than likely that in an expanding country like Australia costs will rise even though the ratio of the economy may differ little over the next ten or twenty years. However, the economists will know more about that question than I do. As a former councillor, I realize that when road construction and repair, and drainage maintenance are being dealt with, the question is, the availability of money and how it shall be spent. Few councillors could foretell what might happen in the expenses of a municipality in the next ten years.

Although this Bill may repeat a principle laid down ten years ago, it appears that it may contain certain new provisions. If it is true that the condition relating to rating, and the power of certain municipalities to spend their allocations as they desire—whereas other municipalities must spend it in certain directions—are included for the first time, we should be told of those facts. The Minister of Public Works may have

explained those matters in his second-reading speech. I know that the honorable gentleman can supply the answers to the questions I have raised.

Although this measure deals with the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, clause 5 refers to the Local Government Act. The honorable member for Williamstown has raised a pertinent point in saying that the Board pays no rates in regard to the pumping station at Douglas-parade, Spotswood, which is in the City of Williamstown. We all know that the nominees of the Colonial Gas Association and other bodies vote at municipal elections, because they are liable to be rated not only for the property they own, but for their mains. The Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board is liable to be rated for its tram tracks and the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board for its buildings. All those bodies elect nominees to vote at municipal elections. We might go further and ask whether there is a general exemption from liability of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works of rating in regard to its sewage mains. That has never been questioned, and I do not think anyone would want to see such a form of rating brought into effect. Any money paid in rates would have to be paid by the ratepayers either directly or indirectly, as the Board would have to increase its water or sewerage rate to balance what it might have to pay in rates. I should like the Minister of Public Works to furnish an explanation of the points which I have raised.

Mr. BLOOMFIELD.—Have you compared this Bill with the provisions referred to in the side notes?

Mr. SHEPHERD.—I have not, but it is obvious that the Minister of Education has. I do not mind if the honorable gentleman furnishes the explanation. His learned opinion on matters of law will be acceptable to this House. However, I would ask the Minister of Public Works to indicate to the House whether the provisions of this Bill are a re-enactment of former legislation or whether certain provisions are included for the first time.

Sir THOMAS MALTBY (Minister of Public Works).—By leave, I shall give a joint answer to the queries raised by the honorable members for Williamstown and Ascot Vale. I begin by informing the honorable member for Williamstown that no part of the Shire of Corio or the Shire of Werribee has any reference to my electorate, except according to the direction of the wind. The object of this Bill is to renew an agreement that has been reviewed at ten-yearly intervals. For the reasons stated in my second-reading speech, it is deemed proper to double the contributions. I think Opposition members will agree that it is highly desirable that agreements of this character should not have permanency by legislation but should be brought to the notice of the legislature periodically so that if their continuance is considered undesirable they will not be renewed.

I agree with the contention of the honorable member for Williamstown concerning the necessity of a consolidation of the many Acts governing the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. I have already given earnest consideration to that matter. The chairman of the Board concurs with me that it is highly desirable to cut away the dead wood and to simplify the legislation so that the average councillor, without expert guidance, can at least find relevant passages in the various enactments. I remind the honorable member, however, that because of the wide ramifications of the Board, it will become necessary during the very first session following the passage of a consolidating measure to add to the statutes governing the Board. However, until the Parliamentary Draftsman and his assistants can find time to prepare a consolidating measure, the position will have to continue as it is.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has asked a pertinent question, which I essay to answer without the benefit of advice from my departmental officers. I believe the reason for the differentiation between the area to the east and that to the west is that if the land to the east was not used as a watershed, it would become forest land and, as such, would be Crown land under the control of the

Forests Commission. Moreover, it would not be subject to municipal rates. In the watershed area, the maintenance of roads, channels, bridges and so on is the sole responsibility of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, but traffic on the roads of adjacent municipalities is generated in the same way as the Forests Commission and the Country Roads Board generate traffic when access roads are constructed. As to the area to the west, there we have rich plains. Much of that land, particularly at Werribee, is irrigable market garden property. Conversely, if the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works were not using it as a farm for the disposal of sewage it would be regarded as first-class highly-rateable agricultural territory and, in truth, it would become the principal market garden of the southern part of Australia.

Mr. SHEPHERD.—The Metropolitan Farm would be highly rateable even in its present state.

Sir THOMAS MALTBY.—I concur. I suggest to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that the willingness of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works to pay rates in respect of its Werribee property and to regard the roads that are contiguous as if they were adjacent roads, plus the compensation, is a fair measure of adjustment, and the fact that agreement has been reached with all the municipalities concerned indicates that the Board has not been ungenerous. I advert to the question asked by the honorable member for Williamstown who, I understand, is a councillor in that municipality. Presumably, he has brought the matter before his local council.

Mr. FLOYD.—I have not done so.

Sir THOMAS MALTBY.—I suggest that the honorable member hastens to take appropriate action in that regard. Maybe the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works will be generous with regard to the pumping station at Spotswood also.

Mr. COOK (Benalla).—This measure embraces some far-reaching principles and, in general, I favour it. The Bill is to provide for contributions by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of

Works to certain municipalities and for the maintenance by the Board of certain roads, and for other purposes. I note that the shires to benefit under the measure are those of Broadford, Corio, Healesville, Lillydale, Upper Yarra, Werribee and Whittlesea.

Clause 2 provides—

(1) The Board shall in the period of twelve months beginning with the first day of October One thousand nine hundred and fifty-six and in each of the nine periods of twelve months thereafter contribute—

- (a) to the shire of Broadford—the sum of Three hundred and thirty-seven pounds;
- (b) to the shire of Corio—the sum of One thousand six hundred and eighty-seven pounds;
- (c) to the shire of Healesville—the sum of Three thousand nine hundred and sixty-six pounds;
- (d) to the shire of Lillydale—the sum of Four hundred and fifty pounds;
- (e) to the shire of Upper Yarra—the sum of Four thousand one hundred and forty pounds;
- (f) to the shire of Werribee—the sum of Five thousand six hundred and twenty-five pounds;
- (g) to the shire of Whittlesea—the sum of Seven hundred and eighty-seven pounds.

(2) Where the Board has after the first day of October One thousand nine hundred and fifty-six acquired land in the municipal district of any of the said shires and that land was at the time of its acquisition liable to be rated by the council of the shire the Board shall in addition to the sum referred to in the last preceding sub-section contribute annually during the period aforesaid to the shire while the land is not rateable property a sum equivalent to the general rates which the council would, but for the acquisition of the land by the Board, have been entitled to receive in respect of the land for the year in which it was so acquired.

I should like to know why the principle enunciated in that provision should not apply to the acquisition of other property on a similar basis where land is not producing rates. I have in mind particularly the acquisition of land by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission in connexion with the Eildon weir. I know that the Shire of Mansfield has made representations concerning the loss of rates as a result of the acquisition of large tracts of land, and I feel that what is sauce for the goose should be sauce for the gander. In

other words, if it is good enough to contribute to certain shires under stipulated conditions, it should be good enough to contribute to other shires that are not altogether in the same category.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clause 1 was agreed to.

Clause 2 (Contributions to be made by the Board to certain municipalities).

**Mr. SHEPHERD** (Ascot Vale).—The Opposition appreciates the frank replies made by the Minister of Public Works to points raised during the debate. Like its predecessor, this Bill has some retrospective application to the 30th September 1956. The honorable member for Williamstown desired to know why the Acts relating to the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Work were not consolidated. This is one of the few measures that virtually consolidates themselves. As the Minister of Education pointed out, apart from the contributions aspect, the legislation is renewable. Actually no good purpose would be served in consolidating it in the ordinary Acts of the Board. In the case of land that is acquired in the future, rates will be paid during the currency of the agreement or until a new Act cancels or renews it in some other form.

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.

#### PUBLIC WORKS LOAN APPLICATION BILL.

The debate (adjourned from April 16) on the motion of Mr. Fraser (Honorary Minister) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

**Mr. STONEHAM** (Midlands).—This Bill authorizes the expenditure of certain public moneys in order to assist persons adversely affected by floods and other disasters, to assist municipalities to replace roads, bridges and other property damaged by floods or fire, and to reimburse Government authorities

and municipalities in respect of flood prevention work undertaken during the serious River Murray floods last year.

Honorable members will agree that the purpose is worthy, but an extraordinary omission from the Honorary Minister's second-reading speech was any statement indicating how the Government intended to prevent the possibility of such widespread damage occurring in future. I trust that before the debate closes the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) or the Minister of Water Supply will state what action is proposed through the medium of the River Murray Commission or other authority to evolve a plan for this purpose. It is all very well to say "well done" to certain organizations which did excellent work during the floods; positive steps must be taken to implement whatever works are required to avoid a future calamity. The most effective and economic means must be adopted. Some persons are unwise in erecting damageable assets on land which is subject to periodic flooding, but that is only a small part of the problem. An endeavour must be made to divert the top foot or so of the flood waters by some cheap means into low-lying areas adjacent to the river.

I wish to correct the impression gained by some honorable members that another measure which is before the House has some relationship to the flooding of the Murray valley. That Bill is not intended to provide an answer to this problem. If the tributaries which feed the Murray are so improved as to greatly increase the velocity of their flow, the flooding of the Murray could be accentuated. I am somewhat alarmed that the Government has seen fit to introduce this particular Bill, which involves the expenditure of a substantial amount of public money, without indicating its intentions in the matter of dealing with the flood problem in the Murray valley. I shall not labour the point because other honorable members are more conversant with the specific matters referred to by the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) than I am. However, I stress the importance of employing the best brains on the problem of preventing catastrophic damage such as that caused by

flooding in the Murray valley last year. Perhaps the Government believes it will not be in power when the next flooding of that great river occurs. We can all assume that that will be so, even if it is next spring, but I urge the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) to enlighten the House on what the Government has in mind.

On the motion of Mr. CAIN (Leader of the Opposition), the debate was adjourned until next day.

### ADJOURNMENT.

#### DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR AND INDUSTRY:

SALE OF PETROL: ALLEGED TRADING ON ANZAC DAY—RAILWAY DEPARTMENT: PROPOSED STANDARD GAUGE TO ALBURY: WODONGA LEVEL CROSSING—POLICE DEPARTMENT: PROTECTION IN GEELONG WEST—UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE: STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

**Mr. FRASER** (Honorary Minister).—

I move—

That the House, at its rising, adjourn until to-morrow, at half past Three o'clock.

The motion was agreed to.

**Mr. FRASER** (Honorary Minister).—

I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

**Mr. CAIN** (Leader of the Opposition).

—I direct a question to the Minister of Industry and Labour. Under a recent amendment to the Labour and Industry Act, certain persons are permitted to sell petrol during extended hours. The new law does not allow them to sell at any time, day or night, but that is happening. However, that is not the subject I wish to discuss. Last Anzac Day, which is a very close holiday in Victoria, a petrol station in a district adjoining mine sold petrol openly all day long. Its proprietors even went to the extent of announcing that if a person obtained a ticket there, he could buy petrol at any time. There is no provision in the legislation giving anybody the right to sell petrol except in the prescribed hours, from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m. on week days, for two hours in the evening—not four or six hours—and during certain hours on Sunday. Nobody has the right to sell petrol at all on Good Friday.

A petrol station trading under the name of Allied Taxis, which has no special rights, operates in High-street, Preston and I believe that last Thursday it sold petrol all day long. I think it was detected doing so by officers of the Department of Labour and Industry. This is not the only petrol reselling station doing so; the practice is becoming general. The legislation regarding petrol selling is being flagrantly disregarded, as everybody knows. It is now a real joke. If it is the desire of the Government that petrol service stations remain open for 24 hours a day, it should take steps to amend the law. Until that is done, the law as it is should be administered, whether it applies to petrol or anything else. At present, the law is not being enforced by the Department of Labour and Industry. That statement applies not only to petrol but also to the baking of bread and a number of other things.

Last week, a deputation waited on the Minister, and he promised that he would have a real blitz on the baking of bread on Sundays. No blitz is required regarding the matter I raise. Any number of breaches of the law can be detected without such action. I guarantee that hundreds of cases of the illegal sale of petrol could be detected every night. In many cases service stations which are allowed to be open from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. do not close at 8 p.m.; those which have a permit to trade between 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. do not close at 10 p.m.; and so on; the situation is a joke. The price of commodities will not be cheapened if these practices continue.

I direct the attention of the Minister to flagrant breaches of the Labour and Industry Act, and refer particularly to the sale of petrol on Anzac Day. The firm I have named is not the only one concerned; there are any number of others. A deputation of eight persons in business in opposition to the firm, and within half a mile of it, waited on me recently and brought a petition which I shall give to the Minister if he desires it. They informed me what had transpired since the firm commenced business. It was bankrupt a couple of years ago, and the reason it

did not pay was that the prescribed hours were observed. Now, the firm does not observe those hours, and probably it is prosperous. Business people who observe the law are entitled to protection, but they are not getting it from the Government. I trust that I shall not have occasion to raise this subject again after the next Anzac Day, or even in the next fortnight or so.

**Mr. MITCHELL** (Benambra).—I ask the Government to ensure that when the survey in connexion with the proposed construction of a standard gauge railway line between Melbourne and Albury is carried out, it will ascertain how the new line will affect the country towns through which it passes. The existing double track from Mangalore to Melbourne will have merely one track reduced to the standard gauge, but from Mangalore northwards, through Wangaratta and Wodonga to Albury, an extra standard gauge line will be installed. The Sisely-avenue crossing at Wangaratta, about which the Premier has heard from me on more than one occasion, will be doubled in width, and therefore the danger will be doubled. On the second point I raise, the Government must be particularly careful. What will be its policy regarding the operation of the standard gauge line? Will trains merely take "through goods" from Melbourne to Sydney, or will it carry goods from wayside stations, such as Wangaratta and Wodonga?

**Mr. CAIN**.—Do you mean passengers?

**Mr. MITCHELL**.—No; freight. If trains did not stop at the intermediate stations, the line could be routed around the towns. If the new line is to be of service to the towns, there will need to be considerable reconstruction of stations. I hold that such a line should not merely carry freight and serve passengers from Melbourne to Sydney, but should be available to towns such as Wangaratta and Wodonga so that local people can obtain goods from Queensland and consign goods to the north.

I urge the Government also, when the survey is being made, to investigate the question of the level crossing in the main street of Wodonga. It needs bold action to sink the present line 11 feet into the

ground. An unobstructed street could then be maintained at all times and the town not detrimentally bisected as it is now, with ramifications and reactions adverse to the town's economic existence. It also involves moving the shunting yards to the coal siding. I urge the Government to look into this matter far more carefully than it has and to realize that this survey is of vital importance to country people.

**Mr. C. D. MACDONALD** (Geelong West).—I bring to the notice of the Chief Secretary the grave concern of residents in my electorate at the totally inadequate police protection available since the introduction of D24 to Geelong. When that system was inaugurated approximately twelve months ago, concern was expressed by people living in Geelong West at the change, because they were satisfied with existing arrangements. However, they were prepared to give it a trial, because they were informed that the service provided would be better than they had before. I have had frequent visits from representatives of the retail traders in Geelong West and they have expressed grave concern because there is not a police patrol in the area.

Before the present scheme was introduced, there was a sergeant, two senior constables and seven constables, and two motor cycle patrols. To-day, there is a sergeant and four constables, most of whom are recruits. Two days a week, there is no one at the station at all, not even a sergeant. If a person telephones D24 he will be told that somebody will be along in half an hour—I have tried it. The retailers are very concerned. The motor cycle patrols submit their reports at 10.30 p.m. and finish duty at 11 p.m. After that, the only mobile patrol in operation is the police van, which could be miles away within the police district. There is nobody who can adequately look after the residents of the area.

Superintendent Reid, of Geelong, was requested by the Geelong West council to attend a council meeting and state his viewpoint on the question of protection in Geelong West. He did so, and I believe he "pulled the wool over their eyes." Since I think a number of the councillors have wakened up. He

stated that it was his job to see that the scheme worked properly, whether the people liked it or not. That is a matter about which concern is felt. I should like the Chief Secretary to make a close examination of this question. He can get adequate evidence of the truth of my statements.

Unpleasant incidents have occurred in the district. Young girls have been molested by hooligans. One method of police protection that hooligans recognize is the man on patrol; they know that there is a policeman about somewhere. A motor cycle patrol can race through a locality at 30 or 40 miles an hour—as does occur—and then it is gone. But when a man is pounding the beat, as there used to be, potential law breakers realize that he is about somewhere. The fact of having a policeman on this form of duty is a real protection. I ask the Chief Secretary to make an investigation into the method of police protection in Geelong West.

**Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL** (Brunswick West).—I wish to bring a matter to the notice of the Minister of Education. The University of Melbourne is much concerned about a statement made recently by the Minister in reply to certain questions asked by the honorable member for Coburg. Not only is the university concerned, but a very conscientious student and his father, a well-known Melbourne medical practitioner, are also worried. The Minister stated, *inter alia*—

Some of the students who were not accepted were qualified for admission but had not done well in their subjects. In some cases students who had taken useful subjects (chemistry and physics) were given preference over students who had done other subjects and had barely passed the examinations.

That is a grave injustice to a very industrious and conscientious prospective medical student. I think, by implication, the Minister said that the student had not done well, but in fact the university is very proud of his accomplishments. This is his record: As a boy of seventeen, in 1955, he passed in English expression, chemistry and physics. They are the two subjects which the Minister said would be very

useful. He failed in applied mathematics, and passed in pure mathematics. In that year, he could have entered the medical course; at that stage, there was no pre-selection. However, on the advice of his tutor he did another year on matriculation work. He again passed in chemistry and physics and applied mathematics. He also took geography, biology and social studies, in which subjects he obtained second-class honours. The university is proud that a matriculation student should pass in eight subjects. I can assure the Minister of Education that the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar of the University of Melbourne wholly disagree with what he has said, and I ask him to hasten to correct the impression he has created. He has rendered a very grave injustice to a young student at the university, who, contrary to what the Minister has said, has done exceedingly well. Of course, I realize that the Minister was speaking generally, but I point out that the questions were directed to him in relation to a particular medical student.

**Mr. BLOOMFIELD**.—That certainly did not appear to be the case.

**Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL**.—When the Minister prepares an answer such as the one he gave the House, he should at least consult university officials in order to ensure that he does not do a grave injustice to a prospective medical student.

**Mr. REID** (Minister of Labour and Industry).—In answer to the matter affecting the administration of the Department of Labour and Industry, raised by the Leader of the Opposition, I point out that it was made very clear to any potential sellers of petrol on Good Friday and on Anzac Day by special notification issued with my authority and approval before the holidays that it was entirely illegal to sell petrol on either day. That was stressed particularly in the published announcement. The question of taking action against persons alleged to have sold petrol either on Good Friday or on Anzac Day is already being considered by the Department. If the Leader of the Opposition has information concerning any violation of the regulations by

other persons and brings it to my notice I shall be only too happy to have the charges investigated.

I undertake to refer the matters raised by the honorable members for Benambra and Geelong West to the notice of the Ministers concerned.

**Mr. BLOOMFIELD** (Minister of Labour and Industry).—In answer to the honorable member for Brunswick West, I must first of all profess some astonishment that out of an answer to a general question asked by the honorable member for Coburg, which was expressed in the most clear and unambiguous language and related to a number of students, the honorable member for Brunswick West has managed to spell out an attack on some particular individual of whose identity neither I nor anybody else in this Assembly, other than the honorable member for Brunswick West, has any indication. I invite honorable members to read the questions submitted by the honorable member for Coburg and my answers and then consider whether it could be fairly contended that what was said by me could conceivably be regarded as a slight on an industrious, conscientious and studious person except by somebody who chose to take the answers as applying directly to himself or to his son. The answer to such an inquiry must be in the negative. Of course, success at the university does not depend only upon being studious, industrious and conscientious.

The honorable member for Brunswick West has recommended that on similar occasions in future I should make inquiries of university officials before furnishing the answer required by an honorable member. He also said that the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar of the university were gravely disturbed by what I had said and disagreed completely with my remarks. I would point out that his advice to me is belated as what he urged is exactly what I caused to be done when the questions under discussion were first brought to my notice. The secretary of my Department, who is well known to honorable members as a most conscientious, capable and painstaking officer—he is also studious—had a

prolonged and thorough discussion with the Registrar of the university on the morning of the day the questions were answered. The information sought by the honorable member for Coburg was very detailed and the discussion with the university authorities was a thorough one. The secretary of my Department referred a draft reply to me, which appeared to be quite in order. I am sure that any reasonably minded man would say that every endeavour was made to provide fairly detailed and involved information at short notice and that nobody but an extremely thin-skinned person would regard it as referring other than to a class of 107 students.

**Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL.**—The person to whom I referred was one of the 107.

**Mr. BLOOMFIELD.**—He may have been one of the 107, but apparently he took exception to it as referring to him personally. No reasonable person could say that we singled out and insulted any individual. If we have done so, it has been in good faith and on information supplied by the very authorities to whom the honorable member for Brunswick West would have us refer.

The motion was agreed to.

*The House adjourned at 11.8 p.m.*

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## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

*Wednesday, May 1, 1957.*

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The **PRESIDENT** (Sir Clifden Eager) took the chair at 4.58 p.m., and read the prayer.

### EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

**GEELONG JUNIOR TECHNICAL SCHOOL:**  
**WORKSHOPS BLOCK: MAIN BUILDING.**

**The Hon. D. P. J. FERGUSON** (South-Western Province) asked the Minister of Transport—

(a) On what date was the tender accepted for the erection of the workshops block at the Geelong Junior Technical School?

(b) To whom was the contract awarded, and what was the contract price?

(c) What is the cost of this project to 30th April, 1957?

(d) When is it expected that the works on this contract and the additions to the main buildings will be completed?

(e) On what date were instructions given to the architect to proceed with plans and specifications?

(f) Were the plans and specifications for these works prepared by a private architect; if so, what fees have been paid to him to 30th April, 1957?

**Sir ARTHUR WARNER** (Minister of Transport).—The answers are—

(a) 4th August, 1954.

(b) Mr. H. R. Leach, 52 Shannon-avenue, Newtown, Geelong—£46,275.

(c) £41,000.

(d) Workshops block, 30th June, 1957. Additions to main building, 31st July, 1957.

(e) 15th June, 1951.

(f) Yes—£3,372 7s. 3d.

### CITY OF MELBOURNE.

DEBNEY'S PADDOCK: REQUEST FOR FILE.

**The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER** (Doutta Galla Province) asked the Minister of Transport—

Will he lay on the table of the Library the file concerning the Melbourne City Council and the Town and Country Planning Board relating to Debney's paddock, together with the correspondence passing between these bodies and the decision made by the Town and Country Planning Board?

**Sir ARTHUR WARNER** (Minister of Transport).—I have ascertained that there is no file containing correspondence between the Melbourne City Council and the Town and Country Planning Board relating to Debney's paddock. There are various other departmental files on the subject, but in accordance with the usual practice, it is thought that, in view of the impending inquiry in the matter, such files should not be laid on the table at this stage.

### COUNTRY ROADS BOARD.

PRINCES HIGHWAY: RECONSTRUCTION: CONTRIBUTIONS BY MUNICIPALITIES.

**The Hon. BUCKLEY MACHIN** (Melbourne West Province) asked the Minister of Transport—

Will the Minister supply information as to the financial responsibilities of the municipalities of Footscray, Sunshine, and Werribee in connexion with recent reconstruction works on portions of the Princes Highway?

**Sir ARTHUR WARNER** (Minister of Transport).—The following information has been supplied by the Country Roads Board:—

1. The section of the Princes Highway in Footscray City is a main road and the council contributes to the cost of work thereon.

2. The section in the City of Sunshine and Shire of Werribee is however a State highway and the full cost of the "through" roadway is borne by the Board.

3. The councils are, however, responsible for the cost of footpaths adjoining kerbs and service roads and half the cost of the kerb nearer the centre of the road reserve.

### QUEENSCLIFFE BOROUGH COUNCIL.

CARAVAN AND CAMPING AREA.

**The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER** (Doutta Galla Province) asked the Minister of Transport—

(a) Has the Minister approved of proposed action by the Queenscliffe Borough Council to make available for caravans and camping parties part of the narrow cliff lands between the foreshore and the main Point Lonsdale-road?

(b) Will not such use of this narrow strip of land result in possible destruction of the tea-tree and other flora as well as accelerate the serious erosion of the cliffs?

(c) Will the Minister make available suitable Crown land in the Point Lonsdale area for caravans and camping parties?

**Sir ARTHUR WARNER** (Minister of Transport).—The answers are—

(a) No.

(b) Such use could possibly result in accelerated erosion.

(c) Very little unreserved Crown lands suitable for caravans and camping parties remain in the Point Lonsdale area, but if application were made by the council for use of a specific area for this purpose it would receive full consideration.

### DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

DETECTION OF FRUIT FLY.

**The Hon. A. K. BRADBURY** (North-Eastern Province) asked the Minister of Agriculture—

(a) What has been the cost of the road blocks for the detection of fruit fly in the State for the years 1955-56 and 1956-57 (to date)?

(b) Have such road blocks led to the detection of fruit containing fruit fly; if so, in which localities, and on what dates?

**The Hon. G. L. CHANDLER** (Minister of Agriculture).—The answers are—

(a) The cost of road blocks for the detection of fruit fly in Victoria for the years 1955-56 and 1956-57 has been as follows:—

|                   |    |        |
|-------------------|----|--------|
| 1955-56           | .. | £3,700 |
| 1956-57 (to date) | .. | £9,100 |

In addition to the fixed position road blocks, since July 1956, six men have been engaged constantly on road patrol work in the course of which they set up temporary road blocks at appropriate points covering the various border crossings. The estimated cost of this work is £5,880.

(b) Fruit fly infested fruit has been intercepted by the road blocks at the localities as set out hereunder:—

Wodonga—104 instances—between the 7th December, 1955 and the 30th April, 1957.

Bairnsdale—three instances—between the 1st February and 8th February, 1956.

Darnum—one instance—on 3rd October, 1956.

Genoa—ten instances—between the 10th January and 6th March, 1957.

Wahgunyah—one instance on 24th April, 1957.

Mildura—one instance on 29th April, 1957.

#### CITY OF MELBOURNE (DEBNEY'S PADDOCK) BILL.

**The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER** (Doutta Galla Province) moved for leave to bring in a Bill relating to the Melbourne City Council the permanent reservation and use for recreational purposes and the immediate termination of existing occupations of the whole of the area vested in the Melbourne City Council and situated at Flemington and bounded by Mount Alexander-road, Victoria-street, Racecourse-road, and Moonee Ponds creek and known as Debney's paddock, and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

#### CLEAN AIR BILL.

**The Hon. BUCKLEY MACHIN** (Melbourne West Province) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to make provision for abating the pollution of the air.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

#### MONOPOLIES AND RESTRICTIVE TRADE PRACTICES CONTROL BILL.

**The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER** (Doutta Galla Province) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to deal with regulate and control monopolies, restrictive practices, unfair trading, unfair profits, and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

#### CITY OF MELBOURNE (DEBNEY'S PADDOCK) BILL.

**The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER** (Doutta Galla Province).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time. The introduction of this short but very important measure has been made necessary because of extraordinary action taken by a majority of the members of the Melbourne City Council. A leading article which appeared in the *Age* newspaper during the present controversy referred to "greedy eyes," and that brought to my mind the many occasions when greedy eyes have been cast upon lands which have belonged or should have belonged to the people generally. In the early part of the last century, no less than 1,000,000 acres of the common lands of England were enclosed and became the possession of the manorial lords.

I have a few brief but pointed observations to make about those enclosures and the attitude taken by vigilant men who were not associated in those days with the Labour party—it then had not come into existence—but who occupied high positions in either the Liberal or the Conservative party, and saw the danger of the system of enclosing the common lands, which should have been reserved for the people. Associated with those proposals are the names of men such as Henry Fawcett, Lord Thring, Sir Charles Dilke and others. The *Encyclopædia Britannica*, volume 6, at page 127, states that after a great deal of trouble, Fawcett ultimately achieved success when the Commons Act of 1876 was passed. The writer goes on to say—

This measure, introduced by a Conservative Government, laid down the principle that an enclosure should not be allowed

unless distinctly shown to be for the benefit, not merely of private persons, but of the neighbourhood generally and the public.

The effect of this legislation and of the changed attitude of the House of Commons towards enclosure has been almost to stop that process, except in the case of common fields or extensive mountain wastes. It can be quite truly said that every struggle to protect commons from unlawful enclosure originated in the desire that the threatened area should be preserved as an open space in the public interest for use and enjoyment.

Those observations apply definitely to the problem now facing us.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—Also to the aborigines.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—I cannot see the relevancy of that interjection. If Sir Arthur Warner speaks of full-blooded aborigines, no problem is presented; according to the last census figures, there are only about three such persons in Victoria. There is a problem which I will concede, and it is in relation to half-caste members of the community, who should not be deprived of their tribal areas. But we have no such difficulty, or only very limited segments of one, in this State.

I wish to refer to the history of Debney's paddock. As far back as 1885 and 1890, there were certain roads in that area—and the roads form the key to this problem. Had there been no difficulty about roads, and no mix-up about the proclamation of certain legislation, it is safe to assume that some members of the Melbourne City Council would have handed over, lock stock and barrel, the whole of this area to industry and commercial interests. In 1938 they tried to achieve this purpose. They knew the problem of the roads, and that without the fee simple of those roads being vested in the Melbourne City Council nothing could be done with the area.

Consequently, in 1938, Parliament was asked to pass a small measure entitled the Melbourne (Hopetoun Ward) Streets Bill, the purpose of which was to vest the roads in question—which were public highways, by declarations of 1885 and 1890—in the

council. Fortunately, there were some far-sighted members in the legislature, and they were responsible for a vital amendment. It provided that the vesting of the roads in the city council should not become operative until the area was proclaimed under the Slum Reclamation and Housing Act. Curiously enough, whilst the Act itself was proclaimed, no proclamation from that day to this was ever made under the provisions of Part V., which empowered municipalities to zone areas. Those provisions were repealed by a 1944 Act. So here was the problem of which the legal advisers of the city council must have been fully aware, as were the advisers of the big-business occupants of the land—that a legal flaw prevented them from getting any title or lease to the areas in question.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—In substance, part of it remains a roadway?

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—Yes. I invite the Leader of the House to instruct his legal advisers to examine that proposition. In 1938, before the council secured the passage of the Bill referred to, local interest was aroused by the proposal to sell to commercial interests large areas of land in Debney's paddock. That was resisted by men of courage and vision, such as the late John Holland, Jack Bent and others, and one or two clergymen who realized what would happen if part of the land was sold to private enterprise.

As a result of that pressure, and possibly of the knowledge of the legal flaw that existed, the council did not pursue its proposal to sell any of the land. In 1941—and this becomes very significant—despite all that Councillor Maurice Nathan says now about a snap vote having been taken, and that there was not a full house, the council deliberately passed a resolution determining that the whole of the area was to be permanently reserved for recreational purposes. In 1951, the council reaffirmed its previous resolution and again declared that all the land should be permanently reserved for recreational purposes. What is the next unsavoury incident?

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—It appeared that the councillors had made up their minds.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—They did so very definitely on two occasions without any qualification or reservation. In 1953, big business interests became concerned about the land. They knew its value, because of its proximity to all means of transport and its nearness to the heart of the city. Although these industrial interests were merely given monthly tenancies—and this requires a great deal of explanation—they were prepared to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds upon the buildings that are now erected there.

The Hon. W. O. FULTON.—They must have received some assurance behind the scenes.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—Of course. They were to get permanency of occupation or very lengthy leases in spite of the legal difficulties which were apparently well known to the legal advisers of the city council and possibly equally well known to the legal advisers of the vested interests. I pass those observations to the person who, I suppose, is the shrewdest business man here—the Leader of the House. Can anybody imagine Sir Arthur Warner occupying an area of land—certainly most favourably situated for building up a great enterprise—on only a monthly tenancy?

The Hon. A. J. BAILEY.—What about Wirth's Park?

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—The honorable gentleman did not go very far with Wirth's Park.

**The PRESIDENT (Sir Clifden Eager).**—That question is outside the purpose of this Bill.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—I was trying to make the illustration that the Minister of Transport, who is a very sound business man, would not embark upon an enterprise on an area of land of which he could get only a monthly tenancy. There is some point in statements made by interjection to the effect that those concerned must have had

some assurance from somebody that they were not likely to be disturbed for a very long time.

The matter reached crisis point a few weeks ago, when the Melbourne City Council decided to give the business people concerned six-year leases. Then the fat was properly in the fire. The community has never been so aroused—nor have I seen so great a degree of unanimity on any other question—as it has been on this. Not a single newspaper in the community, either metropolitan or provincial, has raised a voice in favour of the passing of any part of Debney's paddock to private or commercial interests. The most powerful and critical articles have appeared day after day in the leading organs of the city—and they have no axe to grind over this problem.

The Hon. J. A. LITTLE.—Probably that is what they are annoyed about.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—I do not know what is behind the innuendo, but it is strange that all the newspapers, large and small, have supported the proposal that Debney's paddock should not be handed over to industrial interests. Not only has there been striking unanimity on the part of the press, but there has been complete agreement among the people who live in the district. Every organization and every body in the locality is wholly opposed to the proposal that this land should be passed over to commercial interests. I challenge any member to point to any organization, political or non-political, sectarian or non-sectarian, in the area which has supported the Melbourne City Council in its attitude. The Essendon City Council, a body of some importance which is concerned with a large area of land in the western suburbs, stands—as it has always stood—wholly opposed to any misuse of the people's land.

When the Premier made certain observations on this issue, the hopes of the people in the district rose. I now wish to quote what the Premier said on this issue without any reservations or qualifications.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—He is always worth hearing.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—The remarks I desire to quote are worth hearing, but his somersault on this question is surprising. That is what we quarrel about.

**The PRESIDENT (Sir Clifden Eager).**—On which Bill was the Premier speaking?

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—He was speaking about Debney's paddock.

The PRESIDENT.—Standing Orders provide that debates in the other House in the same session may not be referred to. I do not know whether the Premier in this instance was making a statement or taking part in a debate.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—What I wish to quote is a statement made by the Premier to the press.

The PRESIDENT.—It appeared to me that you intended to quote from *Hansard*.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—I merely wish to quote the press statement as it is recorded in *Hansard*, for the sake of convenience.

The PRESIDENT.—If you can assure me that the statement was made outside the House and you are merely referring to it in *Hansard* for convenience, the quotation will be permissible.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—I can give that assurance. If there is any doubt about the matter, I could send for a copy of the *Age* newspaper in which the report first appeared and read it *in extenso*. The report is as follows:—

The Premier, Mr. Bolte, wants Debney's paddock, Flemington, developed as a park.

"It's time we called a halt to the whittling away of parklands," he said to-day.

Mr. Bolte said that the Melbourne City Council should adopt the State Government's policy which was opposed to further alienation of the people's parklands and recreation reserves.

Mr. Bolte added that Melbourne's pioneers had reserved vast areas of parkland for the enjoyment of future generations.

But over the years thousands of acres of this parkland had been whittled away for other purposes.

He said the other purposes to which the land had been put seemed legitimate at the time, but to-day Melbourne had less parkland than 50 years ago.

The Premier invited the Melbourne City Council not to continue with its policy of granting leases over Crown lands, but to adhere to the policy of his Government which believed in the maintenance and the preservation inviolate of the parklands of this State, which are all too few.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—What made him change his mind?

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—I suppose certain interests got to work and applied gentle pressure on him. Probably it was said to the Premier, "You have been a very good friend of the Melbourne City Council and you have achieved a lot for us. Surely you do not intend to hurt us now." After that, the Premier recanted.

The Hon. W. O. FULTON.—Surely you do not think it was gentle pressure, do you?

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—I think it was subtle and insidious pressure. Nevertheless, it was pressure by a small group in the community that is apparently able to wield immense power against this avalanche of public opinion.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—Will you quote the Premier's recantation as well?

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—Of course I shall do so. The Premier later stated that he did not consider it was right for the Government to legislate against municipal councils. Why did he not say that in the first place? Originally he stated that the Melbourne City Council should not persist with its intention to grant extended leases, and that the parklands should be held inviolate for the recreational needs of the community. I now wish to deal with the terms of reference of the proposed inquiry. It is my view that these will be definitely loaded in favour of the vested interests represented by the Melbourne City Council. I read with very great amusement, as I think most people did, the statement in the press that the representatives of the Law Department were to confer with the solicitor to the Melbourne City Council before the terms of reference of the proposed inquiry were drafted. Why were they not asked to confer with the solicitor to

the Essendon City Council, the solicitor to the Flemington and Kensington Progress Association, or the solicitor to the Essendon District Football League or the combined mothers' clubs in those areas who know that facilities for sports grounds in that area are entirely inadequate at the present time?

The Hon. ARTHUR SMITH.—They only live out there.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—Few members of the Melbourne City Council live in the area and know anything about the needs and requirements of the district. The only time many of the members of the council residing south of the Yarra pass Debney's paddock is when they are on their way to the Essendon aerodrome or to the races. The procedure adopted with regard to the framing of the terms of reference condemns the inquiry from the beginning and casts suspicions around it which should not exist if a free and independent investigation is to be conducted. I believe this action is unprecedented. The terms of reference of the inquiry will be determined by people who have personal and selfish reasons to be interested in it.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—It is the same as asking an accused person to draw up the indictment against himself.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—Mr. Galbally draws a perfect analogy. It is like the Crown saying to an accused person that he will be allowed to consult with the Crown Prosecutor in determining the charge to be laid against him.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I think you are making an unfair accusation.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—I do not think so. For whom is the solicitor to the City Council to speak? Is he to speak for the people of Kensington, Flemington, Ascot Vale, Moonee Ponds, or Essendon? No, he will speak for the body which pays and employs him. It is futile for anybody to think otherwise. The *Age* newspaper in an editorial on this question clearly expressed the view that there was no necessity for any inquiry. I wonder what the thoughts of its management were when

the news was published that the terms of reference were to be drawn up in consultation with the council's solicitor? I should imagine they would be the same as the views I hold about that procedure. When the question of the future use of Debney's paddock came before the city council last week, not one member of that august body had the guts to stand up and defend the attitude of the council. Silently they let it pass by; they knew they had the numbers. A circular had been prepared by somebody and the views expressed in it were accepted. One councillor said, "As a rule, I tell my constituents where I stand on these matters and I speak on them." However, he was singularly silent on the issue. Every member of the so-called civic group of the Melbourne City Council was as silent as the grave on this matter. What makes me so savage over this controversy is that the leading protagonists in the city council of the policy of granting long leases over portions of Debney's paddock have no knowledge whatever of the needs of the people in the area for sports-ground facilities. They have not been associated with senior or junior football clubs. They do not know of the increasing difficulty of finding grounds for junior clubs. Government supporters speak about the problem of juvenile delinquency, yet they allow powerful industrial and commercial interests to take control of parklands which belong to the people.

The Hon. L. H. S. THOMPSON.—We did not do it.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—Is Mr. Thompson apologizing for the somersault of the Premier?

The Hon. L. H. S. THOMPSON.—Prove to us that he did turn a somersault.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—I consider it to be the greatest somersault in political history. One day he said that the land should be reserved for the people; that the parklands were not to be whittled away. The next day he stated that he believed that the Government should not interfere with municipal politics. In other words, municipalities could do what they liked. The

day after that, the Premier announced that an inquiry would be held and that the terms of reference were to be drafted in consultation with the solicitor to the Melbourne City Council. Could there be more utter humbug than that? I remind Mr. Thompson that he lives in a more favoured part of the metropolitan area south of the Yarra. I live in one of the western suburbs and I know, as an executive of a junior football body, how difficult is the problem facing the community concerning the increasing need to provide adequate sports ground facilities for our young people. Clubs have had to be refused admittance to the Essendon District Football League because sufficient playing areas are not available. One of the city councillors said that the children of Flemington and Kensington could go across to Royal Park for their recreation. Are the parents of the children going to be happy in allowing them to cross busy Mount Alexander-road at what is perhaps the worst traffic bottleneck in the metropolitan area in order they they might have a game of football? As I said before, members of the Melbourne City Council do not know the needs of the people in the area, and, what is more, they do not know the feeling that has been aroused over this proposal. All organizations in the district, without exception, are behind this move of the Labour party to permanently place this area of land beyond the predatory hands of big business.

Perhaps I should now turn to the Bill in detail. I do not think one should throw a measure to the House and say, "Gape, sinner, and swallow." I think the reasons for the introduction of a measure should be put fully and clearly.

The Hon. J. A. LITTLE.—That was done in the last session and your party approved of it.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—Mr. Little can make his speech later.

The Hon. J. A. LITTLE.—I was merely reminding you of what had happened in the past.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—I am not afraid of what assistance might be offered by way of interjection, but I suggest to Mr. Little that he can attack this proposal later if he wishes.

The Hon. J. A. LITTLE.—I am on your side on this occasion, but I should like to go a step further.

The PRESIDENT (Sir Clifden Eager).—Order! The *Hansard* reporter must be experiencing great difficulty in recording these many interjections. Of course, Mr. Slater does not need advice from me, but I suggest that he should ignore the interjections that are being made.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—I think that is a proper and desirable ruling, Mr. President, and I shall certainly observe it. The Bill contains four clauses, the first of which is the short title and citation. Clause 2 seeks to surrender to the Crown the area of 37 acres which comprises Debney's paddock and sets out the boundaries of the land. If the measure is enacted, the area will revert to unalienated Crown land beyond the reach of any business or commercial interests to use for their own purposes and thus deprive the community of its use. Paragraph (c) of clause 2 seeks to appoint the council of the City of Melbourne as the committee of management of the area. It is the usual custom to appoint a committee of management to administer unalienated Crown lands, and the Melbourne City Council is the appropriate body on this occasion. It will not be able to sell or lease the area; its powers will be confined to making the area available for the use and needs of the community. Clause 3 provides that all existing erections on the land are to be removed by the end of the year, and clause 4 sets out that no compensation will be payable by either the Crown or the city council.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—That seems to be a little unfair.

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—Why is it unfair? If these business tycoons were prepared to carry on operations at Debney's paddock on a monthly leasehold basis and, with their eyes fully opened, erect buildings costing

thousands of pounds, why should they be compensated? The longer the firms remain in occupation of the area, the more assured are their prospects ultimately of receiving compensation under the Town and Country Planning Act. The Town and Country Planning Board has declared that the land should be reserved for recreational purposes. Against the weight of all the opinions I have mentioned only two voices stand against my proposal, namely, the vested business interests in the Melbourne City Council and the entrepreneurs conducting industries there. Those interests support one of the most outrageous proposals I have ever heard of.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—Are you still dealing with the compensation clause?

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—No, I am dealing with the subject generally. The occupiers knew that their leases could be determined at any time. If in the light of that they were prepared to spend large sums of money, that is their lookout.

The Hon. J. A. LITTLE.—Why should they be treated any differently from the man who built a house at Sunshine on the wrong block of land?

The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.—I fail to see the analogy. The Bill will compel these people to remove their buildings. I have been informed that the buildings were constructed in such a manner that they could be cheaply and readily removed. Honorable members should inspect the area, which offers one of the most unsightly approaches to this great city. On the site there is a pile of packing cases 70 or 80 feet high, a quantity of dilapidated machinery, and numerous cars that overflow almost on to the street in one portion and occupy half of the footway during busy traffic periods. Parliament should affirm that it is no longer prepared to entrust to the Melbourne City Council power to control this land. I invite the House to support the second reading of this measure.

On the motion of Sir ARTHUR WARNER (Minister of Transport), the debate was adjourned until Wednesday, May 15.

## MELBOURNE AND GEELONG CORPORATIONS BILL.

The debate (adjourned from April 16) on the motion of the Hon. J. W. Galbally (Melbourne North Province) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

**The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY** (Melbourne North Province) (*By leave*).—Before the Leader of the House addresses himself to this Bill, I feel I should offer an explanation to the House. I made a mistake of fact when I introduced the measure which, I stated, related to the cities of Melbourne and Geelong. I pointed out that those cities were in a different position from the remainder of the State. In fact, only Melbourne is in that different category. The position relating to Geelong was altered in 1938, and I am indebted to the Town Clerk of Geelong for that advice. There is an interesting and intricate explanation of how the mistake, which is quite readily made, occurred. The title of the Bill is correct, but the measure relates only to Melbourne.

**Sir ARTHUR WARNER** (Minister of Transport).—This is an interesting little measure, not because it purports to do a great deal but because it shows very clearly that at least one section of the Labour party desires to pursue what is almost a vendetta against any capital investment, or savings, or property owned by any person. It is clear that this flows from the general socialistic conception of what is left of the Labour party. Millions of pounds have been invested in the City of Melbourne. I do not know how much, but I do know that in one particular ward the sum of £35,000,000 has been invested.

The Hon. F. M. THOMAS.—Where did they get that from?

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—By saving money.

**The PRESIDENT (Sir Clifden Eager)**.—Order! The point is that they are owners of the properties. I hold that the source of the money is irrelevant to the debate.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I agree, Mr. President. I only wish to make it clear that the money did not come out of the air; that some people had to

refrain from drinking beer or spending money in some other way in order to invest their savings. Of course, property of all kinds is thoroughly objectionable to the Labour party. No matter who owns it or saved it, the members of that party believe the State should receive all, and if anyone obtains any privileges out of property he should be deprived of them and regulated as to how he shall use his property or savings. This Bill indicates the extremes to which the Labour party will go. Every person who occupies a building in the City of Melbourne is entitled to one, two or three votes at a municipal election, as an occupier. If he happens to be the owner of the property he is entitled to the same number of votes, but if the owner does not occupy the property he also receives a certain number of votes. In no circumstances do non-occupying owners receive more than 10 per cent. of the total votes on the register of the Melbourne City Council.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—They may vote in other municipalities as well.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—That could be so. The rates are based on the value of the property concerned. If roads are required in front of it, the owner must pay for them. If the rates on the property are increased, to some extent a greater burden is placed on the owner.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—I did not realize that the Minister of Transport was such a reactionary. He wants to go back 100 years.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I shall cite an example. The estimated value of the property at 125 Swanston-street, Melbourne, is £620,000, but the terrible capitalist who owns it receives only two votes.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—Is he any better a man because he owns all this property?

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—Mr. Galbally is becoming excited when I begin to demonstrate how miserable and chiselling is this Bill, but I should like the House to examine the full purport of this attempt to take away from a man a small right. The tenants for

whom the owner of the property I have mentioned provided the building, and who are probably paying rentals based on 1940 values, exercise 68 votes. It might be argued that at least the owner occupies the corridors, and is thus entitled to two votes. The Capitol building is estimated by the Melbourne City Council to be worth £840,000. I do not know to whom it belongs—probably it is a company. Savings have been co-ordinated in order to provide a building for the use of the people, but the owner receives only two votes. Mr. Galbally considers that to be so shocking that he has introduced a special Bill to take away that right. The people who have the benefit of conducting businesses and making profits—many paying rents based on 1940 values—are entitled to 257 votes, but have invested no money in the property that is being rated. The law provides that the person who invests his savings shall be given the very slight protection, if he does not occupy his property, of a minority say in what happens at the deliberations of the Melbourne City Council. Is not that a shocking state of affairs!

Mr. Galbally said, in effect, "The bloated capitalist is getting too many privileges. He has two votes out of 250. He cannot have that. It is not democratic that he should have two votes to represent all his investments. Let us take them away from him." I emphasize that some of the voters in question are not simply individuals, but companies representing the savings of 2,000 or 3,000 shareholders. Is it so disgusting for them to have two votes? Mr. Paul Jones had something to say on behalf of the landlord who was being exploited.

**The PRESIDENT (Sir Clifden Eager).**—Order! Mr. Jones was then speaking on another matter, and it is not in order to refer to that in this debate.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—One of the other reasons advanced in support of the measure was interesting. Mr. Galbally said, in effect, that the cities of Melbourne and Geelong should be placed on the same footing as the remainder of Victoria so far as voting at municipal elections is concerned. In other words,

he claimed that all the injustices that have been perpetuated against the other property owners should be applied to property owners in the cities of Melbourne and Geelong. If a person has "carved" a farm out of virgin bush, and he later lets it to someone else, why should he not be entitled to a vote and to have some say as to what should be done about the roads surrounding the farm and the rates that should be paid? Surely, it is not unreasonable that he should have some voice in these matters.

The Hon. J. W. GALBALLY.—You are not democratic.

Sir ARTHUR WARNER.—I am not, if being democratic means depriving a person of all his savings. The Labour party, which has committed itself to Socialism, although it is finding Socialism uncomfortable to live with, shows its hand periodically by introducing a measure of this type, saying that even the 10 per cent. of the voting power in the City of Melbourne which is wielded by people who own many thousands of pounds worth of property should be taken away and given to tenants. The Government opposes the Bill.

On the motion of the Hon. P. T. BYRNES (North-Western Province), the debate was adjourned until Wednesday, May 8.

### TRINITY COLLEGE BILL.

The Hon. G. S. McARTHUR (Minister of Forests).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time. This Bill is for the purpose of enabling the trustees of Trinity College to borrow on the security of the college land and premises. Trinity College is affiliated to and connected with the University of Melbourne and is one of four such denominational affiliated colleges. It is situated on an area of approximately 10 acres of land adjacent to the university and permanently reserved in 1871 as a site for an affiliated college to be established by the Church of England. Similar reservations were made for Ormond College established by the Presbyterian Church, Queen's College established by the Methodist Church, and Newman College established by the Roman Catholic Church.

In the case of Ormond, Queen's, and Newman colleges, after the Crown grant had been issued to the respective churches, specified powers of disposition were granted to the trustees pursuant to the provisions of Act No. 391, passed in 1871, which was entitled "an Act to provide for the abolition of State aid to religion." This Act provided that on conditions laid down all lands which had been granted or promised or reserved by the Crown permanently or temporarily for church purposes of any denomination could be disposed of by the denomination. Upon application by the head or authorized representative of the denomination and with the consent of the trustees of the land, the Governor in Council could grant an "allowance" enabling the issue of a certificate of title to the trustees as proprietors under the Transfer of Land Act, with specified powers of disposition. Those powers of disposition in the case of Ormond, Queen's and Newman colleges included the power to borrow on the security of the land with the prior consent of the Governor in Council. No "allowance" under the legislation passed in 1871 was ever applied for or granted in the case of Trinity College. Thus the position arose in which Trinity alone of all the university colleges could not use its land as security for a loan.

In 1924 the administration of the trust funds of Trinity College and of its property—with the exception of the original grant of land—was placed in the hands of the Trinity College (Melbourne) Trusts Corporation registered under the Companies Act as a limited company. About this time, doubts arose as to the legal powers of Trinity College to award scholarships, and to admit students without distinction of religious belief, though this had in fact been the practice of the college from its inception. Primarily to remove these doubts, Parliament passed the Trinity College Act in 1927. But the Act went further; it vested the land forming the original site of the college in the Trinity College (Melbourne) Trusts Corporation as sole trustees, subject to the conditions and provisions of the original Crown

grant. Under this Crown grant the trustees of Trinity College were prohibited from taking action "to alienate or attempt to alienate in fee simple or for any less estate or interest the said land and premises or any part thereof."

The effect of the 1927 Act therefore was to make the college an autonomous body but to continue the prohibition upon pledging the college land as security for a loan. Furthermore, the vesting of the land in the Trinity College (Melbourne) Trusts Corporation removed it from the ambit of Act No. 391, and it is therefore not possible to give Trinity power to borrow on the security of its land under the provision of that Act, as was done in the last century in the case of Ormond, Queen's and Newman colleges. The present situation is that Trinity College desires to proceed with urgently needed and substantial building extensions. The college has some funds in hand for this purpose, but not sufficient to meet the cost of the building extensions it desires to make. However, it can borrow the balance of the amount required provided it is given the necessary borrowing powers. The purpose of the Bill is to give Trinity those powers.

The powers of disposition set out in clause 2 of the Bill are the same powers as have already been granted in the case of Ormond, Queen's and Newman colleges under Act No. 391. The Bill, therefore, places Trinity in the same position as the other university colleges and will allow it to use its not inconsiderable assets by borrowing to provide additional accommodation for students. The college plans to have the new building ready by 1958.

I am sure honorable members will agree that no controversy can arise on this Bill, and I ask the House to deal with it without undue delay so that the college council can make firm plans at the earliest possible moment.

On the motion of the Hon. J. W. GALBALLY (Melbourne North Province), the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, May 7.

## VICTORIAN INLAND MEAT AUTHORITY (FINANCIAL) BILL.

**The Hon. G. L. CHANDLER** (Minister of Agriculture).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill contains only two main provisions. Clause 2 will have the effect of increasing from £200,000 to £300,000 the maximum amount which the Treasurer may advance to the Victorian Inland Meat Authority by way of temporary advances and guarantees. Clause 3 provides for an amendment to the Companies Act to permit the registration of a mortgage debenture given by the Authority to its bank as security for advances obtained from the bank to finance normal trading operations by the Authority.

The need for the Bill arises from the difficulty the Authority has experienced in obtaining financial accommodation to cover its operations for the 1956-57 season. The Authority applied to its bank—the Commonwealth Bank—for a maximum advance for the season of £300,000. Of this advance, £50,000 was to be secured by a Victorian Government guarantee, and £250,000 was to be based on 80 per cent. of the Authority's meat stocks, skins, by-products, book debts, and so on. Before it was prepared to advance this sum, the bank requested that action be taken to enable it to register its mortgage debenture, and that the Government remove the limitation of £200,000 as the maximum limit for temporary advances and guarantees by the Treasurer in respect of the Authority.

**The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER.**—There is another big slice of Socialism in that.

**The Hon. G. L. CHANDLER.**—It sounds something like the debate in this Chamber last night in connexion with the Port Fairy cement works. On its first request, the bank takes the view that without registration, the mortgage debenture given by the Authority to the bank is not a satisfactory security for its advances. Registration of the debenture under the provisions of the Companies Act is not possible at present because the Victorian Inland

Meat Authority, although a corporation, is not a company within the meaning of the Companies Act. A similar problem arose in connexion with the financing of Boards constituted under the Marketing of Primary Products Act, and the difficulty was overcome by a similar amendment to the Companies Act to that proposed under the present Bill.

Section 20 of the Victorian Inland Meat Authority Act 1942, authorizes the Treasurer to make advances to the Authority for providing temporary financial accommodation, but section 22 limits the amount which the Treasurer may provide, either by way of advances or guarantee, to £200,000. To date the amount provided under this section amounts to £145,000. In addition, a further £50,000 has been guaranteed to the Commonwealth Bank of Australia in connexion with the Authority's financial arrangements.

The Victorian Inland Meat Authority was appointed in 1943 to take over the Amalgamated Freezing Company Proprietary Limited, and its three constituent companies—the Ballarat and District Freezing Company Limited, the Victorian Freezing Company Limited, and the Donald Inland Freezing Company Limited. The total indebtedness of these companies to the State of Victoria at 30th April, 1943, for advances and interest, was £843,501. Under the Victorian Inland Meat Authority Act of 1942 this amount was written off. Previously an additional £119,000 of the freezing companies' indebtedness had been written off so that the total amount dealt with in that way by the Government, including interest charges, was £962,500.

Since its inception in 1943, the Inland Meat Authority has had to contend with some adverse conditions and although profits were shown in seven of the fourteen years that have elapsed, the losses over that period have exceeded the profits by £175,744. These losses are arrived at after providing for interest of £110,947 on Government loans, £145,669 for depreciation, and £47,775 on the maintenance of the Donald works, which have not operated for many years.

*The Hon. G. L. Chandler.*

The Authority has advanced several reasons for the losses sustained over the years. First, the seasons from 1st July, 1945, to 30th June, 1948, marked the recovery stage from the severe drought of the preceding years and, although there was a gradual improvement in the numbers of stock available over this period, local prices were well in excess of export values. The resulting serious decline in "throughput" of the works increased operating costs and, as the plant at Ballarat at that time was equipped to handle export trade only, the virtual failure of export was severely felt by the Authority.

Again, in 1950-51 the number of lambs exported from Victoria fell to 504,000 compared with 2,023,000 in the previous year. In addition to the reduction in numbers killed for export, there were remarkable rises in wool prices followed by a calamitous fall in wool value which resulted in serious losses on realization of skins. From 1952 to 1954 the extensions and alterations at Ballarat works seriously affected operations there, while in 1955-56 local prices of livestock were again in excess of export values making it necessary for the Authority to cease export operations.

In view of the uncertainty of the export market, the Authority has regarded it as desirable that the works at Ballarat and Bendigo should be equipped to treat all classes of meat for the local trade and to take advantage of any export that may exist. In both cases this has been done and both works are now modern in design and of a high standard of hygiene. In spite of the fact that neither works operated for export this season, it is worthy of note that to 31st December last Ballarat had killed 95,136 head of stock and Bendigo 80,340, a total of 175,476.

The Government believes that these works are serving a useful purpose and that they should be kept going. As a public utility the Authority now provides the only facilities at both Ballarat and Bendigo for the efficient treatment of all classes of stock for local trade requirements. It is fully equipped to handle stock for export on its own behalf

and for private operators. In normal years its works provide employment for nearly 500 persons, and its properties constitute an asset to the State worth, on to-day's values, approximately £1,500,000.

The provisions in the Bill will enable the Authority to make satisfactory arrangements with its bank for the financial accommodation it requires to finance its operations. I commend the measure.

On the motion of the Hon. ARTHUR SMITH (Bendigo Province), the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, May 7.

### VERMIN AND NOXIOUS WEEDS (FINANCIAL) BILL.

**The Hon. E. P. CAMERON** (Minister of Health).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time. This small Bill is to amend section 28 of the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Act 1949. It proposes an increase in the limit of £700,000 to £900,000 of authorized loan moneys to be utilized for the purchase and upkeep of plant used in connexion with the destruction of rabbits and noxious weeds and where necessary to be hired out to landowners. The Vermin and Noxious Weeds Act of 1949 authorized the use of loan moneys for this purpose, and the first authority was for £200,000. The limit has been raised periodically and now stands at £700,000, the expenditure to date being approximately £668,000. As honorable members are aware, much has been done in connexion with the destruction of vermin and noxious weeds, but much more work needs to be undertaken, more especially in the eradication of ragwort, skeleton weed and other noxious weeds. It is anticipated that during the next three years an additional expenditure of £200,000 will be needed. The money to be made available under the authority will be used to benefit the economy of the State. I commend the Bill.

On the motion of the Hon. Arthur Smith for the Hon. J. J. JONES (Ballarat Province), the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, May 7.

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### MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN BOARD OF WORKS (CONTRIBUTIONS) BILL.

**The Hon. G. L. CHANDLER** (Minister of Agriculture).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This measure extends for a further period of ten years the arrangement that has been in operation since 1927 whereby the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works makes a contribution in lieu of rates to those municipalities in which the Board has extensive properties, namely, Werribee, Corio, Healesville, Lillydale, Upper Yarra, Whittlesea and Broadford. Most of those shires are in the Southern Province, which is represented in this House by Mr. Rawson and me.

The original Act was the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (Contributions) Act of 1927, under which contributions were to be paid by and with the agreement of the Board. Under that agreement the Shire of Broadford received £150; the Shire of Healesville, £300; the Shire of Lillydale, £200; the Shire of Upper Yarra, £500; the Shire of Whittlesea, £300; the Shire of Werribee, £1,700; and the Shire of Corio £700.

The payments were to be made annually by the Board and were to be expended on any roads so far as the Shires of Corio and Werribee were concerned, and on roads in or adjacent to the Board's watersheds and reservoirs by the other municipalities. This arrangement was eventually extended until 1946. However, no provision was made in the original Act for any variation in the amounts, consequent upon further lands being vested in the Board. Moreover, some of the councils felt that adjustments to the original scale of contributions were needed, so in 1947 a conference between the Board and the councils concerned was held and a new agreement reached providing for:—

- (a) adjustment of contributions where the Board acquires additional rateable land;

- (b) increased payments in certain cases; and
- (c) the arrangement to operate for a further ten years.

The Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (Contributions) Act 1947 gave statutory effect to this agreement. The term of that Act expired on 30th September, 1956, and a further conference was held between the parties.

Following that conference and at the request of the participants, it was decided to introduce this Bill to bring the arrangement up to date. The Bill provides for payments to be made to the councils each year as follows:—Broadford, £337, the amount was previously £150; Corio, £1,687, previously £750; Healesville, £3,966, previously £1,500; Lillydale, £450, previously £200; Upper Yarra, £4,140, previously £1,840; Werribee, £5,625, previously £2,500; and Whittlesea, £787, previously £350. These increases have been made generally having regard to the substantial alteration in the value of money since the amounts were previously fixed, but some of the increased payments are due to the Board taking over extra land.

The other provisions of the previous Act are to be re-enacted, namely—

- (a) That Werribee and Corio shall devote the amounts they receive under the Act to the construction, renewal, repair or maintenance of streets and roads in their municipal districts, and the other councils shall expend their amounts on roads in or adjacent to watersheds, catchment areas and reservoirs of the Board.
- (b) In the event of additional land being acquired by the Board during the currency of the Act, appropriate increases will be made in the amounts payable to the councils concerned.
- (c) The Board shall maintain any road in the Shires of Corio and Werribee where its property abuts on both sides of the road.

*The Hon. G. L. Chandler.*

- (d) Where the Board has erected a group of houses for its employees on land abutting on a road in the Shires of Corio and Werribee, such houses shall be deemed to be occupied for private purposes and be rateable property.

The Bill dates back to 30th September, 1956, when the previous Act expired, and, when enacted, will operate for a further ten years from that date.

On the motion of the Hon. G. L. TILLEY (South-Eastern Province), the debate was adjourned until the next day of meeting.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

CITY OF MELBOURNE: DEBNEY'S  
PADDOCK: REQUEST FOR FILE.

**Sir ARTHUR WARNER** (Minister of Transport).—By leave, I move—

That the Council, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday next.

The motion was agreed to.

**Sir ARTHUR WARNER** (Minister of Transport).—I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

**The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER** (Doutta Galla Province).—I am extremely dissatisfied with the answer furnished by the Minister of Transport to a question which I had placed upon the Notice Paper to-day. I asked the honorable gentleman—

Will he lay on the table of the Library the file concerning the Melbourne City Council and the Town and Country Planning Board relating to Debney's paddock together with the correspondence passing between these bodies and the decision made by the Town and Country Planning Board.

The answer supplied by the honorable gentleman was in the following terms—

I have ascertained that there is no file containing correspondence between the Melbourne City Council and the Town and Country Planning Board relating to Debney's paddock. . . . .

It seems most extraordinary that no correspondence has passed between those two bodies. I have in my possession material that suggests otherwise. The Minister's reply proceeded—

There are various other departmental files on the subject, but in accordance with the usual practice, it is thought that in

view of the impending inquiry in the matter, such files should not be laid on the table at this stage.

I suggest that the action of the Executive in this matter is most arbitrary in character. If such a precedent were followed generally, the rights of members would be stultified completely. Never before in my long experience in another place and in this House have I heard such a submission as that of the Minister of Transport in answer to my question. I claim that the assumption of such an attitude is not only grossly unfair but distinctly dangerous. I intend to have another question placed upon the Notice Paper and trust that in the meantime the Government will reconsider the matter. I can see no reason why the relevant files cannot be laid on the table of the Library, particularly as there has been no official notification that an inquiry will be conducted, or of the terms of reference, whether the investigation will be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Evidence Act, or whether a Royal Commissioner will be appointed. The only intimation on the subject has been a newspaper announcement that an inquiry would be held. I repeat that the Executive has been guilty of arbitrarily misusing power reposed in it.

**Sir ARTHUR WARNER** (Minister of Transport) (*By leave*).—I am inclined to sympathize with Mr. Slater, but if he will be more specific as to the particular file he has in mind, I shall be glad to see what can be done to assist him.

**The Hon. WILLIAM SLATER** (Doutta Galla Province) (*By leave*).—The file I require is that relating to the application—if any—by the Melbourne City Council to the Town and Country Planning Board to be relieved of the application of the Master Plan in respect of Debney's paddock.

The motion was agreed to.

*The House adjourned at 6.36 p.m. until Tuesday, May 7.*

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

*Wednesday, May 1, 1957.*

The **SPEAKER** (the **Hon. W. J. F. McDonald**) took the chair at 4.4 p.m., and read the prayer.

### PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE: PRE-MEDICAL COURSE: SELECTION OF STUDENTS.

**Mr. BLOOMFIELD** (Minister of Education).—I desire, by leave, to make a personal explanation in relation to a matter raised by the honorable member for Brunswick West on the motion for the adjournment of the House last night. I then stated, what I believed to be true, that the information upon which I based my replies to questions asked previously by the honorable member for Coburg was received from the Registrar of the University of Melbourne. It is the Registrar who, as a matter of practice, regularly assists us in such matters.

I now find that, in fact, the Registrar was not available when the information was sought from him, and my Department obtained it from the Faculty of Medicine, to whom the officer inquiring was referred by the Registrar's office. I find also that the answer to one of the questions asked by the honorable member for Coburg was slightly incorrect. Question 2 was based upon the honorable member's assumption that 200 persons were selected by a committee of university professors for the pre-medical course last year. In my reply, I accepted this assumption without question, but now find that it is wrong, as no such pre-selection took place last year. Mr. Speaker, I regret both inaccuracies.

The House will recall that the honorable member for Brunswick West indicated that the university and, specifically, both the Vice Chancellor and the Registrar, were in opposition to me and objected to my answers to the questions asked for by the honorable member for Coburg. I wish to advise the House

that I spoke to both those gentlemen on the telephone this morning. Each of them assured me that he had never heard of the questions asked by the honorable member for Coburg, or of my answers to such questions, until our conversation this morning. With the minor alteration to my answer to question 2, which I have now supplied, they both agreed that the answers are correct and unexceptionable. Time has not permitted me to inquire of the remainder of the university on this subject, nor has the occasion seemed to justify it.

**Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL** (Briswick West).—By leave, I wish to state that on Friday last, at a finance committee meeting of the University Council, I discussed the academic background of the student whom I defended last night. Both the Vice Chancellor and the Registrar in person told me that the student could not be described as not having done well, but on the contrary had done very well. I repeat that there is only one innuendo contained in the answer of the Minister to the honorable member for Coburg, and that each and every one of the students involved could spell from it an allegation that he had not done well. I reiterate that both the Vice Chancellor and the Registrar advised me that the particular student referred to had done exceptionally well.

#### THE LIBRARIAN.

RETIREMENT OF MR. E. L. FRAZER:  
APPOINTMENT OF MR. H. O. BELL.

**The SPEAKER** (the Hon. W. J. F. McDonald).—In accordance with the powers vested in it, the Library Committee nominated Mr. Harry Oswald Bell, the Assistant Librarian, to be Librarian in the place of Mr. Eric Lindsay Frazer, retired. The Governor in Council has been pleased to make an appointment in accordance with the said nomination.

I should like to take the opportunity of referring briefly to Mr. Frazer, for whom I am sure all members have a very affectionate regard. He joined the Education Department as a junior

teacher on the 17th February, 1910, after having graduated as a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Melbourne. After a few months in that position, he transferred to the State Audit Office and, later, for three years served with the Australian Imperial Forces in the 1914-18 war. On his return from war service he joined the staff of the Public Library and then, on the 6th December, 1923, took up duty as clerk of the Parliamentary Library. He was appointed Acting Librarian on the 1st July, 1926, and Librarian on the 1st April, 1929. During his office as Parliamentary Librarian he wrote a document entitled *A Brief History of the Library of Parliament*, and has compiled a select history of older works, early Australian books, and early pamphlets in the Library. This is in the course of being printed at the Government Printing Office. As members know, Mr. Frazer retired on the 28th February, 1957, and at the present time is enjoying a tour of Great Britain and the Continent. I am sure that all honorable members will join with me in wishing him a pleasant voyage and a safe return.

**Mr. BOLTE** (Premier and Treasurer).—Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government I should like to support your remarks concerning Mr. Frazer, who spent 34 years in the service of the Parliamentary Library. For 29 of those years, he occupied the highest position there. Older members have come to know Mr. Frazer very well. We realize that his work in the Library was not merely a source of employment for him; it was his life's work. He cared for the many valuable books and documents housed in the Library as though they were his own. We realize the great work Mr. Frazer has done for the Parliament of Victoria. I, too, wish him a happy holiday and a safe return.

**Mr. CAIN** (Leader of the Opposition).—This announcement is somewhat belated, because the current sessional period began three weeks ago. Even at this late stage I join with you, Mr. Speaker, in expressing our gratitude for the service rendered to this institution by Mr. Frazer over a long period.

As has been stated, he was more than a librarian; he devoted his life to his duty. Mr. Frazer possessed the great qualities that a successful librarian must have. He was probably one of the best informed men associated with this Parliament for many years, and he rendered valuable service during the time he occupied the position of Librarian. I am delighted that his successor, Mr. Bell, has been a member of the Library staff for some years. Although some members wanted to import a librarian, I am satisfied that the new occupant of the post will prove as satisfactory in the future as Mr. Frazer was in the past.

**Sir HERBERT HYLAND** (Leader of the Country party).—I desire to join with you, Mr. Speaker, the Premier, and the Leader of the Opposition in thanking Mr. Frazer on behalf of the Country party. We appreciate his valuable service over a number of years. Mr. Frazer became Librarian in 1929, the year that I entered Parliament, so I can claim to have had a long experience with him and can speak with knowledge and feeling on what he has done to assist members. If at any time members, irrespective of party, desired information or a reference, Mr. Frazer was ready to help immediately. That was one important way in which the performance of our parliamentary duties was facilitated. We wish him a happy voyage and a safe return to his native land. Moreover, we trust that he will enjoy a long retirement and that we will see him in Parliament House from time to time. It has been my experience that a man of Mr. Frazer's calibre cannot just walk out the door of a building or institution with which he has been associated for many years and never return. I am sure therefore that we shall see him occasionally in this building, perhaps with a few books under his arm. We wish Mr. Bell, his successor, the best of luck in the future. He should be able to assist us in the same way as Mr. Frazer did. We know that as a result of his long experience in the Library he will carry out his duties in a commendable and highly satisfactory manner.

**Mr. SUTTON** (Albert Park).—May I add a brief note to the refrain of eulogy concerning Mr. Frazer and his successor? I recall that when the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Butler, was visiting Victoria, and was being conducted around this institution by the Leader of the Opposition, who was then Premier, the President of the Legislative Council, and myself, Mr. Frazer was presented to Mr. Butler who said immediately, "The old type of scholar-librarian" and dismissed him affectionately. I think that set a seal upon the high opinion that we always entertained of Mr. Frazer. He was not only capable but was assiduous in tracking down every question he was asked. He made light of his work; he liked doing it. He seemed to be, as someone said of Montague the novelist, "At war with his materials." Mr. Frazer had the knowledge, and he liked to find the answers to questions and furnish the desired information to members. As you know well, Mr. Speaker, he was a humourist, too. Probably his unpublished history of the Library would be even more valuable than the brochure to which he has set his name. I add my eulogy to his successor for whom I predict a very successful career.

**Mr. ROSSITER** (Brighton).—Having been assisted by Mr. Frazer tremendously during the two years I have been a member of this House, I would wish that he were now just entering upon his term of service so that he might be able to provide assistance to future members of this House. Mr. Frazer's genial manner and his scholarship were a great help to members who desired to undertake research. I offer my congratulations and good wishes to the new Librarian, Mr. Bell.

**Mr. BARCLAY** (Mildura).—I join with previous speakers in wishing Mr. Frazer a long and happy retirement. I add my praise for the marvellous work he did for this Parliament and for the Library in particular during the many years that he was Librarian. All honorable members trust that his successor, Mr. Bell, will have good fortune during his term of office. That officer, I am sure, will give the same service to

members in the years ahead. The forebears of Mr. Frazer came from the Emerald Isle—the greatest country in the world—and before he settles down in retirement he intends to inspect the homeland of his parents. We say to him, "Bon voyage and a safe return."

## BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS.

NUMBER: DATES ESTABLISHED:

PERSONNEL.

**Mr. MUTTON** (Coburg) asked the Premier—

1. How many Boards and Commissions are operating in connexion with the administration of the executive government of the State?

2. What was the date upon which each was established?

3. What is the personnel of each Board and Commission and what salary is paid to each member?

**Mr. BOLTE** (Premier and Treasurer).—I assure the honorable member for Coburg that he will be furnished as soon as practicable with the information he requires but I am certain he realizes that its compilation will take some considerable time. I undertake to contact all the Ministers concerned in order that the data may be made available. When it is to hand I will convey it to the honorable member for Coburg by letter or, if he prefers that course, have it prepared as a return and incorporated in *Hansard*.

## BREAD INDUSTRY.

BREACHES OF BOARD DETERMINATIONS: PROSECUTIONS, CONVICTIONS AND FINES.

**Mr. FLOYD** (Williamstown) asked the Minister of Labour and Industry—

1. How many offences against determinations of the Bread Trade Board and the Bread Carters Board were reported to his Department by—(a) Inspectors of Factories and Shops; (b) officials of the Operative Bakers Union; and (c) officials of the Bread Carters Industrial Federation, respectively, during the twelve months ended 31st January, 1957, and how many prosecutions were authorized in connexion with those reports?

2. How many convictions were obtained as a result of the prosecutions, and what total amount was collected in fines?

3. What was the average time between the reporting of an offence and its hearing before the court?

**Mr. REID** (Minister of Labour and Industry).—The answers are—

1. (a) Thirty-eight reports of alleged offences.

(b) Thirty reports of alleged offences.

(c) Six reports of alleged offences.

Fifty-seven prosecutions were authorized but it is to be noted that some of the above reports would relate to more than one alleged offence.

2. Fifty-two. Total amount of fines was £165 10s.

3. Twenty-one weeks.

## EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

OVERCROWDING IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

**Mr. CONNELL** (Evelyn) asked the Minister of Education—

1. Whether effective teaching has become impossible in many primary and secondary schools owing to increasing overcrowding of pupils?

2. Whether he will ensure that a maximum enrolment figure is allotted to each school and that this figure is not exceeded in any circumstances?

**Mr. BLOOMFIELD** (Minister of Education).—The answers are—

1. No.

2. No precise maximum enrolment figure has ever been fixed for all schools, nor is it practicable to do so. Large classes are not limited to State schools or to Victoria. The problem of school accommodation is world wide. Every effort is being made to reduce the size of classes.

NEW GIRLS SECONDARY SCHOOL,  
BENDIGO.

**Mr. STONEHAM** (Midlands) asked the Minister of Education—

Whether it is proposed to commence construction of the new girls' secondary school at Bendigo during the next financial year; if so, when; if not, what school building projects have priority over this school?

**Mr. BLOOMFIELD** (Minister of Education).—The answer is—

The position of the Bendigo Girls' Secondary School on the building programme justifies the expectation that construction will commence during the next financial year. It will be commenced as soon as practicable having regard to other commitments. I am unable to give any more precise information.

## METROPOLITAN FARM, WERRIBEE.

### RELEASE OF CATTLE FOR BREEDING.

**Mr. STONEHAM** (Midlands) asked **Mr. Porter** (Honorary Minister), for the Minister of Health—

Whether, as requested by the Victorian Wheat and Woolgrowers' Association, the Government intends to release pedigree cattle from the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works farm at Werribee for breeding purposes?

**Mr. PORTER** (Honorary Minister).—The Minister of Health has furnished the following answer—

A deputation was received on the 17th April, 1957, from the Victorian Wheat and Woolgrowers' Association requesting the release of unpedigreed cattle from the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Farm at Werribee for breeding purposes. The matter is receiving consideration.

## VERMIN AND NOXIOUS WEEDS.

### DESTRUCTION OF RAGWORT.

**Sir HERBERT HYLAND** (Gippsland South) asked the Minister of Lands—

What amount has been expended in each of the last five financial years on the destruction of ragwort?

**Mr. K. H. TURNBULL** (Minister of Lands).—The answer is—

|                    |          |
|--------------------|----------|
| 1952-53            | £79,188  |
| 1953-54            | £82,688  |
| 1954-55            | £98,198  |
| 1955-56            | £110,751 |
| (Estimate) 1956-57 | £119,182 |

In addition, £98,623 has been expended on the provision of transport and spray units for areas affected. It is estimated that 75 per cent. of the working time with that equipment would be on ragwort control.

## LANDLORD AND TENANT ACT.

### RENTING OF ROOMS: HOUSES DECLARED "SPECIAL PREMISES."

**Sir HERBERT HYLAND** (Gippsland South) asked the Attorney-General—

1. Which metropolitan municipalities responded to the Government's invitation to co-operate in dealing with improper room-renting practices?

2. What assistance was received by the Government from each of those municipalities?

3. How many houses have been declared "special premises" and in how many cases warnings have been issued?

4. In what municipalities these declared "special premises" are situate?

For **Mr. RYLAH** (Attorney-General), **Mr. Porter** (Honorary Minister).—The answers are—

1. The municipalities of Box Hill, Brunswick, Camberwell, Caulfield, Coburg, Essendon, Footscray, Hawthorn, Malvern, Moorabbin, Mordialloc, Nunawading, Oakleigh, Port Melbourne, Prahran, Preston, Ringwood, South Melbourne, St. Kilda, Sunshine and Williamstown. The municipality of Fitzroy, without formally offering co-operation has actively co-operated with the officers of the Rentals Investigation Bureau.

2. Municipalities of Fitzroy, St. Kilda, Moorabbin and Williamstown have referred specific instances of apparent rental exploitation to the Rentals Investigation Bureau. However, the officers of the Bureau have received the fullest co-operation from all municipal officers with whom they have found it necessary to make contact in their investigations.

3. (a) Eight premises have been declared "special premises."

(b) To date, 229 complaints have been received, 159 of which have been finally dealt with. At present 64 cases are being investigated. In all these cases, if the landlord adopted an unreasonable attitude in the matter, the possibility of recontrols being imposed would be pointed out to him.

4. Coburg, Caulfield, Fitzroy, Hawthorn, Melbourne, Richmond and Williamstown.

## MEMBERS OF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

### ABBREVIATED DESIGNATION.

**Mr. TANNER** (Ripponlea). — By leave, **Mr. Speaker**, I desire with respect to submit to you a question concerning the title of members of this House. On occasions members receive communications addressed to them on which the letters "M.L.A." are shown, following the addressee's name, whereas communications from you, Sir, calling members to Parliament, and correspondence from the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and from the Chief Secretary always bear the abbreviated appellation, "M.P." Will you, **Mr. Speaker**, advise the House whether the correct designation for a member of this Chamber is "M.L.A." or "M.P.?"

**The SPEAKER (the Hon. W. J. F. McDonald).**—It is rather unusual for the Speaker to be asked a question at this particular time, but I feel that in this instance I am justified in answering the query raised by the honorable member for Ripponlea. According to the fifteenth edition of *Sir T. Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice*, at page 13, the title of "Member of Parliament" is used as a designation of a member of the House of Commons. The Constitution Act Amendment Act 1956 defines the privileges of the members of the Assembly to be the same as, at the time of the passing of The Constitution Act, were held, enjoyed, and exercised by the members of the House of Commons, and I am therefore of the opinion that the title "Member of Parliament," or "M.P.," should be used to designate members of this Assembly.

#### BREAD INDUSTRY BILL.

**Mr. REID** (Minister of Labour and Industry) moved for leave to bring in a Bill relating to the bread industry.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

#### WODONGA (UNIMPROVED RATING POLL) BILL.

For **Sir THOMAS MALTBY** (Minister of Public Works), **Mr. Bolte** (Premier and Treasurer) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to postpone the time for taking the poll on a proposal to adopt rating on unimproved values in the Shire of Wodonga, and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

#### STAMPS (HIRE-PURCHASE AGREEMENTS) AMENDMENT BILL.

**Mr. BOLTE** (Premier and Treasurer) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to amend the Stamps (Hire-Purchase Agreements) Act 1956.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

#### YINNAR LANDS BILL.

**Mr. K. H. TURNBULL** (Minister of Lands) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to provide, upon the surrender to Her Majesty of certain land in the Parish of Yinnar, for the reservation thereof as a site for public recreation, and for the revocation of the reservation of certain other land in the said parish temporarily reserved as a site for public recreation, and for the grant thereof to the president, councillors, and ratepayers of the Shire of Morwell, and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

#### LANDLORD AND TENANT (CONTROL) BILL.

For **Mr. RYLAH** (Attorney-General), **Mr. Porter** (Honorary Minister) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to re-enact with amendments the law relating to the control of rents of premises and the recovery of possession of premises, and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

#### DRIED FRUITS (AMENDMENT) BILL.

**Mr. FRASER** (Honorary Minister).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The Victorian Dried Fruits Board was set up under the Dried Fruits Act 1924. The Board is responsible for advising the Minister of Agriculture of the percentage of the crop each year which may be sold on the Australian market, the balance being exported. Each of the Australian States has a similar marketing Board, and uniformity in marketing throughout Australia is obtained by agreement between the Boards as to the home market quota. In addition, the Boards administer regulations covering the grade standards for dried fruit sold on the Australian market, register all packing houses and

dehydrators under conditions which ensure hygienic handling of the fruit, and generally are responsible for the State supervision of the processing and handling of these foodstuffs.

Although these Boards exercise a valuable influence in the manner described on the marketing of Australian dried fruits, they are not marketing Boards and their sole revenue is derived from a contribution made by each packer based on the tonnage of dried fruit that he processes. The amount per ton is determined each year by the Board. It varies with the size of the State's crop, since the Board's expenditure is fairly uniform from year to year except for variations due to the changed value of money giving rise to increased wages and other costs. In the original Dried Fruits Act of 1924, the maximum rate of levy was fixed at one thirty-second of 1d. per pound, equal to 5s. 10d. per ton. It is a tribute to the prudent and economical management of this Board that until 1956, the rate of levy provided in 1924 was sufficient to meet Board expenditure. However, in 1956—when there was a low crop—expenditure exceeded revenue by almost £3,000.

This deficit resulted in a fall in the Board's cash balance at the Treasury from £11,076 on the 1st January, 1956, to £8,200 on the 1st January, 1957. The Board's financial year ends on 31st December. This cash balance, strictly speaking, is the working capital of the Board and is needed to meet the Board's expenses for the seven months, January to July inclusive, when the next levies will become payable to the Board. The estimated expenditure for this period is £9,000, so that the cash balance of £8,200 is now insufficient for this purpose. Further, the Board is faced with a request by the Commonwealth Department of Primary Industry—whose officers in the course of their export inspection duties at packing houses carry out inspection of fruit for the local market on behalf of the State Boards—that the present recoup by the Victorian Board be increased as it does not meet current Commonwealth costs of inspecting locally-marketed fruit. It

is thus necessary that the maximum rate of levy permitted under the Act should be increased.

The Bill provides that the new maximum rate shall be one sixteenth of 1d. per pound which is the rate already operating in South Australia and Western Australia. It does not necessarily follow that the actual levy fixed by the Board following this amendment will be double the levy of last year, the actual amount being determined by the Board each year in accordance with the crop and after consideration of the estimated expenditure, which is subject always to the approval of the Minister of Agriculture. This has been recommended by the Victorian Dried Fruits Board, and I am convinced that it is necessary for the Board to have the authority to strike a levy up to the higher maximum now provided and that the present need for this measure is simply due to the rise in costs. I commend the Bill to the House.

**Mr. STONEHAM** (Midlands).—I move—

That the debate be now adjourned.

Although the Bill is a short one, it involves the whole of the affairs of the dried fruits industry—an industry that is of considerable economic importance to this State—and a fortnight's adjournment is necessary to enable the requisite inquiries to be made.

**Mr. FRASER** (Honorary Minister).—I am prepared to grant a week's adjournment, which I think will be sufficient in the circumstances. The principles embodied in the measure are in accordance with representations made to the Government by the Dried Fruits Board, which is the body that represents the growers in this State.

The motion for the adjournment of the debate was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned until Wednesday, May 8.

#### PUBLIC WORKS LOAN APPLICATION BILL.

The debate (adjourned from the previous day) on the motion of Mr. Fraser (Honorary Minister) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

**Mr. CAIN** (Leader of the Opposition).—This Bill was submitted to the House in a simple manner by the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser), who has a great capacity for saying very little. Whoever prepared the notes for his second-reading speech exercised a flair for congratulating all and sundry on what has been done in the past in relation to the repair of flood damage in the Murray valley. The greater proportion of the Honorary Minister's speech was along those lines. The House is being asked to grant £750,000 to the Treasurer to spend as he deems fit during the next few years. I doubt whether that sum will be distributed. The other contributor towards rectifying damage caused by the flood disaster is the Federal Government, which, I understand, is granting the sum of £100,000 towards the assistance of settlers.

I have always had an objection to the granting of a large sum such as it is proposed to authorize by this Bill to be spent at the discretion of some person or Department, or other body. Parliament is entitled to know more about this proposal than the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) has told this House. First, the honorable gentleman referred to an amending Act passed last year extending the powers of the Rural Finance Corporation, which is not handling this particular matter. The Corporation lends money on mortgage to industries, such as certain ones in Gippsland. For example, the Government arranged to provide money, through the Corporation, for an industry in Traralgon and to assist farmers throughout the State. More than £105,000 has been advanced to the brick industry in Colac.

Out of the sum of £750,000 covered by the Bill, £100,000 is for assistance to settlers adversely affected by floods, droughts or other disasters. From time to time Parliament has assisted settlers who have been in difficulties, but to-day the position is vastly different from what it was some years ago. For many years cultivation advances were made to wheat growers, and the repayments were made regularly. In those days the prices of primary products were such

that in many cases farming was a respectable means of starving. To-day, there are cases of men who have not been successful at farming because they obtained their land at excessively high prices, but, generally speaking, those who have been in the industry for some years, having purchased their properties when values were low, are not in difficulties.

To-day, the position of the primary producer is much different from what it was ten, fifteen or twenty years ago. Incomes generally have increased. The steady rise in agricultural incomes that went on for some years has slowed down. The dried fruits industry, which flourishes in the Murray valley, has been affected by unfavourable seasons, the uncertainty of prices, and the reversion from Government to private buying throughout the world. In the great Murray valley, the wheat industry, which has been in many difficulties over long periods, has had a run of good seasons during the last ten or twelve years. Last year, owing to a wet period in the middle of the year and bad conditions in the Wimmera, the Mallee had one of its best years. From the dust bowl of ten or twelve years ago, the Mallee has greatly improved, but I warn that the quickest way to bring about erosion is to overstock, and with a succession of dry seasons the land could deteriorate quickly. Rain at any time would save the country, and it would be particularly helpful during the next few weeks.

I challenge any honorable member on the Government side of the House to explain what will be done with the amount of £750,000 referred to in the measure. The Government has claimed credit for the appointment of a Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee, which has already examined two issues. The first was discrepancies in the accounts of the Forests Commission, an employee of which ultimately found his way to the law courts. Now the Committee is considering matters which I consider to be outside its province, namely, motor registration fees and difficulties of insurance companies. Here is an opportunity for the Committee to

look into the spending of money that Parliament is now asked to authorize. With due respect to the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser), I point out that honorable members are entitled to much more information about the proposal under consideration than has been supplied. Apart from the £100,000 to be set aside to assist settlers, the Honorary Minister said, in regard to financial assistance to municipalities—

Whilst proper care has been exercised to ensure that all public moneys are being properly applied, municipalities are being reasonably compensated for the work which they so willingly undertook at a time when it was most important. I am sure that honorable members generally will join me in the sentiments of appreciation I have already expressed.

My consideration is not that of "appreciation" but the lax way in which this institution is asked to provide £750,000 for relief purposes. To-morrow it will be asked to amend the Public Account Act so as to provide £3,000,000 as an advance to the Treasurer. The Honorary Minister continued—

As a matter of interest, it might be proper to indicate that, as at the 9th April, 1957, 501 applications for assistance had been received from individual flood sufferers. The aggregate losses as stated in the individual claims amount to £781,301, and grants amounting to £58,994 have been made in 428 cases. In 32 cases it was decided that no assistance could be granted, and 41 applications which were received late were in course of being dealt with. It is estimated that the total amount of assistance already granted and yet to be granted to individual flood sufferers will be in the vicinity of £80,000 and perhaps more.

The aggregate claims amounted to £781,301, and the grants totalled approximately £58,000.

At this stage, I should like to ask the Honorary Minister whether the Commonwealth Government will make some contribution towards this payment. If so, will the Victorian Government act as a distributing agent for the Commonwealth? Surely, we are entitled to such information. Unfortunately, Government members appear to adopt the attitude that Opposition members must "take it or leave it." They are becoming intoxicated with their own importance. However, sooner or later, the chickens will

come home to roost. The Government might succeed in "fobbing off" its own supporters, but I will do my utmost to prevent the whole House being treated in that fashion. After all, it is our responsibility to look after the public finances of this State. The House is entitled to know if the Commonwealth allocation is being paid to these people per medium of the State Government. If that is not the procedure, I should like to know why it is not?

Mr. FRASER.—That was made clear in my second-reading speech.

Mr. CAIN.—It may be clear to the Honorary Minister, but no one else understands the position. If the Commonwealth is contributing half of the amount of £58,000, it means that Victoria is paying only £29,000.

In his second-reading speech, the Honorary Minister further stated, *inter alia*—

Flood-protection claims received from municipalities and instrumentalities amount to approximately £250,000, while claims for the restoration of flood-damaged roads and bridges aggregate approximately £850,000—although as the waters recede unexpected damage has been disclosed and these figures may have to be adjusted. In all, the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments have jointly undertaken to provide £1,000,000, comprising £726,000 for restoration of flood-damaged roads and bridges and £274,000 for reimbursement of emergency flood-protection expenditure, in addition to £100,000 for individual relief under the heading of hardship.

Mr. FRASER.—Is not that clear?

Mr. CAIN.—It is not clear whether the Commonwealth Government is paying half of the £58,000 already advanced to flood sufferers.

Mr. FRASER.—That will be paid on a £1 for £1 basis.

Mr. CAIN.—Apparently, it may be assumed that the Commonwealth Government will pay half of the total cost. The Honorary Minister further stated—

The Bill requires little further explanation but for the information of members I shall detail its provisions.

He then proceeded to explain briefly each of the clauses of the Bill. He concluded by saying—

In conclusion I wish to record my personal thanks . . .

It seems to me that there are too many "thanks" in this debate. However, Parliament would thank the Honorary Minister if, in connexion with future legislation of this type; more detailed information was supplied. I am sure that the Honorary Minister does not intend to refuse to supply the information sought, but through custom, experience, and satisfaction with himself, he has thrown the Bill on the table saying, in effect, "It is only a small Bill." Surely, no Bill providing for the expenditure of £750,000 could be termed "small." I have attempted to be constructive and critical with a view to inducing the Government to explain more fully the facts leading up to the expenditure of this money, and I invite the Honorary Minister, during the Committee stage, to supply the necessary information.

**Mr. MOSS (Murray Valley).**—The Leader of the Opposition has asked some very pertinent questions and I trust that, at the appropriate stage, the Honorary Minister will take the opportunity of providing the necessary information. There is a growing feeling in the community that as a result of a succession of good seasons, the primary producers should not be requiring financial assistance. However, I point out that the primary producers are not looking for something for nothing. When the State Government approached the Commonwealth Government to assist in the alleviation of the distress caused by the flood, the Commonwealth explained that it was prepared to make a grant of money in the nature of a "hand-out."

**Mr. CAIN.**—From revenue.

**Mr. MOSS.**—That is so, and this offer was accepted by the State Government. It has always been the policy of the Commonwealth in such cases to make straight out payments to necessitous cases rather than by way of loans. However, it is not simply a matter of sending cheques to those who apply for assistance. It is necessary that accounts that have been paid by primary producers be presented to the appropriate authority. For example, if

money was expended in purchasing seed, the primary producer must lodge a claim for a refund of this expenditure, and the exact amount of the compensation will be determined by the committee administering the relief. In the circumstances, that is a satisfactory method of dealing with the matter.

One man at Numurkah, with a property of about 400 acres, has been successful in obtaining some money from the Government. The assistance has enabled him to get back into production, and that is all we are seeking. I do not think it matters very much if the finance is made available as a grant or as a loan, but the Government in its wisdom has decided to make a grant. I appreciate what has been done for many people in the Murray Valley who are in the "battling" stage. The money they have received will enable them to get back into production as early as possible. If no assistance had been granted a period of two or three years might have elapsed before they were able to sow clover or plant a crop of wheat or oats. The procedure that has been adopted will benefit the State. I have repeatedly urged the Government to afford immediate relief to individuals who have suffered severe damage.

There is an urgent need for work to be done quickly on the levee bank in the Kotupna area. I understand that the Country Roads Board will be provided with finance to repair that bank. Thousands of acres of country in the vicinity were under water for a month during last year, and if the damage to the levee bank is not repaired and there are heavy rains they will again be submerged. If that occurs, those people who sustained losses last year will suffer again because of lack of production. The Country Roads Board must be interested in this work, because the Murray Valley Highway runs for miles through the area to which I refer. In view of the fact that the Board built up the road with insufficient outlets it should accept some responsibility in the matter.

In a general way, a vast quantity of work was carried out by municipalities and hundreds of volunteer workers,

many of whom worked around the clock and spent many days in order that the flood waters might be held back and townships saved from flooding. For instance, as a result of the splendid organization at Cobram the town was not flooded. There was only one small break, which was stopped after a few hours. The township of Barmah, which was seriously threatened with flooding for some weeks, was kept free from flood waters by the voluntary work of the people. The same position applied at Nathalia and, in fact, right along the River Murray. This work which was undertaken by the municipalities involved them in heavy expenditure. I am glad to learn that the emergency expenditure will be met in part, and that proposed works will be financed on a £5 to £1 basis.

Several municipalities have been paid almost in full on the applications they made. This might indicate to some people that it was possible to obtain easy money. However, in my electorate I have not encouraged the people or the municipalities to make applications for assistance where it was not deserved.

Mr. BOLTE.—The applications were thoroughly investigated, of course.

Mr. MOSS.—That is so. It appears that the applications of the municipalities that suffered only slight losses have been met almost in full. The shires of Shepparton and Rodney incurred tremendous expenditure. I ask the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) to investigate this matter again. The Shire of Rodney has received approximately £50,000.

Mr. FRASER.—You have been wrongly informed.

Mr. MOSS.—I understand that application was made for a sum of £75,000 and that the shire received £50,000. Can the Honorary Minister inform me of the true position?

Mr. FRASER.—I do not think it would be proper at this stage.

Mr. MOSS.—In my opinion, the municipalities of Shepparton and Rodney have not received the assistance that should be rendered. As I

understand the position, they have received only about two-thirds of what was claimed, whereas the applications of other municipalities have been met practically in full. I ask the Minister to inquire into the claims further. The Shire of Shepparton could do with more money to repair roads, and is entitled to more consideration.

The Country party supports the Bill. The flooding was a catastrophe for people living close to the River Murray. After a good deal of agitation, we have been able to obtain some money in order that the settlers might be placed on a footing which approximated their position previously. A few months after the flooding occurred some people in the locality were burnt out.

Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL.—The railways?

Mr. MOSS.—There are so few trains in the area of which I am speaking that the chances of railway engines starting fires are remote. Some of the settlers whose properties were flooded were burnt out a short time afterwards. Although efforts were made to assist those people, unfortunately the situation arose that because of a change taking place in the administration of the local press, they were not informed of a visit of the investigating committee to the area to finalize certain flood applications. Consequently not many persons availed themselves of the opportunity of meeting the committee. The police at Nathalia took all particulars of the fire sufferers. I suggest that while the applications for flood damage are being dealt with, consideration should be given to affording assistance to those who suffered as a result of the fires. The police can provide all the necessary information concerning that aspect.

Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL (Brunswick West).—During the time of my membership of this House I have tried to understand the Bills presented. Being conscious of the extreme hardship, inconvenience and losses suffered by residents of northern Victoria along the River Murray, I was extremely interested in this measure. I commend the public spiritedness of the settlers along the

Murray for the great assistance they gave to primary producers whose properties were flooded. It has always been my opinion that when a Government seeks the imprimatur of Parliament to expend a sum of £750,000 a detailed statement should be supplied to indicate to members how the money is to be distributed. As has been stated by my Leader, the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) devoted the greater part of his second-reading speech on this measure to thanking various people. All members are extremely grateful to the various corporations and bodies that have been mentioned. Reference was made to the State Electricity Commission, the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, the Soldier Settlement Commission, the Country Roads Board, various municipalities and the Victoria Police. It was said that the work of the police was outstanding. I hope that in the Bill of which notice was given to-day there will be nothing to undermine the status of the Police Force. However, we will learn that later. The Honorary Minister thanked the Commonwealth, too, for supplying Army "ducks" and man power. To demonstrate the great distress suffered by many people, the honorable gentleman said—

At one period some 400 people were housed at this emergency centre and provision had been made to transfer all the inhabitants of Wentworth there had it been found necessary to evacuate that centre.

That is a graphic description of the hardship and inconvenience about which I spoke earlier. During the time the tragic floods were occurring in northern Victoria and southern New South Wales, there were published in the press many pictures of levee banks being constructed to protect towns along the Murray. I should have thought that details of that nature would have been provided. Tribute was paid to the work of the Victorian Floods Relief Committee.

Mr. BOLTE.—If you are not satisfied, the people involved are.

Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL.—I am not complaining about what has been done. My criticism is that the Government has not taken the members of this

House into its confidence. We have not been given details of how the money is to be spent. I have no complaint as to the amount being provided nor of the way in which claims are being dealt with. I regret the fact, however, that the Government has shown a lack of respect to the highest tribunal of this State—the Parliament of Victoria. I understand that the Victorian Floods Relief Committee was furnished with a sum of £80,000 by the Victorian Government and that the Commonwealth Government contributed on a £5 to £1 basis.

Mr. BOLTE.—I wish it were true.

Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL.—I received my information from a member of the Public Service, but the figures I have cited could be wrong. The Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) thanked the Committee for what it had done, and his commendation was well deserved, but members would be more interested to learn the amount actually received by the Committee and how it was disbursed.

Mr. SHEPHERD. — Perhaps the Honorary Minister does not know.

Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL.—The Premier, who is also Treasurer of the State, is aware of the position and I have no doubt that eventually the honorable gentleman will inform the House of the relevant details. So far members have merely been told in a general way that the sum of £750,000 will be made available for flood relief in the River Murray area. The Honorary Minister in his introductory speech said—

In addition to the finance made available by the State of Victoria, the Commonwealth Government is contributing on a £1 for £1 basis.

Does that mean that the Commonwealth is to contribute an additional £750,000? The honorable gentleman proceeded—

In all, the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments have jointly undertaken to provide £1,000,000, comprising £726,000 for restoration of flood-damaged roads and bridges, and £274,000 for reimbursement of emergency flood protection expenditure, in addition to £100,000 for individual relief under the heading of hardship.

According to my calculation, the honorable gentleman was £100,000 out in his computation. I claim that by bringing down a Bill in which authority is sought for the expenditure of £750,000, or possibly £1,500,000, without furnishing proper details, the Government has shown grave disrespect for this Parliament.

Mr. BOLTE.—It does not interest you at Brunswick West.

Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL.—I remind the Premier that citizens of Brunswick West are just as entitled as are those who live in Hamilton to know precisely how money which is authorized by Parliament for payment will be spent. The Premier has failed to supply the requisite information to the House and has shifted his responsibility to the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser). When the necessary particulars are furnished, the Opposition will readily agree to the passage of this measure, which obviously is designed to afford relief to unfortunate persons in the northern part of Victoria.

Mr. STIRLING (Swan Hill).—I support the measure. All members will agree that the rainfall last year was exceptional and created flood problems of considerable magnitude which had to be grappled with. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the considerable improvement that has taken place in the Mallee in recent years, but I point out that one or two small parts of the Mallee suffered flood damage last year also. There was a time when I wondered whether the Avoca river flowed—it seemed to peter out into nothing—but last year there could be no doubt that it definitely flowed into the River Murray. In so doing, it caused a tremendous amount of damage. One of our first responsibilities, of course, is to arrange for everything possible to be done to mitigate damage that may be caused by future floods. Only those persons who were on the spot during the last flood period have any real knowledge of the havoc that was caused. Not only individuals but also municipalities suffered, and it will be no easy matter for the shire councils

concerned to repair the damage caused in their districts. I join with the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) in expressing appreciation to all those who rendered valuable assistance in flood relief work. In addition to landholders, many working men assisted and thus lost much money in wages, for which they cannot be compensated. Officers of the Country Roads Board, the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission and the Police Force did excellent work, as did also the Victorian Floods Relief Committee. Without doubt, Mr. F. Kenny of the Premier's Department, who is secretary of the Victorian Floods Relief Committee, had a difficult task trying to make a certain amount of money go around to meet the most urgent needs.

One most unfortunate aspect is that irrespective of the sum of money that will be made available under this measure, the production that has been lost cannot be recovered. At this point I should like to mention that many municipalities have expressed appreciation of the relief that has already been afforded to enable them to repair damage caused to roads and bridges. Many of the roads washed out had previously been school bus routes. I predict that if there is a serious flood next year, many of those buses will have difficulty in traversing the roads. I emphasize that shire councils, in addition to repairing flood damage, have to make good ordinary wear and tear on roads within their territorial boundaries; and so they may require a little extra time in which to expend the funds that will be allotted to them under this measure. My understanding is that for the year 1954-55 the sum of £10,326,000 was collected in petrol tax in Victoria and that the reimbursement to this State was only £4,100,000. For the year 1955-56, £11,700,000 was collected and £4,660,000 was returned. Because of the financial plight of shire councils in the areas affected by the floods, the Government should make a more concerted approach to the Commonwealth Administration to obtain a greater allocation from the petrol tax. The Federal Treasurer may contend that his Government has already made many

thousands of pounds available to Victoria for flood relief, but that argument could be countered by stating that a large part of the allocation has to be spent on re-establishing roads damaged by flood waters. For many years the Commonwealth Government has been retaining out of the petrol tax large sums that really belong to Victoria. The grant that it has made for flood relief is only returning money to which this State is entitled.

Country residents in the affected areas greatly appreciate the action of this Government, and in particular the manner in which the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) approached the problem. He inspected the flood damage and discussed the question with many people involved. I express my appreciation of his action, and I trust that the majority of the people who suffered loss will be satisfied with the compensation they received. I know that it is impossible for them to be fully compensated. Should a similar catastrophe occur in the future, I hope that the damage will not be as great.

**Mr. MUTTON** (Coburg).—I am sure that the constituents represented by the honorable member for Swan Hill have the full sympathy of every member of this House. My complaint against this measure is that honorable members have been given no indication how the £750,000 is to be disbursed. If the Opposition formed the Government, I am sure that the supporters of the present Administration would censure it severely if an equally vague Bill were introduced. Doubtless, back-bench members of the Government party are as concerned as I am how this money is to be spent. There are many municipalities in the metropolitan area that could well do with a grant to alleviate flood damage. Apparently the £750,000 is to be distributed as some departmental official sees fit. Doubtless, if the total sum were expended in the Swan Hill electorate it would be inadequate fully to compensate for the losses incurred. I should like to know whether the sum of £750,000 is the State's contribution and whether the Commonwealth Government proposes to grant a subsidy on a £1 for £1 basis.

**Mr. FRASER.**—The amount has been contributed . . . .

**The SPEAKER** (the Hon. W. J. F. McDonald).—Order! I call on the honorable member for Coburg to proceed without assistance from the Honorary Minister.

**Mr. MUTTON.**—I should like the Honorary Minister to give me some help. So far, no Opposition member has received any information from him concerning this measure. I have been a member of this institution for many years and I cannot remember a Bill so vague in detail ever having been introduced previously. Surely honorable members are entitled to know how £750,000 of public money is to be spent. Apparently it is all to be allocated to country areas. The City of Coburg is affected by flood waters from the Merri creek, and the honorable member for Brunswick West referred to damage that is caused when the Moonee Ponds creek is in flood. If every area of the State affected by flood waters participated in the distribution of this money, the amount allocated to each municipality would not be sufficient to repair the railings on one bridge in each area.

I am like Little Jack Horner; I sit in the corner and I do not say much, but I do analyse legislation. I say that it is not right for Parliament to approve of the expenditure of £750,000 without the Government presenting an itemized account of how that money is to be disbursed. If that action were taken, honorable members generally could comment on the amounts proposed to be allocated to their electorates and state whether they were adequate or not. Country members in particular would be able to advise the Government whether the amounts allocated would be beneficial. The honorable member for Gippsland East has as much right to expect some of this money to be distributed to municipalities in Gippsland as the honorable member for Swan Hill has to expect a large proportion of it to be expended in his electorate. I am sure that if Country party members outlined the extent of the damage caused by bushfires and floods in their areas it would be realized that a sum of

£750,000 was totally inadequate to compensate for the losses incurred. The amount allocated is miserly when compared with the extent of the damage. The Government should make a more worth-while contribution towards compensating those who have suffered losses. If this amount is to be used as a means of gaining political advantage, then the result will not be gratifying. I cannot understand why this House is asked to pass this Bill when so little information about it has been furnished by the Government.

*The sitting was suspended at 5.55 p.m. until 7.26 p.m.*

**Mr. MITCHELL** (Benambra).—My party and I support this Bill but my support is given with a degree of reluctance. It is neither efficient nor honest for the Government to submit a measure that has no schedule and of which it appears to be thoroughly ashamed. Ministers on the Treasury bench try to laugh that off, but their laugh is about as hollow as their applause was yesterday when their colleague gave notice of the bread Bill. It is not right for this House to agree to the allocation of a large sum of public money unless provision is made for definitely accounting for its expenditure. It is our job as members of this House to safeguard the people's money. The Leader of the Opposition directed attention to the activities of the Committee of Public Accounts. There was a case in which a strong charge was made against the Treasury, and the Government has done nothing about that. What is the use of the Committee of Public Accounts sitting when this sort of thing occurs? It is no wonder that the Government's attention was side-tracked to such matters as motor car registration. In a letter during the recess, I asked the Premier about the recommendation of the Committee of Public Accounts respecting the Forests Commission's activities, and the honorable gentleman replied that the Government would sell the Newport seasoning works. He side-stepped what the Committee of Public Accounts had to say about the Director-General of Finance.

Much as I like the idea of assistance to be authorized by this Bill, it does not make me very happy about the Government's capacity to handle large sums of the people's money. As various members have said, the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) was strangely—possibly deliberately—remiss in his second-reading speech. He commenced by saying—

The purpose of this Bill is to authorize the expenditure of certain public moneys for the purpose of assisting persons adversely affected by floods and other disasters.

Instead of proceeding to tell the House exactly how it was proposed to spend the money in assisting the people concerned, he went on in a way reminiscent of a picnic back-scratching party. Everyone was thanked. That is nice and ethical, but it does not get us very far from the point of view of accountancy. The Honorary Minister concluded his speech by saying—

The Bill requires little further explanation. That is where I differ radically with the honorable gentleman. I repeat that the Bill should contain a schedule explaining exactly where the money is going and who is to be helped. We are here to try to assist the Government. If we knew what the Government proposed to do with the money, we could give it valuable assistance. Instead, we are being hobbled. As other members have pointed out, considerable damage was done to the Murray and other rivers by floods last year. At Wodonga, the lowlands were covered with flood water, and Albury was almost a city of submerged suburbs. What the position will be when as a result of the Snowy scheme there is an uncontrolled flow of water, I do not know. During the floods, as well as the actual mechanical flood damage, fences were washed away or broken, and pastures were ruined. Months elapsed before proper grass grew and animals could obtain adequate fodder. The farmers involved suffered considerable loss.

One other aspect relating to this "blindfold" Bill is that while there is provision for people who are burnt out or flooded out, no assistance is forthcoming for any unfortunate person who

is snowed in. Last year, one of my constituents built a public restaurant at Falls Creek. It was finished before the snow season arrived, but because of an unusual heavy snowfall the roof of the building caved in. On our own property, we have been twice snowed in since the war. I well remember how the Treasure Brothers lost some 3,000 cattle in heavy snow on Cobungra station on the Omeo side of Hotham. Facts such as these should have been mentioned. The Bill has all the makings of a "blindfold" measure.

I should like to know how much money is being spent at Tallangatta. The Shire of Towong, in which Tallangatta is situated, applied for an allocation of £12,000, and I would be interested to learn whether it received the amount. Without a detailed schedule, I cannot obtain the information. On the border, the floods were so severe that for weeks people could not get to the bridges—particularly at the Bringenbrong bridge, the Towong bridge and the Tintaldra bridge—which were just above the water level, as the approaches were heavily inundated. We spent quite a bit of the winter going to the Bringenbrong bridge with a tractor and pulling out water-logged motor cars. The road there has been considerably damaged, and I should like to know whether any assistance is to be given regarding this important interstate link.

It is easy to think lightly of farmlands being flooded by water, and it sounds funny to hear of Mum and Dad being perched with the poultry on the roof of the homestead, but for the persons concerned the matter is of the utmost seriousness. The fate of one particular farm on the Avon river will be dealt with later by the honorable member for Gippsland East. This property consisted of 37 acres above the bridge on the main road, and in one flood 30 acres of it vanished over-night. The farmer was ruined; his assets disappeared.

In connexion with all this damage one naturally thinks, "Cannot the water be used before it becomes dangerous?" Some of the money could be devoted to

*Mr. Mitchell.*

governing the flood waters in the Ovens valley in an effort to solve the important question of a water supply for Wangaratta, a growing city faced with an acute water shortage in most years, which thereby restricts its growth. Subject to those comments, I support the Bill.

**Mr. SHEPHERD** (Ascot Vale).—I think it is obvious to the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) and to the Government that a mistake was made in the form of introduction of this Bill, on which there is a dearth of information. The second-reading speech of the Honorary Minister was commendatory of the people who played a gallant role in the relief of flood victims, but it could be misinterpreted by other persons when criticism of the Bill is coupled with references to humanitarian actions always associated with disasters such as fire and flood. It is obvious, too, that members are only now realizing that this proposed legislation, although quite brief, is very important. Every member should want to know more about the subject.

Actually, a Bill of this nature is dealt with by the House every year. Parliament is annually asked to pass a measure to sanction the issue and application of loan moneys for public works and other purposes. Clause 2 of every Public Works Loan Application Bill that has been submitted to the House in the last twenty years—and probably before that—has been couched in exactly the same language. The passing of the measure gives the Government the opportunity to set aside money in some Treasury account, but it does not stipulate how this sum shall be spent. Clause 2 states—

From the Loan Fund there may be issued and applied the amounts specified in the schedule to this Act for the respective works and purposes specified opposite thereto, not exceeding Seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds in all.

No loan application Bill is specific. Annually, there are submitted to Parliament public works, State forests, and railway loan application Bills, each of which is designed to appropriate sufficient money to cover

not only the remainder of the financial year in which the Bills are introduced, but also the first six months of the following financial year. Despite the exhaustive and extensive schedule that always accompanies each Bill, one learns subsequently that the money has not been spent exactly as was contemplated. Sometimes there is a reserve against a specific item.

I do not propose to charge the Government with insincerity regarding this measure. Although the Honorary Minister's speech may have been prepared, he delivered it in a most haphazard way. He began with a commendation, and I support all he said in that regard. I shall even contest the point raised by the honorable member for Benambra when he used the word "picnic" in reference to the Minister's explanation. Any honest commendation of organizations or groups of individuals that have helped to alleviate distress caused by fire, flood or other catastrophe must be supported.

The Bill contains nothing to indicate where the money to relieve suffering is to be obtained. The Honorary Minister's speech was most unusual, although I believe he made it in good faith. He has been complimented by members for the humane way in which he approached the situation. At the time of the disaster, he was on the spot and saw the difficulties. Much of the work at the rivers during the flood was not initiated by any Government Department. Local men rallied together, used material that belonged to shires and to private persons and organizations, and did what they thought best to relieve the situation.

The honorable member for Benambra said he hoped some of the money provided for in the Bill would be spent with the object of preventing a recurrence of the type of disaster that befall people living in the Murray valley in the last twelve months or so. The sum of £750,000 is not the limit, but that is the total amount provided for in the Bill. No one has indicated how much will be received from the Commonwealth Government, or whether it will

be a contribution or an extra grant. The Treasury should know. All we have learned from the Honorary Minister's speech is that £100,000 will be placed at the disposal of the Treasurer to meet immediate needs arising from the disaster. Expressed condemnation regarding lack of information given by the Honorary Minister is warranted.

When all is said and done, we agree wholeheartedly with the proposal of the Government to provide money for this relief. It would appear from the figures quoted by the Minister that not a great sum is to be paid to individuals, most of the expenditure being incurred in the restoration of and repairs to bridges, roads and other semi-governmental property damaged by floods and to some extent by fire. A classic example of inaccuracy in the second-reading speech of the Honorary Minister is to be found at page 179 of the current *Hansard*. Following one page and a half of explanation of the measure, he stated—

The money to be applied under this Bill will be utilized for the purposes already indicated.

That means that the schedule in its broadest aspect contained all the information the Minister was prepared to give. He praised the work of heads of Government Department and persons associated with municipalities. The district school inspector at Mildura—Mr. Ian Young, who is a friend of mine and a very capable person—was thanked for his valuable assistance. The Honorary Minister indicated also what had happened in these terms—

As a matter of interest it might be proper to indicate that, as at the 9th April, 1957, 501 applications for assistance had been received from individual flood sufferers. The aggregate losses as stated in the individual claims amount to £781,301, and grants amounting to £58,994 have been made in 428 cases.

If that is the maximum amount to be paid to satisfy those claims, two things are evident. Either the claims made were fantastically high or the assessment of the damage was on a very meagre basis. Of course, it is possible that some of the payments made are only of an advance nature and not in full satisfaction of the claims. We have not

any information on that aspect. All that we can go by is what is contained in the speech of the Honorary Minister.

Mr. FRASER.—If you read a little more of the speech, you will obtain the information you are seeking.

Mr. SHEPHERD.—It was stated that the Commonwealth and the State Governments were contributing on a £1 for £1 basis. Will the Victorian Government use £750,000 of loan money for the purpose of meeting these flood damage claims or will a portion of that sum be reserved for use in case another disaster is encountered?

Mr. FRASER.—That, too, is indicated in my second-reading speech.

Mr. SHEPHERD.—Nobody knows a great deal about the details of the compensation payments. I do not wish the Government to feel that I am attempting to criticize it for not providing sufficient funds for this purpose. All we seek is further information on the allocation of the money. Despite the fact that members of the Country party are commending the Government for its action, they too wish to know where the money is going, and how much is being voted out of the funds of the Country Roads Board for flood restoration work. Is any or none to be spent? The Board was asked to assess the damage, and a grant to municipalities on the basis of a ratio of £5 to £1 was mentioned. The Opposition will not protest if the Government adjourns the further consideration of the Bill when the second-reading debate is concluded in order that the information we require might be prepared and furnished. That statement could then be discussed in Committee. Of course, if those details are not provided, we will have to wait until the Auditor-General's report is received during the next financial year. Doubtless he will pinpoint some of the weaknesses of this type of administration. It is quite easy for members of Parliament whose electorates are affected to say they are grateful to the Government for the steps it has taken. I do not blame them. We are all aware that when disaster occurs the Government must step in and provide funds for relief. With the honorable member for Mildura, I visited the

Redcliffs power station during the period of the previous flooding. The State Electricity Commission had rushed earth-moving machinery and man power to the area in order that the power station might be saved. Operations of that nature cost money and nobody can ascertain the overall cost of them to the Government. The main thing, of course, is to save, if possible, power houses, sewerage and water supply systems, bridges, and other valuable property. The extra expenditure incurred on such work is very often not debited to the particular project concerned.

The Opposition considers that its speakers have made pertinent points in this debate and is entitled to further information. The Government should not make the mistake of thinking that these details are required in order that comparisons may be made. The honorable member for Swan Hill spoke very feelingly and said that the Government could pour all of the money voted into his electorate and still not restore the assets damaged by the floods. The Opposition is well aware of that. The honorable member for Benambra made a suggestion in regard to the control of the Ovens river. That can be examined from a narrow point of view, but it can be envisaged also as part of a bigger undertaking. One may conjecture whether the River Murray Commission has been a success or a failure. A great contributor to some of the recent flooding of the River Murray was the water that came down from Queensland in the Darling river. Little can be done to control that waterway because of the difficult country through which it passes. During the height of the flood the Darling river was 80 miles wide in places, but at the present time it is a mere trickle, and is causing the local inhabitants great anxiety.

In his second-reading speech the Honorary Minister presented a rather concise statement that was meant to cover a situation that had been given great publicity at the time of the floods and on many occasions since, but the House is entitled to far more information when considering a loan Bill designed to finance the payment of compensation and the restoration of flood damage.

Mr. FRASER.—Where did the Government fail?

Mr. SHEPHERD.—We want to know whether it has failed or not. We cannot tell at the moment.

Mr. FRASER.—What information do you want that you are not already in possession of?

Mr. SHEPHERD.—We wish to know to whom the compensation is to be paid. We do not want the Government to name individuals, but to dissect the proposed expenditure into headings covering such items as compensation to individuals, payment for road restoration, bridge restoration and so on. Details could be given also of the costs of flood prevention work in the country. I should like to obtain the same information as the Honorary Minister would require if he were in Opposition. Another matter that I am concerned about is where the additional money is coming from because only £750,000 is provided for in the Bill, and the Government expects to spend £1,000,000. The Honorary Minister has already indicated that the £750,000 may not all be expended this financial year. I should like to know also how much will be available for the Treasurer to advance next year to the Rural Finance Corporation. If the Government will supply the information that I have referred to, the Opposition will not delay the passage of the Bill further.

Mr. BOLTE (Premier and Treasurer).—I do not propose to defend the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) but to praise him for the action he took during the recent disastrous floods in Victoria and for what he has since accomplished. The Leader of the Opposition, his Deputy, and other members have engaged in kindergarten politics in an endeavour to obtain a schedule to a Bill that must of necessity be drafted in the broadest possible terms in order that the most good may be done. If the Government acceded to the request of the Opposition the passage of the measure would have to be delayed for several months to enable the necessary information to be obtained. Some municipalities

are still submitting their claims for compensation. Several months could elapse before an accurate schedule could be prepared.

Mr. SHEPHERD.—I asked for a statement, not a schedule.

Mr. BOLTE.—If the necessary money is to be obtained to alleviate the sufferings and remedy the damage that was caused, this Bill could not have been presented to the House in any other form, and honorable members must be satisfied with that approach. The amount specified in the measure, namely, £750,000, is greater than the total of claims received and accepted to date. The Commonwealth and Victorian Governments have jointly undertaken to provide approximately £1,000,000, comprising more than £700,000 for municipalities and approximately £280,000 for individuals. The State's proportion of that total is half. The provision of an amount greater than the aggregate of claims already accepted will mean that the Government will be enabled to examine thoroughly further requests that may be submitted. If a detailed schedule were included in the Bill the sum specified would have to be allocated immediately. Such a course could react unfavourably against the areas represented by the honorable member for Benambra and others.

With most loan application Bills the amounts stipulated in the schedule are greater than those actually allocated for the financial year, and honorable members know the necessity for following such a practice. A similar procedure cannot be applied in this instance for the reason I have already given—the amount allocated would have to be paid immediately. I suggest that members of the Opposition are fencing. If those members of the Labour party advanced the argument against which I have been contending were back-benchers, I would excuse them, but I cannot excuse the Leader of the Opposition or his Deputy.

Mr. SHEPHERD.—And a member of the Country party who is a former Attorney-General.

Mr. BOLTE.—I include him also. Those honorable members have had many years' experience in Parliament and should know better. When the Leader of the Opposition was Premier he allocated £36,476 in the Supplementary Estimates for 1954-55 for flood relief in New South Wales. No details of how that amount would be expended were supplied at the time and the then Opposition did not ask for any information because a major tragedy had occurred, and we fully supported the action taken by the Premier of the day. If Opposition members were honest and sincere they would not haggle and delay the passage of this Bill.

Mr. DOUBE (Oakleigh).—The House is again witnessing the familiar scene of the Opposition dragging information out of reluctant and tight-lipped members of the Government. It is only by constant pressure that we have obtained some details from the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser). No Government member, other than the Premier, and the Honorary Minister, who explained the Bill, has spoken during the debate. Whilst the Opposition agrees wholeheartedly with the principle of assisting the people who suffered losses during the recent disastrous floods, we insist also that this House is entitled to know what the Government proposes to do. The Premier stated that he could excuse Opposition back-benchers for adopting the procedure that has been followed, but I can find no excuse for what the honorable gentleman said, despite his position in the Government. Earlier in the debate when the honorable member for Brunswick West stated that some financial support was expected from the Commonwealth Government, the Premier interjected that that was the first he had heard of it.

Mr. BOLTE.—Rubbish!

Mr. DOUBE.—It is not rubbish. He has now informed the House that the Commonwealth Administration will contribute on a specified basis. The Honorary Minister did not say what contribution the Commonwealth Government proposed to make, and the Opposition is entitled to be in possession of full information.

Mr. PETTY.—The relevant information appears in the Minister's second-reading speech in *Hansard*.

Mr. DOUBE.—The Minister's statement was that the Commonwealth Government would contribute on a £1 for £1 basis, but the point I am making is that the Premier interjected earlier that that was the first he had heard of such a proposal. The Minister of Housing indicated by way of interjection that the second-reading explanation included something about flood prevention. Perhaps he will inform the House what steps are being taken in that direction.

Mr. BOLTE.—Have you not heard of levee banks?

Mr. DOUBE.—Of course I have. The Honorary Minister has directed my attention to the following portion of his second-reading speech—

Flood-protection claims received from municipalities and instrumentalities amount to approximately £250,000, while claims for the restoration of flood-damaged roads and bridges aggregate approximately £850,000—I am speaking about flood protection, not rehabilitation of the area. Too many of these half-baked speeches have been made by Ministers.

Mr. CAIN.—Half-baked and written by departmental officers.

Mr. BLOOMFIELD (Minister of Education).—On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, is the Leader of the Opposition in order in interjecting from other than his own place in the House?

The SPEAKER (the Hon. W. J. F. McDonald).—Any interjection is disorderly. I would ask all honorable members to refrain from interjecting.

Mr. DOUBE (Oakleigh).—It has been proved that until about five minutes ago the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) was under the impression that his second-reading speech included some mention of future flood protection measures. It is obvious that it did not. The Government must realize its responsibility towards Parliament by taking honorable members into its confidence. All honorable members are agreed that assistance must be extended in this case, yet even on this non-controversial issue we are not fully informed.

The Opposition makes an honest and reasonable plea to the Government to spend more time on preparing explanations of proposed legislation for the benefit of the House, so that three or four hours are not wasted dragging Ministers to their feet in an attempt to obtain further information from them. Because of the complexities of Departments and their branches, there is a tendency on the part of Ministers to accept what is handed to them by departmental officers. The Government has an obligation to answer questions posed by honorable members on Bills under debate. If it discharged that responsibility properly the passage of Bills such as this through the House would be expedited.

**Mr. BARCLAY (Mildura).**—I commend the Bill to the House. I also congratulate the Government for its wise action, and the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) for this effort to compensate to some extent those concerned for the losses they sustained during the recent disastrous floods in the Murray valley. At the peak of the floods I was assured by the Deputy Premier that the Government would provide relief to those affected. That honorable gentleman called representatives of the State Electricity Commission, the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, the Police Force and other organizations into discussions that were held on the desperate situation. At Redcliffs men were fighting for their lives at the power and pumping stations. They worked up to their knees in mud, filling sand bags. When a State Electricity Commission engineer and I were on the bank it started to move as a result of water pressure. The alarm was sounded and only by using railway tarpaulins which were placed on the bank to stop the water from seeping through, were the power station and pumping station saved. Possibly twenty men took great risks on that occasion. A wonderful effort was made by the people of the Mildura district in moving equipment, tractors, trailers and other vehicles down to the banks to save those stations which are vital to the irrigation of Redcliffs, Mildura and Merbein. Railway employees have not been

mentioned, but some of them did wonderful work loading bags for distribution along the river and so on. The late Inspector Winterton of the Police Department did a marvellous job. On one occasion the upthrust of water almost destroyed the circulating pump on the river that weighed approximately 560 tons. I received a telephone message at an emergency meeting and rang Inspector Winterton to arrange with the railways to send 60 tons of rails to Mildura. The employees worked all the afternoon so that the rails would arrive in time. Assistance was received also from people from Swan Hill down to Renmark.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition referred to the Darling river which, in some places, was almost 40 miles wide. The flooding of the Darling at Wentworth held back the River Murray waters. This accumulation of water, together with the flow from the Murrumbidgee river, increased the flooding along the Murray. Work has commenced in New South Wales on the provision of a dam at the Menindee lakes. When completed, the weir, which will impound approximately 2,000,000 acre feet of water, will help to regulate the flow of the River Murray, thereby minimizing future flooding in northern areas.

The Shire of Mildura and the Mildura City Council are quite satisfied with the financial assistance received. Accurate records of expenditure were maintained by the shire secretary and the town clerk and all accounts were carefully scrutinized before being passed by the officers of the Public Works Department. Similarly, in connexion with the Country Roads Board, the shire engineer at Mildura kept accurate accounts of the money expended and when those accounts are checked, it will be seen that no attempt was made to "put anything over" the Government with a view to obtaining additional finance.

The people of Victoria should be indebted to the residents in the northern parts of the State for their magnificent efforts during the disaster. Splendid work was done for flood sufferers in New South Wales, Victoria and South

Australia at the emergency camp at Merbein, and the Army, Navy and Air Force, by utilizing "ducks," were able to distribute food to persons isolated by flood waters from the Darling river.

The Government should be commended for introducing this measure. Unfortunately, however, people are still coming to me seeking financial assistance. In many instances, the amounts originally claimed will not compensate for the total flood damage caused to properties. Vines have been affected by flooding and through seepage, and trellis work that has been undermined has fallen over and must be replaced. A great deal of work remains to be done in the vineyards that were on the fringe of the flood waters. Ultimately, of course, the Government will reap the benefit of its excellent efforts on behalf of the people concerned.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clause 1 was agreed to.

Clause 2 (Issue and application of money from Loan Fund).

**Mr. FRASER** (Honorary Minister).—It might be appropriate if I reply to some of the points raised by Opposition members during the second-reading debate. It will be remembered that the Leader of the Opposition stated he could not understand my second-reading speech. That is difficult to understand as I endeavoured to use simple expressions, the speech was grammatically correct, and it contained all the information sought by Opposition members. However, if the Leader of the Opposition is still unable to understand my explanatory remarks, I offer him my sincere apologies.

I should like to read to the Committee the two opening paragraphs of my speech—

The purpose of this Bill is to authorize the expenditure of certain public moneys for the purpose of assisting persons adversely affected by floods and other disasters, to assist municipalities in connexion with the replacement of roads, bridges and other property damaged by floods or fire, and to reimburse municipalities and Government authorities in

connexion with flood prevention work undertaken at the time of the serious River Murray floods last year.

Members will recollect that last session the Rural Finance Corporation Act was so amended that where any money is provided from the Public Account for any special purpose, the Treasurer of Victoria may, subject to such directions or conditions as he may think fit to give, direct the Corporation to take charge of the administration of the money for such purpose. Further, the Corporation was to establish a separate agency department. In order that funds may be available from time to time to provide assistance to settlers adversely affected by floods or drought provision has been made for an amount of £100,000 to be placed at the disposal of the Treasurer to enable him to afford assistance direct to such settlers or by medium of the Rural Finance Corporation. My remarks appear to be quite clear. The only purpose that a sum of £100,000 was placed at the disposal of the Treasurer was to provide a fund to afford the assistance to which I have just referred. The Leader of the Opposition stated that he was seeking certain additional information, and a similar attitude was adopted by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the honorable member for Oakleigh. The Leader of the Opposition said, in effect, "Where is this money coming from? I wish to know whether the Commonwealth is contributing towards it. If so, on what basis? The Honorary Minister said nothing about it in his second-reading speech." At page 179 of *Hansard*, the following statement appears:—

The moneys to be applied under his Bill will be utilized for the purposes already indicated. In addition to the finance made available by the State of Victoria, the Commonwealth Government is contributing on a £1 for £1 basis.

Surely, that is clear enough. The Leader of the Opposition then asked, "Where is this money going to? How much will be used for roads, bridges, flood prevention works, and so on?" I direct the attention of honorable members to the paragraph in my speech, which reads—

As a matter of interest, it might be proper to indicate that, as at the 9th April, 1957, 501 applications for assistance had been received from individual flood sufferers. The aggregate losses as stated in the individual claims amount to £781,301, and grants amounting to £58,994 have been

made in 428 cases. In 32 cases it was decided that no assistance could be granted, and 41 applications which were received late were in course of being dealt with.

Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL.—Opposition members would like you to explain what is meant by the statement at the top of page 180 of *Hansard*.

Mr. FRASER.—For the benefit of the honorable member for Brunswick West, I shall deal with that matter. The Government made it clear that the people concerned were not to be compensated for their losses; only cases of hardship were to be dealt with. It is to the credit of those who have been dealing with the matter that the job has been done successfully. Despite the small sum of money so far made available, everyone concerned has expressed satisfaction. I am indebted to the honorable member for Mildura for informing the House of the attitude of the Mildura Shire Council and the Mildura City Council in respect of the deal they received. A similar position obtains with respect to other municipalities in the area affected. In my explanatory speech I said—

Flood-protection claims received from municipalities and instrumentalities amount to approximately £250,000, while claims for the restoration of flood-damaged roads and bridges aggregate approximately £850,000. I suggest that in that statement the Leader of the Opposition will discover the information he sought.

Mr. CAIN.—Is the sum of £750,000 the total contribution by both the Federal and State Governments, or by the State Government only?

Mr. FRASER.—The Leader of the Opposition, who has been Treasurer of this State, should know the answer to the question he has asked. Obviously, this House can deal only with Victoria's money.

Mr. CAIN.—If the Commonwealth Government provides this State with money, it becomes Victoria's property.

Mr. FRASER.—That is so. However, the matter is dealt with in the Public Account Act 1951, section 11 of which provides—

Where the Commonwealth has made or makes any grant of moneys to the State of Victoria pursuant to any Act of the Commonwealth and that Act prescribes the

purpose for which the moneys must be applied the Treasurer may accept the moneys from the Commonwealth and credit a suitable account in the Trust Fund therewith and may without any other authority than this Act authorize the disbursement of such moneys for the purposes set out in the Commonwealth Act.

All that is being dealt with in this measure is money made available by Victoria. In addition to the sum stipulated in the Bill, the Commonwealth is providing a certain sum on a £1 for £1 basis. I have already indicated that the amount of £750,000 includes £100,000 over and above the sum we are using for flood relief, or flood prevention, or flood damage, or reimbursement of claims by people who suffered damage. The Government desires to provide the sum of £100,000 in accordance with the proposal outlined last session when the Rural Finance Corporation Act was amended. In my second-reading speech I also stated—

In all, the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments have jointly undertaken to provide £1,000,000 comprising £726,000 for restoration of flood-damaged roads and bridges and £274,000 for reimbursement of emergency flood protection expenditure in addition to £100,000 for individual relief under the heading of hardship.

It is not suggested that all of that money will be spent, nor is it submitted that the sums mentioned represent the total amounts that will be made available.

Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL.—How is the difference between £1,000,000 and £750,000 made up?

Mr. FRASER.—Victoria is receiving a contribution on a £1 for £1 basis from the Commonwealth, and the two Governments, jointly, have undertaken to make up the sum of £1,000,000. Had this debate taken place in December of last year, or early this year, there would have been no criticism of the Government by Opposition members. They would have been only too ready to agree to the provision of the money.

Mr. CAIN.—We are not opposing that course of action now.

Mr. FRASER.—The Opposition suggests that there have been certain shortcomings on the part of the

Government; that it is not exercising proper care. What more can it do? Claims for road damage are certified by the Country Roads Board. Is there any better authority for that purpose? Applications for flood protection work submitted by municipalities are being accepted. An advance of 50 per cent. has been made promptly to the shires affected because some are in financial difficulties. The balance has been made available following scrutiny by qualified officers of the Public Works Department who were asked to take a reasonable and sympathetic view of claims, having in mind that each claim has been submitted on the basis of a £5 to £1 grant and therefore one-sixth of the money involved is being provided by the municipalities concerned. This is the first time on record that a grant has been made on such a generous basis.

**Mr. CAIN** (Leader of the Opposition).—If this discussion has done nothing else it has produced a better explanation by the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) than could have been given by the Premier, who obviously does not know as much about the situation as does the Minister in charge of the measure. The honorable gentleman knows what he is talking about because he has studied the matter in detail. I emphasize that the Rural Finance Corporation knows nothing about the ramifications of this measure. No applications for flood relief have been submitted to that body. Conversely, the Regional Planning and Decentralization Division has received about 500 applications representing claims for nearly £800,000. I presume that the Honorary Minister has reviewed those applications. If the Government provides £750,000 in connexion with claims by municipalities for losses to roads and bridges, it will provide half of the money and the Commonwealth Government will provide the balance.

**Mr. FRASER**.—If we spend £1,500,000, this Government will provide £750,000, and the Commonwealth Government will make available £750,000.

**Mr. CAIN**.—It would have been better if the Honorary Minister had said, "You know what has happened over the

floods, and we have dragged £750,000 out of the Commonwealth Government." If I had been the Minister, that is what I would have said, and I would have taken credit for it. The honorable gentleman has hidden the facts.

**Mr. FRASER**.—That is not so.

**Mr. CAIN**.—I do not want to be unfair to the honorable gentleman, but the facts were not disclosed. After hearing the explanatory speech of the Honorary Minister, no member could have said that he knew the facts about this matter. It would have been better if the honorable gentleman had said, "From the information we have to hand at present, the Government estimates that the expenditure in this direction will be £1,000,000 or £1,500,000. If we spend the last-mentioned amount, the Commonwealth will provide £750,000 from its revenue. If the total expenditure is £1,000,000, the Commonwealth Government will give the State £500,000." I repeat that if I had been the Minister in charge of the Bill I would have said, "We have dragged this sum out of the Commonwealth, which is granting assistance to New South Wales and elsewhere." Then members would have had the full information, but Departments put these matters in a devious way and they become so involved that no member of Parliament can appreciate the full facts. I take credit for having been able to obtain from the Honorary Minister information about which he knew nothing two hours ago.

**Mr. FRASER**.—It all appears in my second-reading speech.

**Mr. CAIN**.—It does not appear in the honorable gentleman's explanatory speech in the way he has now put it to the Committee. Members are not in the Treasury every day. If a member is sitting on the Committee of Public Accounts, or some such body, and interviews 500 applicants for assistance, he knows about the matter. What the Honorary Minister should have said was, "We have 500 applicants; we will obtain £750,000 from the Commonwealth Government and we will provide

£750,000, and we will do the job." That would have been the simple way to explain the matter. The officials who prepare Ministerial notes know the facts, and imagine that members of Parliament also realize the position. I would advise the Minister to throw away departmental notes in the future. He should come before the House and say, "This is what we propose to do, although I cannot give members the exact facts at this stage." Then we would know the Government's intentions. There is too much preparation of speeches by departmental officers. They know what they are writing about, but they forget that those who have to assimilate the speeches cannot always interpret them in the right way. I thank the Minister for his explanation. I am sorry if I caused him trouble, but I have brought to light information that will benefit all members.

**Mr. MUTTON** (Coburg).—In my second-reading speech, I pointed out that the schedule provides "for assistance to settlers adversely affected by floods, droughts and other disasters, £100,000." I am wondering how the word "droughts" came to be included. Let us hope that there will not be a drought in Victoria. If one occurs, the amount provided will not be nearly sufficient to afford adequate relief. From our knowledge of previous droughts we know that £100,000 would not do anything worth while to assist unfortunate farmers. I presume that the Bill was drafted to relate only to the recent floods and fires, and I cannot understand how "droughts" can be truly classified with "other disasters." It is foolish to include that term in this Bill.

People in the metropolitan area who suffered flood damage have as much right to participate in the benefits of this Bill as sufferers in any other part of the State. Some metropolitan Government members should have fought this Bill in the interests of their constituents; they will not be able to stand up to its provisions. When, speaking on another Bill yesterday, the honorable member for Gippsland East had much to say about noxious weeds in his electorate,

but I could rightly claim that I have advanced a better argument for country people than the dumb-bells from the country sitting in this Chamber. Undoubtedly, the backbone of the country is the man on the land, and I expected that representatives of rural constituencies would make representations on behalf of the people in their electorates. They have not done so, although I admit that a speech was made by the honorable member for Murray Valley.

I should like the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) to explain why the word "droughts" is included in the schedule to the Bill. The measure was prepared in the light of the recent bushfires and floods, and I do not know why reference should be made to droughts. I trust that a disaster of this sort will not occur, but if there is one the sum of £100,000 will not go far.

The clause was agreed to.

Schedule.

**Mr. FRASER** (Honorary Minister).—I remind the honorable member for Coburg that during the last session, Parliament agreed to an amendment of the law to provide that the Rural Finance Corporation could act as an agent for the Government in distributing funds under certain conditions, at the direction of the Treasurer. So that there will be some money in hand, the sum of £100,000 has been included in the schedule for assistance to settlers adversely affected by floods, droughts or other disasters. It is a truism that he who gives quickly gives twice. Certainly, it would be a disaster if we suffered another drought. If one does occur it will be well for the Treasurer to have some funds at his disposal to meet urgent cases until Parliamentary approval can be obtained for the distribution of a larger sum. That is the sole purpose of the inclusion of the reference to droughts.

The schedule was agreed to.

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

## MOORABBIN LAND BILL.

The debate (adjourned from April 17) on the motion of Mr. Porter (Honorary Minister) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

**Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL** (Brunswick West).—The history of the Bill goes back to 1949. So far as I can ascertain from the file, at that time a provisional committee to secure a suitable site for a hospital was formed in the municipality of Moorabbin. The area sought was approximately 18 acres, not 22 acres as suggested by the Honorary Minister in his second-reading speech.

**Mr. PORTER**.—An area of 22 acres was acquired.

**Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL**.—That is so. Apparently, the acquisition was by private negotiation. One of the land-owners, who held 5 acres, agreed to sell his house and land if he could buy approximately 4 acres which at that time was owned by three persons, Mr. E. Naughton, Mr. G. F. Marriott, and Mr. A. Marriott. As far as I can ascertain, the committee, through the local council, purchased 22 acres of land in all, but only 18 acres was required for the hospital. Therefore, it was decided that the balance of approximately 4 acres should be returned to Mr. Sheppard. The whole transaction seems to have been carried out in a haphazard manner. A report prepared by a former Chief Stipendiary Magistrate, Mr. R. H. Mohr, who investigated this matter on behalf of the Government, states, *inter alia*—

On the 6th July, 1949, Mr. Sheppard made an offer to the town clerk of Moorabbin, couched in the following terms:—

"I offer to sell my 5 acres of land and house situated at corner of Centre-road and Gardiner-road, Bentleigh, for the sum of £6,000."

Set out as a Special Condition above Sheppard's signature was a statement "I am agreeable to pay £1,000 for the area of land on the east of my remaining property."

Unlike the action that would have been taken by prudent estate agents on the Government side of the Chamber, no letter was sent to Mr. Sheppard stating

that his offer was accepted. So far as the municipality was concerned, he was met with complete silence. Apparently the provisional committee communicated that fact to the Hospitals and Charities Commission, which body instructed the Crown Solicitor that it proposed to purchase the 22 acres concerned, and advised that the area coloured green on the plan, comprising some 4 acres, was to be sold to Sheppard for £1,000 in consideration of his agreement to sell 5 acres of his land. That is also contained in Mr. Mohr's report, which continues—

I mention all of these matters for the reason that Mr. Sheppard stated to me that never at any time had he received any acknowledgment of his offer to sell dated 6th July, 1949 nor had he received any intimation from the provisional committee or the Hospital and Charities Commission . . .

Honorable members can realize that the acquisition of this land was carried out in a horribly loose way and so resulted in a completely messy position. In time Mr. Sheppard's land was surrendered to the Crown, and the transfer cited, *inter alia*—

In consideration of the sum of £5,000 paid to the public account and of issue to me of a Crown grant for certain other land I do hereby transfer to the Crown, &c.

**Mr. Mohr's report** states further—

The sum of £1,000 was deducted from the purchase price to pay for the land which was to be transferred to Mr. Sheppard. He was paid £5,000 on 5th April, 1951 and the sum of £1,000 was eventually paid to him on 6th August, 1956 . . .

So from the time the £1,000 was deducted as his consideration for the 4 acres nothing seems to have been done until a similar sum was paid to him. That makes it appear that he, in effect, acquiesced to that part of the deal being concluded. So far as I can gather from the file containing the report to which I have referred, there was some trouble in obtaining land from the other people concerned, Mr. E. Naughton, Mr. G. F. Marriott and Mr. A. Marriott. Apparently Mr. Naughton died and difficulty was encountered in obtaining a transfer of the land from the personal representative of his estate. Eventually it seems that somebody decided that it

was time that Mr. Sheppard obtained a transfer for his 4 acres. Then it was ascertained that the land had been surrendered to Her Majesty and came under the provisions of the Land Act, section 12 of which provides that Crown land cannot be disposed of other than in accordance with the provisions of the said Act. Several sections of that legislation enable the Crown to dispose of Crown lands, but in most cases the requirement is that the land in question shall be sold at public auction. Sections 20, 86, 89 and 94 are relevant, but none of their provisions were competent to enable the Crown to transfer from itself to Mr. Sheppard the area concerned. Nobody seemed to be game enough to "bell the cat" and there was some talk of amending the Hospitals and Charities Act. A Bill was prepared, but was withdrawn rather suddenly. One must at least compliment the Honorary Minister (Mr. Porter) for having sufficient courage to take steps in order to see that an arrangement entered into in 1949 should now be given effect.

Mr. PORTER.—Somebody had to clean up the matter.

Mr. CAMPBELL TURNBULL.—Yes, and being a young and enthusiastic member of Cabinet, I have no doubt that the Honorary Minister was anxious to carry out any directions he received from his Premier. This Bill will in effect enable the Crown to transfer to Mr. Sheppard the 4 acres of land in question. The point I make is that it would be preferable for all Government land transactions to be handled on behalf of the Crown by the Lands Department or some other single authority. At present, the Minister of Education has the right to obtain the title of land to be used for educational purposes, and, as I understand the relevant legislation, the Housing Commission also holds its own titles for land. I think the only sane thing to do is for the Government to empower the Lands Department to handle all these transactions. If the land acquired is to be used for housing, it can be permanently reserved for that purpose.

I have carefully studied the file which has been made available to me for the purpose of discussing this Bill and feel

that what the Government has done in this matter is the only proper and sensible way to implement what was decided by the Government in office in 1949. In those circumstances, the Opposition commends the Bill.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and passed through its remaining stages.

#### RABBIT (BIOLOGICAL DESTRUCTION) BILL.

The debate (adjourned from April 17) on the motion of Mr. K. H. Turnbull (Minister of Lands) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr. STONEHAM (Midlands).—This Bill, to authorize the appointment of a research officer in the biological destruction of rabbits, is one which, after it has been placed on the statute-book and has been in operation for some time, will be recognized as a historic measure not only because of its impact upon the campaign to eradicate rabbits but also because of the principles involved which affect the administration of the Public Service. The Bill provides that a scientist at present on the staff of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization is to be seconded to the Lands Department and paid an annual salary of £3,000 for a period of not less than three years.

I am in favour of the scientific destruction of rabbits in this State by myxomatosis; consequently I approve of the Bill. However, I am not unmindful of the possible misunderstandings and unrest that may occur in certain sections of the Public Service as a result of the appointment of a scientist, at the salary proposed, over the heads of a number of experienced and competent State public servants. I am sure that the Minister of Lands is aware of the possibility of the appointment leading to friction within his own Department. I do not say that the friction must necessarily occur, and I give the honorable gentleman credit for having sufficient ability and a general understanding of human nature to be able to cope with the situation. Nevertheless, the position

is a delicate one and will have to be handled with dexterity until the other members of the staff of the Lands Department become accustomed to the fact that this scientist has been appointed. Clause 2 of the Bill provides—

The Governor in Council may subject to such terms and conditions as he thinks fit appoint a suitably qualified scientist with experience in the biological destruction of vermin to be the Research Officer in the Biological Destruction of Rabbits at a salary of Three thousand pounds per annum for a term of not less than three years.

In order to give the scientist to be appointed a satisfactory undertaking that his services will be utilized for three years, it may be necessary to delete the expression "not less than three years" in that clause and insert in lieu thereof the words "at least three years." I know that some members of the Public Service have already interpreted the present wording of the clause to mean that the scientist is likely to be employed for a period considerably longer than three years. In view of the fact that the present Superintendent of Vermin and Noxious Weeds is likely to retire within a period of three years, it is perhaps likely that the scientist may be appointed to that position. If that is the intention of the Government, it will have a job ahead of it to adjust the thinking of other members of the Public Service to that method of making appointments. I sound a note of warning that the matter will need to be handled carefully in order to be fair to the scientist who is to be appointed under the terms of this Bill. If his efforts are to be successful, it is essential that he have the whole-hearted and effective co-operation of those with whom he will be associated in his work.

In his explanatory second-reading speech the Minister of Lands said—

The scientist appointed will be working in close co-operation with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, the Australian National University and the Superintendent of the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Branch of my Department.

The scientific discoveries of the research officer will be applied by the staff of the Lands Department, and for that reason there must be the utmost

*Mr. Stoneham.*

co-operation between the scientist proposed to be appointed and the present staff of the Department. I should like to hear the views of the Chairman of the Public Service Board on the question whether the salary of £3,000 per annum can be justified. I do not intend to make an issue of the matter, but it appears to me to be disproportionate to the salaries paid to other senior members of the Public Service.

I propose later to discuss the work on which the research officer will be engaged during the next three years. It has been previously noted that this is an acrobatic Government and one of its favourite exercises is that of turning somersaults—both backward and forward. The people of Victoria have had the unfortunate experience of witnessing quite a number of back somersaults that the Government has turned. One was performed recently concerning Debney's paddock. The Premier said quite unequivocally that the whole area should be retained as parkland, but he has now changed his mind and has agreed to the holding of an inquiry into the matter. Another back somersault was turned by the Government in regard to the myxomatosis campaign. During the Budget debate last September I referred to an article, written by that famous Australian, Dame Jean Macnamara, which appeared in the *Adelaide Chronicle*. During that debate I quoted the following paragraph from the article:—

I am deeply perturbed that the Victorian Lands Department has informed the Wool Realization Trust that the subsidy for myxomatosis work is now no longer necessary.

When Dame Jean Macnamara made that statement in June last year it appeared that the Government had lost interest in continuing the myxomatosis campaign financed by the Wool Research Committee. That body has made the following advances to Victoria: In 1953-54, £6,200 for the appointment of research staff and £5,300 for an eradication demonstration at Bacchus Marsh, a total of £11,500; in 1954-55, £3,200 for an investigation into rabbit control; and in 1955-56, £5,789 for the same purpose.

The Minister of Lands was truthful and did not evade the issue in his second-reading speech, when he said—

At the end of 1956, a balance of £3,300 remained in the Department's Trust Fund, and it was about this time the head of the Department, believing the expenditure was not justified, resolved not to apply for a further grant.

Surely that decision must have been made as a matter of Government policy. The rejection by the State Government of the offer of further financial assistance inspired Dame Jean Macnamara's criticism. The Opposition is glad that the Government has somersaulted on this question, presumably under the guidance of Dame Jean Macnamara. Now the campaign in Victoria is to be placed under scientific control. The absorbing history of the myxomatosis campaign has reached the stage where it has been stated that rabbits are increasing their resistance to the disease and that the virus is not as effective as it was a couple of years ago. In my opinion, the appointment of a scientist to direct the campaign is no reflection upon that fine public servant Mr. McIlroy, the Superintendent of Vermin and Noxious Weeds. I do not know whether you, Mr. Speaker, or honorable members are aware that to-night we have the privilege of having that great scientist, Dame Jean Macnamara, who is respected internationally for her superb accomplishments, within hearing of the debate. In my opinion, the distinguished lady should have been brought to the Bar of the House to be congratulated and thanked for her tremendous contribution to our progress. It would be no exaggeration to assert that the economic value of the destruction of rabbits by myxomatosis in Australia runs into hundreds of millions of pounds, and could eventually amount to an even greater sum. The following point was made also by Dame Jean Macnamara—

The campaign should be handled at the same level as Salk vaccine. It is a job for scientists.

I do not think any honorable member would suggest that the Salk programme should be handled by a layman. If the full advantage of the myxomatosis campaign has not been achieved, it should

be conducted by a scientist, and that is no reflection on Mr. McIlroy, who has proved himself over a long period to be an able administrator. But for Dame Jean Macnamara's persistence over the years it is extremely likely that this great benefit to Australia would have been lost. According to an article written in 1933, the Australian quarantine authorities seized and threw into Victoria Dock the first sample of myxoma virus imported into Australia. That was revealed by Dr. Richard Shope, a world renowned scientist, of the Merck Institute for Therapeutic Research at New Jersey, U.S.A. The shipment of the virus to Australia in 1933 resulted from collaboration between Dr. Shope and Dame Jean Macnamara. To-day a number of members of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization would have very red faces if we reminded them of certain remarks they made years ago in connexion with the work of Dame Jean Macnamara. A prominent member of the organization stated that it would be unfortunate if the outburst of wishful thinking by Dame Jean led our distressed and overburdened primary producers to believe that control of the rabbit population lay in the use of any disease-producing virus at present known to man.

For reasons which I do not understand, in 1949, 1950 and 1951 the campaign against the rabbits was by no means successful, and the leading scientists, with the exception of Dame Jean Macnamara, were almost convinced that myxomatosis had been a failure. It was only because of Dame Jean's extraordinary confidence and faith in its effectiveness, and her persistence in persuading people in high positions to continue the experiment, that eventually success was achieved, and the subsequent results were extraordinarily favourable. A possible explanation for the less satisfactory results recently has been made by Dame Jean Macnamara. She said, and I quote from an article in the *Herald* of June, 1956—

For a long time the men waging the germ war against rabbits were without adequate equipment or even proper accommodation. Considering the disabilities under which they worked, they did a fine job—but they

were never able to make the intensive local studies necessary to direct the campaign as it should have been directed. Working only through lay officers of the Lands Department they could not in many instances, even disseminate information among landholders, much less obtain their effective co-operation. Under such condition it surely is not surprising that the killing power of myxomatosis has been weakened.

I join with the Minister in his confidence that under proper scientific direction, and in conjunction with the very high standard of administrative activity for which the Lands Department is noted, a new and bright phase of history in the myxomatosis campaign is about to be written in Victoria.

I commend the Government for its fundamental and revolutionary change of attitude in relation to this matter. As recently as last year the Government said to the Wool Research Committee, "We do not want your £5000. We are not interested in carrying the matter any further." In 1957, however, it said, "Yes; we will take a further grant of £5,000," and I presume the Minister has an assurance that the grant will be continued for the subsequent two years during the tenure of appointment of this scientist. I look forward to great results accruing from this legislation. I again emphasize that the Minister must handle with care the situation that arises as a result of the appointment of a scientist in such an unusual manner. If the Government were to adopt this method generally and appoint outsiders to high positions in the Public Service, it would encounter very serious trouble. However, this is a unique and special case, which calls for the best scientific leadership that we can obtain. Opposition members wish the project success.

**Mr. MITCHELL** (Benambra).—Rarely have I spoken in this House with greater pleasure than on this occasion, when I rise to support the Bill now before the Chair. It is a most courageous attempt to solve what has probably been the most disastrous retarding factor in the economic development of Australia. The first stock return in Australia was compiled on 1st May, 1788, when it was reported that there

was a rabbit population of five, three of which belonged to Governor Phillip. Continuing the history of Vice-Regal patronage to what has become the subsequent scourge, in 1791 Governor King imported some rabbits from South Africa. One of the earliest disputes between Batman and Fawkner was over the possession of some rabbits. In 1859, on the ship "Lightning," a Thomas Austin imported thirteen rabbits which he released four days later on his property near Geelong. A few months later he was very pleased to note how they were doing. Six years later, after he had killed 20,000 rabbits, his pleasure had diminished considerably. Since then the rabbit pest has become an incredible scourge.

A few days ago, in the *Australian Encyclopaedia* I read that my great uncle, James Mitchell, of Table Top station, spent last century no less than £30,000 in ridding his station of rabbits. Since then, the loss to Australia in terms of lack of production of sheep, cattle and horses, and damage to pastures and native growth, has run into countless millions of pounds. Additionally, large numbers of our native birds have been affected through eating poison bait laid for rabbits. It is heartening, therefore, to see a Bill of this nature before the House. With the advent of myxomatosis, the situation has changed greatly and people are now shooting their rabbit dogs, and grass is growing where it never grew previously. We are able to undertake productive work on our properties, whereas formerly we had to concentrate on the perpetual and ceaseless battle against rabbits. The results achieved as a result of the myxomatosis campaign have been incredible and wonderful. However, together with our approbation of this Bill, we should remember two things. First, myxomatosis was recommended to the Australian Government as far back as 1918 by Dr. Aragao of Brazil. Unfortunately, I have not extensive cuttings in my possession such as those produced by the honorable member for Midlands, but there appears to be a long hiatus from 1919 until 1933, when Dame Jean Macnamara again suggested myxomatosis to the Australian authorities.

There followed another long period of inactivity from 1933 until 1950, when the myxoma virus was really established in the rabbits of Australia.

If Dame Jean Macnamara is brought to the Bar of the House, and I sincerely hope that she will be, I trust that Mr. Ratcliffe will be brought along as well because to him goes the credit of putting the coping stone on the great work of Dame Jean, other scientists, and the forgotten Dr. Aragao of Brazil. The situation now is that rabbits have developed a degree of tolerance to the myxoma virus, and also weaker strains have appeared. This tolerance has appeared in Brazil, in France and in England, where there are signs of a definite rebuilding of the rabbit population. This is due, I think, to the absolute ferocity of the disease. In a disease of this character, the first impact is somewhat akin to that of a fire, which will probably either put itself out or reduce its activity. We have seen something analogous in the human race, where the Red Indian tribes and the Eskimos, who were decimated by the first onslaught of influenza, have since developed a tolerance to it. A similar position obtains with rabbits. It would seem that the strong killing virus comes from the sores or lesions in the swollen heads of the infected rabbits, but when some days later those lesions and sores break out on the bodies of the rabbits affected, a weaker virus is released which has the effect of inoculating any other rabbits to which it is transferred.

This is a wonderful and inspiring Bill, but I think our scientists have a severe task ahead. As I shall show, they have certain difficulties to conquer. The myxoma virus in Australia is stronger than that in any other country. Dr. Frank Fenner, a professor at the National University in Canberra has stated that though we started with a strong virus, it is weakening in its killing effects. It has dropped from 99·5 per cent to 90 per cent. efficiency. In England the killing power of the virus has fallen as low as 50 per cent. In the years that lie ahead our scientists must produce a virus that will have a lethal rate of 99·5 per cent. Unless

that is done the breeding capabilities of the rabbits will outstrip the myxoma virus. Accordingly, the scientists' first task must be to produce a virus of almost unprecedented strength. The second difficulty to be overcome is to deal effectively with those rabbits that have achieved a degree of immunization because they have been inoculated by a weaker strain of virus. That will be a mighty tough hurdle to surmount. We humans have our vaccination for smallpox and our T.A.B. injections for typhoid fever, and we believe we are safe from infections. That is the position with rabbits also. Scientists must discover how to overcome the effects of inoculation.

The next problem confronting scientists is a traditionally Australian one, namely, to produce a virus that will not become detrimental to Australia; that will not destroy domestic fowls, injure cattle or harm the dairying industry. But the greatest difficulty I believe will be to find a carrier or vector for virus. At the moment there is a type of mosquito that serves the purpose. In England the virus is carried by the rabbit flea. I emphasize that a person may take a very good suitcase to a railway station, but if he cannot obtain the service of a porter to carry it, it stays where it is. That difficulty is similar to one of the problems our scientists must overcome. How will they persuade some mosquito, rabbit flea, or other insect to carry the virus from one rabbit to another? The rabbit flea—which it has been urged strongly should be imported to Australia—definitely carries the myxoma virus in England. It is not known exactly how the rabbit flea operates. It is even thought that myxomatosis was originally established in England because of rabbit fleas attaching themselves to birds in France, where the rabbit population was suffering the peak of the disease, and carrying the virus to England.

The rabbit flea might be very useful above a height of 4,000 feet in our alps. At the moment it is too cold in those regions for the mosquito to operate successfully. Consequently, in the sub-montane and near-snowland zones there

are still healthy rabbit populations. We know also that Western Australia, with its Mediterranean climate, is not suitable to the mosquito, and a similar condition obtains in Tasmania. Moreover, something must be done about dragonflies because one of the reasons why the effectiveness of myxomatosis has slumped in some areas is that increased numbers of dragonflies have eaten the larvae of potential vectors for the carriage of myxomatosis from one rabbit to another. I am distrustful of rabbit fleas as carriers, because it is necessary to have some corporate body like a fox, a cat, a predatory bird, or a dog to carry the fleas from a dead to a living rabbit. Live rabbits are not inclined to nuzzle against their dead mates. Rabbit fleas on a dead animal will congregate under the body and live there for as long as six days. But they need something like a fox, a dog, or a cat to enable them to carry the virus to live rabbits. So there is a problem to be surmounted. It is a mighty hard task but it is inspiring to learn that a forward step has been made towards conquering this enemy, the rabbit menace.

I wish to sound a warning note. In my view we must look beyond the scientist. The scientist was "drummed up" to-night and we are glad we have had him to help us. But the scientist must work hand in hand with commerce. A solution to the problem has not yet been found and if, perchance, this worthwhile and commendable research fails we must find something else to stop the tolerance from building up and our rabbit population once more assuming its former magnitude to the detriment of our rural and national economy. I ask the Minister of Lands to take note that an approach should be made to New Zealand concerning this matter. As I discovered, when travelling around the South Island, with representatives of the Department of Agriculture, the Dominion cannot sustain the mosquito to carry myxoma virus, and it has been found that the only way to deal with the rabbit pest there is to decommercialize it. The New Zealand authorities have banned the sale outside the Dominion of all fur and carcasses. They also took 66½ per

*Mr. Mitchell.*

cent. of all sales of rabbit skins in New Zealand, making it uneconomical for people to farm rabbits. New Zealand farmers told me candidly that previously it had been more profitable to farm rabbits than sheep. In the six years that intervened between my first and second visits to New Zealand, I noticed the great improvement that had been made in the pastures in the south through decommercializing rabbits.

There is no farming of rabbits in New Zealand now. A rate is paid by property owners and the extermination of the pest is taken over by the Rabbit Board, whose employees move on to a property with dogs, poison, and other equipment. This destruction of the pest has cost New Zealand £1,000,000 annually in export revenue from rabbit carcasses and rabbit fur, but it is cheap at the price. If it cost only £1,000,000 to rid Australia of rabbits, we would obtain a return of £100,000,000 and more. To achieve this objective, there would have to be co-operation between the States in the same manner as we achieved uniformity of action in the legislation relating to drugs. I should like to see this Bill followed by another measure along these lines, and I compliment the Government on taking a forward and a courageous step.

**Mr. STIRLING** (Swan Hill).—This Bill relates to one of the most important problems facing the State, and the Government is wise in proposing to appoint a person with the knowledge necessary to do what it is desired to achieve by this measure. It will be difficult to find a member of the Public Service who possesses the requisite knowledge. We must not forget the difficulty experienced in trying to obtain a staff to cope with the rabbit menace in Victoria, and that proves that we should obtain the services of someone with the necessary ability to handle this task.

About 1948, I well remember that endeavours were being made by Dame Jean Macnamara to have myxomatosis introduced into Victoria. She had a hard battle to obtain the support needed to assist her to achieve what she believed was essential for the welfare of

this State. About 1933, when the Rockefeller Foundation awarded Dame Jean Macnamara a travelling scholarship for two years to visit Great Britain and the United States of America to study poliomyelitis, she was given an opportunity also to study myxomatosis. Although she worked hard to have the virus introduced into Victoria, I do not think she claimed that she was the first to do so.

In 1926, a statement was published in Brazil by one who had made a close study of the effects of myxomatosis, which, I think, was used in Brazil about 1911, and this outstanding authority said it would be something of great advantage to countries such as Australia in which the rabbit was a menace. No interest was taken in that statement by the people of Victoria. In 1949 I suppose the difficulties placed in the way of the introduction here of myxomatosis were greater than they had been previously. Mention has been made of Dr. Shope, a man highly respected throughout the world, and his support of Dame Jean Macnamara, I think, led to the decision to permit myxomatosis to be introduced here.

A start on the destruction of rabbits by this method was made about 1950, but that was not the first occasion on which myxomatosis was used in Australia. In 1926 the myxoma virus was introduced into New South Wales and some eight tests were made. In 1927, however, the tests were abandoned and we heard nothing further of the matter until 1950, when myxomatosis was tried in northern Victoria on the Gunbower estate. At the same time, tests were also made at Corowa. Officials who claimed to know about myxomatosis told us that it was a failure and it was useless to persist with the virus. However, out of the blue, myxomatosis started to spread, and shortly afterwards thousands upon thousands of rabbits were killed by it in northern Victoria and in New South Wales. So far as the authorities were concerned, it got away unexpectedly. Something happened about which they did not know anything and the virus was spread by an agent which they had

not previously considered. We remember the difficulties existing in 1950. There were articles published in the metropolitan press and in country newspapers claiming that myxomatosis should be stopped as it involved cruelty to rabbits. Some people contended that there should be no further tests. They tried to stop something that was most essential to this State.

Mr. BOLTE.—No one could have stopped the spread of myxomatosis at that time.

Mr. STIRLING.—That is so, but some people tried to have its use discontinued. They claimed it was cruel to rabbits, but they gave no consideration to the cruelty inflicted on starving stock through the ravages of the rabbit. That condition existed in many parts of Victoria. In addition, considerable damage was being done to catchment areas by the rabbit plague. Year after year, top soil was being blown away and wasted. For 26 years, we did nothing to rid our land of the pest, and we did not take advantage of the method that was being used successfully in other parts of the world. If strenuous efforts had not been made at that time to introduce myxomatosis it would have been many more years before action would have been taken to overcome the destruction caused by rabbits. If the people who claimed that the method was cruel had had their way, we would have been forced to import food from countries shrewd enough to use myxomatosis to rid their land of the rabbit plague. I trust that we will now receive worth-while co-operation from all concerned in the efforts being made to grapple with this great problem.

The Minister of Lands convened a meeting on the 17th of March, and it was attended by officers of his own Department and representatives of all primary producers' organizations in Victoria, as well as persons with wide knowledge of the use of myxomatosis in Australia. At the meeting much information, which those present probably did not realize was available in Victoria, was given. Representatives of every organization pledged full support if the proposed legislation was enacted.

A person capable of doing an essential job is to be placed in charge of this work. Doubtless, he will be able to overcome many of the existing problems with the co-operation of primary producers and landholders generally, who will render greater assistance than ever before. As a result of the great efforts and hard work, over a long period of years, of a woman who will always be respected, one of the greatest menaces that has plagued this country could be destroyed.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and passed through its remaining stages.

#### PUBLIC ACCOUNT (AMENDMENT) BILL.

The debate (adjourned from April 17) on the motion of Mr. Bolte (Premier and Treasurer) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

**Mr. CAIN** (Leader of the Opposition).—The purpose of the Bill is to increase the amount made available to the Treasurer, under what is known as the Treasurer's Advance, to the sum of £3,000,000. I do not think that this is a Government Bill; probably it was sponsored by the Treasury.

**Mr. BOLTE**.—It is really an Auditor-General's Bill.

**Mr. CAIN**.—In his second-reading speech, the Premier pointed out that the Treasurer of the day was empowered to spend sums up to a certain amount to meet claims that might arise before Parliamentary sanction for their payment could be obtained. He recalled that when the revenue of the State was £22,000,000, the Treasurer's Advance totalled £500,000. That figure was increased in 1947 to £850,000, and I may have had something to do with that alteration. However, I was not responsible for the two subsequent increases. In 1949, the authority was increased to £1,250,000, the revenue of the State then being £48,200,000. In 1951, when the Advance was increased to £2,000,000, the revenue was £65,600,000. It is proposed that the

sum shall be increased to £3,000,000; the State's revenue is now in the vicinity of £130,000,000.

Last year, the Government brought down legislation providing for the establishment of a Committee of Public Accounts. At that stage, the Premier was most enthusiastic about the proposal, but I am not certain that he is as keen now. He has been extremely discreet in the matters he has referred to the committee during the last twelve months. The first subject with which it was required to deal related to the Forests Commission. To a degree, I suppose that was a question of finance. An officer or officers of that instrumentality were involved in certain discrepancies, and the committee conducted a long investigation. Since then, I understand, court proceedings have been taken.

A matter relating to the State Accident Insurance Office has now been referred to the Committee of Public Accounts. I am not sure that either this or the previous reference was a proper subject for inquiry by the committee. A Committee of Public Accounts was in existence years ago until the depression when, for economic reasons, it ceased to function. That was in 1930 or 1931. The committee was not resuscitated until the present Government took office, and I do not think its members are sure that the right action was taken. The purpose of having a Committee of Public Accounts is that members of the House shall have, among other things, the right to examine certain financial proposals which are from time to time given effect by the Government.

**Mr. BOLTE**.—There is more to it than that; the committee may investigate transactions of Departments during the régime of former Governments, too.

**Mr. CAIN**.—There is not much more than what I have said. The Premier took the view twelve months ago when the Committee of Public Accounts was revived that the Government was acting virtuously. However, the committee has not been given any major problems to investigate. The matter that has been referred to it recently is in my

view a legislative proposal and not something that should be considered by the Committee of Public Accounts.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Christie).**—Order! I direct the attention of the Leader of the Opposition to the fact that the Bill under discussion deals with the Public Account Act, not the Committee of Public Accounts, and I ask him to address his remarks to the Bill.

**Mr. CAIN.**—It is true that the Bill under consideration relates to the public account, but with the greatest respect I maintain that I should be permitted to make reference to the Committee of Public Accounts. Surely I am not departing too far from the Bill in doing so. As a former chairman of that committee, you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, should not feel that because I am critical of its activities, I am directing my remarks at you in a personal sense. You must remember, too, that colleagues of mine are members of the committee. In discussing the proposal embodied in the Bill now before members, I think it is necessary to examine the trends that have taken place, because, if Parliament gives authority to this legislation, the Treasurer of the day will have authority to spend an extra £1,000,000 without Parliamentary approval.

**Mr. BOLTE.**—It will be possible to do it legally instead of illegally.

**Mr. CAIN.**—That is not correct.

**Mr. BOLTE.**—During your period as Treasurer the statutory limit was exceeded without Parliamentary approval.

**Mr. CAIN.**—The Auditor-General has an inquisitive way of writing a report once a year. In his opinion, officials of the Treasury might be somewhat lackadaisical and careless, so he must examine the accounts of the State and criticize fearlessly anything with which he is not satisfied. The Auditor-General is completely independent of departmental control and can be removed from office only by Parliament. He can have no fears of the Minister of Housing sacking him if he criticizes the activities of the Housing Commission.

**Mr. BOLTE.**—He would not be worried if he was a member of the Labour party.

**Mr. CAIN.**—Nor would he be worried if he was a member of the Liberal party, which fires people occasionally. The Government of the day cannot increase or reduce the salary of the Auditor-General nor dismiss him from office. That power lies solely in Parliament. Therefore, he is in a position to state fearlessly in a report whatever he wishes regarding any governmental irregularities which he encounters in his investigation of Government accounts. As I have said, the purpose of this Bill is to legalize expenditure by the Government up to £3,000,000 without Parliamentary approval.

**Mr. BOLTE.**—Approval has to be obtained later.

**Mr. CAIN.**—That is another point. It is true that Supplementary Estimates are presented to Parliament at about the time the Budget is considered. From memory, between £2,000,000 and £3,000,000 was submitted for approval by Parliament last year as Supplementary Estimates. However, as the sum of money covered by those Estimates has always been expended prior to their submission to Parliament, there is no option but to approve of them. Honorable members can criticize the items of expenditure but it is too late for any effective action to be taken. It seems that the Government feels that the Committee of Public Accounts may some day and in some way be critical of its actions and this, coupled with the fact that the newly-appointed Auditor-General is a young man and nobody is quite sure yet of how critical he will be, has led it to desire to increase from £2,000,000 to £3,000,000 the amount which can be spent on public accounts without Parliamentary approval.

It is true to say that there have not been many irregularities in the handling of the finances of this State. I think the same standard of administration applies generally in all English-speaking countries. At the same time, I sometimes wonder whether in this institution we are not losing sight of some of the great principles involved in the handling of financial affairs by Parliaments of English-speaking

countries. In Great Britain more than one Chancellor of the Exchequer has been removed from office because of the disclosure in advance of information contained in the Budget which might prove to be of value to the business community. Mr. Thomas, a Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, was forced to leave the Ministry. There have since been one or two other instances of that kind.

Mr. BLOOMFIELD.—Dr. Dalton was concerned in one.

Mr. CAIN.—Yes, he, too, was a member of the Labour party.

Mr. PORTER.—Often the disclosing of the information has been by accident.

Mr. CAIN.—That may be so, but the British people jealously guard the principle that information contained in the Budget must remain confidential until it is disclosed in Parliament. The State Government Budgets are not so important these days from that point of view, but the Commonwealth Budget, and particularly the Budget of the British Government can have a big effect on financial groups and it is of the utmost importance that no information should be disclosed prematurely.

The present proposal is to raise the authorized sum from £2,000,000 to £3,000,000. If the inflationary trend continues in this country in another twenty years' time there will be suggestions that it should be increased to £3,500,000 or £4,000,000. The larger the sum which can be expended without Parliamentary approval, the greater is the power in the hands of Executive Government, and this Parliament should not do anything calculated to place too much power in that quarter. For those reasons, while I am not opposing the passage of this legislation, I stress the desirability of protecting the public interest. I believe it is wise always for the Government to keep its Supplementary Estimates as low as possible, but I am well aware that sometimes unforeseen circumstances make it difficult to do so. When another matter was discussed earlier this evening, the Honorary Minister (Mr. Fraser) revealed that the Government was deliberately leaving money available in

a fund in case an emergency should arise next year. It must be realized that the Treasurer of the day acts largely on the advice of Treasury officials, but he can override their advice. That is why Parliament should guard carefully its rights over the expenditure of public funds. If too much power is delegated to the Executive, one could easily find the Government of the day completely under the domination of departmental heads.

One great danger of our system of Government is the power and influence of the public servant. I refer in particular to Canberra where heads of Departments and others in the Service become unfamiliar with ordinary business activities and are too far removed from the rank and file of the community. It is always dangerous to give heads of Departments too much power. Most of the recommendations made at a Premiers' conference in Canberra for reimbursement of taxation to the States, which to-day represents many millions of pounds, are promulgated by Treasury officials.

Mr. BOLTE.—Without argument.

Mr. CAIN.—I do not agree with that interjection. Perhaps they do not argue with the present Premier of Victoria. Treasury officials decide the amount that is to be reimbursed and then tell the Federal Treasurer. They say to him, "Offer the States £60,000,000 and if you get into trouble there will be another £10,000,000 to allocate later." A similar procedure is followed for the allocation of loan funds to the States. For those reasons Parliament has to be particularly careful when it hands power over to the executive Government on the one hand or the heads of Departments on the other.

In this House there are three table officers and three in another place. Sometimes I wonder what those in the other place do but, still, they are there. Although they have had long years of experience and are familiar with Parliamentary practice and other aspects of their duties, they lack knowledge of the outside world. Their future is assured by the superannuation scheme and other benefits. They would not worry should

the Government decide to go to the electors, whether next week or next year, because they would know that after an election they would retain their jobs with the salaries attached and they would hope for an increase. The position is even more dangerous in Canberra. I use the table officers of Parliament as an example and intend no disrespect. My remarks are directed mainly at heads of Departments, who have great power, at backroom economists and at legal advisers.

**Mr. BOLTE.**—A person has great power only when he has the cash.

**Mr. CAIN.**—Heads of Departments have both power and cash. I agree with the Premier that cash leads to power. For the reasons I have enumerated, Parliament is entitled to be critical. I do not oppose the Bill, but I would be remiss in my duty if I did not take this opportunity of pointing to the results of giving too much power to heads of Departments. An examination of Supplementary Estimates over the years will disclose that the amount involved has increased from a few thousand pounds to millions of pounds, and it will continue to rise. It is certain that next year the Treasurer will be faced with Supplementary Estimates much higher than those of this year, particularly if anything unforeseen happens, such as a drought or a flood. The Supplementary Estimates consist of amounts spent by one member of Parliament—the Treasurer—who then comes along to the other 65 members at the end of the financial year and says, "I spent so much extra on this that and the other projects, and now I ask for Parliamentary approval for that expenditure." The lower Supplementary Estimates can be kept, the better. In fact, a prudent Treasurer would endeavour to have no Supplementary Estimates at all, but it is almost impossible to achieve that objective.

I realize that there will be no mention of my remarks in the press to-morrow, and even if my speech was reported, the outside public would not understand what is involved. However, there is an obligation on honorable members generally to understand these matters. I have been critical merely to direct

attention to the effect this small measure could have on the community. The Bill contains two clauses only, and doubtless the Premier believes in the maxim, "The least said, the soonest mended."

**Mr. CHRISTIE** (Ivanhoe).—The debate has taken rather a surprising turn and the Leader of the Opposition, in supporting this Bill has used some of the arguments which I had proposed to employ to indicate why I approve of the measure. I consider that there is an obligation on a member of Parliament to take an active interest in the spending of public money and he should express himself on this subject every time an opportunity presents itself. The burden and incidence of taxation, the spending of public money, and the purpose for which it is used are said to be the traditional reasons for the necessity of a Parliament in the first place.

We in this House represent the people and it is our duty to ensure that the money collected from them in taxation is spent wisely. Members should express their opinions whenever State finances are being debated, but we have few opportunities to do so. In the great spate of legislation which is discussed in this Chamber, I feel that we as members do not pay sufficient attention to public spending. The principle of this Bill has been well established; it is a question of increasing the Treasurer's advance from £2,000,000 to £3,000,000. The Treasurer must have some "elbow room" as regards the spending of money to enable him to overcome crises which arise during the year and then later obtain Parliamentary sanction for that expenditure. The remarks of the Auditor-General are interesting. In 1951, under the heading "Treasurer's Advance", the Auditor-General stated that throughout the year the Treasurer had approved of expenditure against the expense account totalling £2,800,000—approximately £1,500,000 beyond the statutory limit of the £1,250,000. The Leader of the Opposition made the important point that there is a tendency for the spending of public money to get well outside the control of Parliament. All honorable members must share some

of the blame for that, in that they do not take sufficient interest and time to study the public accounts. In 1952, the Auditor-General reported that the Treasurer's Advance Account was within the statutory limit. In 1954, the expenditure charged against this account was £1,000,000 over the limit. In 1955, the authorized total was exceeded by £1,700,000 and in 1956 by nearly £750,000, despite the fact that the statutory limit had been increased to £2,000,000. Although Parliament has increased the limit of the Treasurer's advance by leaps and bounds—not continuously year by year—in a ratio somewhat in keeping with the increase in expenditure, the Treasurer's Advance Account has on many occasions exceeded the statutory limit without the sanction of Parliament. The Auditor-General has suggested two alternatives, namely, to comply with the Act or to have it amended. The latter course is being adopted, and we trust that the £3,000,000 provided in this measure will be adequate for this purpose.

Let us consider the sequence of events in the presentation of financial accounts to this House. All honorable members should take an interest in this matter as improvements could well be made. Taking last year as a typical example, the Budget speech and Budget papers were presented to the House on 11th September, as were the Supplementary Estimates, which, as the Leader of the Opposition stated, covered the excess spending over the previous Budget. Those amounts had been spent and were merely formally brought into the House. The Budget was passed on the 26th September, 1956—before this House had the opportunity of studying the related documents, which I contend one must study in order intelligently to follow the Budget. This was not peculiar to the year I have mentioned. In other words, the Budget and Estimates for the coming year must be passed before honorable members have the opportunity of seeing the Treasurer's statement or the Auditor-General's report for the previous year. If the House is to fulfil its great obligations in caring for the public purse, it should insist that the Budget and Estimates are

not presented to it and passed until honorable members have the opportunity of studying the Auditor-General's report for the previous year and ascertaining whether action has been taken upon it.

Supporters of the Government agree with the principle of the Treasurer's Advance Account, which is a time-honoured method, and support the raising of the limit to £3,000,000. However, surely instead of our having to wait until September to find out what has been done with that account for the whole year it would be reasonable for us to expect progress statements to be presented to the House. Only by financial statements at regular intervals would it be possible for the House to regain any semblance of its ancient control of public spending. Such statements would inform members of the trend and enable them to understand and control the public accounts. They would be aware of the true state of the State's finances and be much better informed generally. Such a regular and sensible approach would overcome the great mental indigestion suffered when the whole volume of Estimates and papers are placed before honorable members in one fell swoop about the middle of September each year. I recommend some light reading for a winter's evening to honorable members. I propose to quote briefly from a United Nations Department of Economic Affairs publication issued in November, 1952. It is entitled, "Government Accounting and Budget Execution." The article refers to the situation in Sweden, but I suggest that the methods of public accounting adopted in Sweden—as in France—are well worth studying. I quote—

Supplementary budgets have also been used in recent years in Sweden. These are voted during the fiscal year to which the budget authorization applies and makes it possible for the Government to meet unforeseen needs and book unforeseen expenses in the year to which they are applicable. Supplementary budgets are not regarded as desirable, but rather as necessary accompaniments of a rapidly changing economic situation.

All honorable members appreciate the need for supplementary budgets, but I contend that instead of this House having to wait three months after the close

of the financial year to find out what happens say, in the £3,000,000 advance account, it should be informed regularly and progressively throughout the year. Certainly, if that were done, we would be infinitely better informed than at present. There is nothing new in the practice of submitting regular reports that provide a kind of yardstick with which to gauge progress. However, that opens up a broad subject which could be discussed on some other Bill at a later date. With this suggestion, of course, goes hand in hand a more modern and up-to-date approach to the presentation of the accounts of the State.

Some of the forms of procedure in this House are archaic. Others have been modernized—and honorable members do not object to them, but surely, if we wish to administer the finances of the state in a businesslike manner, we should not continue the existing methods of presenting accounts to Parliament. I do not think many of us really understand the information thus given. It is about time that we began, perhaps in a quiet way, to “turn the corner,” and made some move towards presenting accounts in a form which could be understood, and which could be used only in a straightforward fashion. I have taken advantage of the opportunity of mentioning these matters and I trust that honorable members will give them serious consideration. They may wish to dedicate themselves to one of the greatest tasks before the House, namely, that of maintaining a very careful and painstaking control of public expenditure in the State of Victoria.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and passed through its remaining stages.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

#### EDUCATION DEPARTMENT: TRANSPORT OF SCHOLARS.

**Mr. BOLTE** (Premier and Treasurer).—I move—

That the House, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday next, at half-past Three o'clock.

The motion was agreed to.

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**Mr. BOLTE** (Premier and Treasurer).—I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

**Mr. WHITE** (Ballarat North).—I wish to direct the attention of the Minister of Education to the present unsatisfactory position in connexion with the transport of scholars on school bus services. All honorable members realize that this position has been brought about by regulations 16 and 17, made under the Education Act in January, 1954, during the régime of the Cain Government. Not only State primary school children but also State secondary school children are being penalized. I do not blame the present Government for the position—probably only one member of this House would favour retention of the regulations—but apparently it is not to be remedied. Under the regulations, children attending denominational schools are permitted to use the school buses, although the facilities are inadequate for those attending State schools.

I propose to read a letter received to-day intimating that because of the overloading of school buses, seven children have been directed by the Department through the Secretary, to seek other means of transport from Gordon into schools in the Ballarat district. Furthermore, from other correspondence, and from personal representations made to me, I know that many secondary school children in the district have received similar advice. In many instances, the schools that these children originally attended have been closed. Members representing other country constituencies know only too well that many country schools have been closed.

**Mr. BLOOMFIELD**.—Which particular school have you in mind?

**Mr. WHITE**.—The Wattle Flat State School. The regulations provide that children attending denominational schools, in order to be eligible to use school transport facilities, must attend the nearest denominational school. However, in some instances, children attending such schools travel as far as 20 miles, passing a number of State schools

on route. Recently a departmental order was issued to the effect that, because school buses are overloaded, children on the last section of the route—particularly those attending State schools—must not use the service. I shall now read a letter which emanated from the Education Department, over the signature of Mr. Place, the Secretary. It is in the following terms:—

Dear Sir,

To relieve overcrowding, it has been found necessary to enforce the regulations governing the eligibility of pupils to travel on secondary school bus services.

The conditions under which State primary school children may use these services prescribe, *inter alia*, that they may use the bus "only if there is sufficient accommodation on the bus."

As the Gordon-Wattle Flat-Ballararat bus is overloaded, I regret that the following pupils who attend your school will not be permitted to use the bus from and including April 29th, 1957. Please advise the parents of the children accordingly.

The letter then names the children, some of whom live 7 miles from the Brown Hill State School. Parents of the children affected then wrote to their nearest municipal representative, Councillor J. C. Rumler as follows:—

Dear Sir,

We, the undersigned, request urgent representation by you to the local Government member, Mr. White, *re* the refusal to convey our children to the Brown Hill State School on the high school bus.

As we are all in a difficult and almost impossible position to convey our children to school owing to the mileage and time involved, we consider that consideration be given our claim and also that our children have as much right to travel on the bus as the denominational children have at the present time.

It is difficult to understand why these children have preference over our own children and we consider that we are being victimized over this matter irrespective of what regulations are in force.

Mr. SCULLY.—By whom was the letter written?

Mr. WHITE.—One of the signatories was Councillor C. H. Rumler of Wattle Flat, a former president of the Shire of Bungaree. I ask the Minister of Education whether it is a fact that departmental regulations give preference to children attending denominational

schools over those who are enrolled at State primary schools. I hold in my hand a letter signed by the Minister of Education which states, *inter alia*—

The Department's regulations provide that State primary school pupils may travel on secondary school buses under the following conditions:—

(a) Sufficient accommodation is available on the bus without overcrowding.

(b) The child attends the nearest State school on route.

(c) The child resides not less than three miles from the nearest State school

The regulations also provide that registered school pupils may travel on secondary school buses under the following conditions:—

(a) The pupil resides not less than three miles from the school attended . . . . .

I remind the House that the requirement in respect of primary school pupils is that sufficient accommodation is available on the bus without overcrowding. Does it mean that if the bus is full, children attending State primary schools are not allowed to board it, but that children attending denominational schools, some of whom travel 20 miles and are already on the bus, can use the service. According to my reading of the communication, it is not a question of overcrowding in the case of denominational school pupils, but it is so far as children attending State primary schools are concerned. I suggest that, irrespective of regulations that have been promulgated, some provision should be made to ensure that State primary school children should have the same right as denominational school pupils to travel on school buses and, if any preference is to be given, it should be in favour of State primary school children.

If the information contained in the communication signed by the Minister of Education is correct—and I believe it is, because I am sure he would not write such a letter without having first explored the position fully—I think every member of this House, with one exception, will agree unanimously that the same provision, at least, should be made for our State primary school children as obtains for denominational school pupils, and that if any preference is to be given

it should be in favour of those children who attend State primary schools. I ask the Minister not to allow the position to worsen. Not only State primary school children but also State secondary school pupils are affected. I emphasize that the situation is causing dissension in many districts.

**The SPEAKER (the Hon. W. J. F. McDonald).**—Order! I think the honorable member has made his point.

**Mr. WHITE.**—I regard the matter as of vital importance to our educational system in country districts.

**Mr. BLOOMFIELD** (Minister of Education).—I think this particular question was raised by the honorable member for Ballarat North during the last Budget debate. At that time I advised him of the Government's policy in the matter, and I now repeat what I then said, namely, that it was far from the intention of the Government to extend privileges given under existing regulations so' as to make the present bus service, which is extraordinarily expensive, even more so. At the same time there are regulations which extend privileges to children of primary schools. They have been extended substantially by all Governments—except the present Administration — including, notably, Governments of which the honorable member for Ballarat North was a member. So far no decision has been made to restrict those privileges.

When the subject was last under discussion, I assured the honorable member that the Government intended to consolidate and amend the Education Act and to put various aspects in order. The Parliamentary Draftsman and his staff have since been at work and I now have before me, in draft form, a Bill which will amend this rather complicated legislation particularly in respect of the provisions that are now the subject of discussion. The Bill is now in my Department. It has not yet been before Cabinet and I doubt whether it will be submitted to the House during the current sessional period.

The letter written by me which was read, in part by the honorable member for Ballarat North sets out the situation. The anomalies in this complicated and expensive bus service will be examined, but I am unable to tell the honorable member that I can depart from the existing regulations until the Act is overhauled, when we shall have a chance to see what changes are necessary. In the meantime, I can only follow the law as I find it.

**Mr. WHITE.**—Will you help our children in the meantime?

**Mr. BLOOMFIELD.**—So far as the regulations permit, I shall help all children.

The motion was agreed to.

*The House adjourned at 10.51 p.m. until Tuesday, May 7.*

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

*Tuesday, May 7, 1957.*

The **PRESIDENT (Sir Clifden Eager)** took the chair at 4.58 p.m., and read the prayer.

### PUBLIC WORKS LOAN APPLICATION BILL.

This Bill was received from the Assembly and, on the motion of Sir **ARTHUR WARNER** (Minister of Transport), was read a first time.

### RABBIT (BIOLOGICAL DESTRUCTION) BILL.

This Bill was received from the Assembly and, on the motion of the Hon. **E. P. CAMERON** (Minister of Health), was read a first time.

### PUBLIC ACCOUNT (AMENDMENT) BILL.

This Bill was received from the Assembly and, on the motion of Sir **ARTHUR WARNER** (Minister of Transport), was read a first time.