

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday, July 24, 1974

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

QUESTIONS

WHEATGROWERS

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: An article, headed "Pay pegging angers wheat men", in the *Advertiser* of July 4 states:

The President of the Australian Wheatgrowers Federation (Mr. T. M. Saint) said yesterday the Cabinet's rejection of a submission from wheatgrowers would result in a fixed owner-operator allowance for the duration of the scheme. The wheatgrowers approved the wheat stabilization scheme in principle earlier this year.

But they asked that the owner-operator allowance—one of the criteria by which the annual formula of the wheat-growers' cost of production is estimated—should be allowed to fluctuate with the economy. They claim that, by fixing the allowance, farmers are disadvantaged because part of their income is fixed.

Government officials argued yesterday that this fixing of the allowance would have a stabilizing effect on domestic wheat prices . . . Wheatgrowers' organizations in each State would make representations to State Ministers of Agriculture to seek their support.

Was the approach made by the wheatgrowers to the Minister and, if it was, what was his reaction to their case?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: This is a very vexed question. When the wheat stabilization scheme was agreed to by the Australian Wheatgrowers Federation and when everything was proceeding normally, politics came into the matter. The New South Wales Government refused to ratify the scheme; at least, that was the indication given, and the New South Wales Government publicly said this. It was only after some time, and after a telegram was sent to the relevant Minister, which I hope had some effect on him, that he agreed that the scheme should proceed as planned. An election was then held in Western Australia, a change of Government ensued, and the incoming Government would not agree to the stabilization scheme. Therefore, the Australian Government did not know whether the wheat stabilization scheme as it was first agreed to was to be brought before the Parliament. As all honourable members realize, it was essential that this scheme be got off the ground as quickly as possible, the legislation having been drafted and being due to come before Parliament. It was only after some time and further deliberations between the Australian Government authorities and those of the Western Australian Government that the latter agreed finally to the stabilization scheme.

Right at the death knock the Australian Government was suddenly confronted with the owner-operator allowance: this had not been taken into account previously by the wheat index committee, which will meet again some time in October. After discussions with the Australian Government Minister, it was considered imperative that the legislation proceed as planned without the owner-operator allowance being considered. It was only one part of the criteria of the wheat index committee, which had so many other things to take into account when fixing the home consumption price of wheat. As honourable members know, Senator Wriedt has already told the A.W.F. that this

matter will be taken into account next season. In the circumstances, I do not know of anything that could be fairer than that, as it was imperative that the legislation be introduced into the Australian Parliament during the current short session.

PARLIAMENT HOUSE

The Hon. JESSIE COOPER: I seek leave to make a brief statement before asking a question of the Minister of Agriculture, as the Acting Leader of the Government in this Chamber.

Leave granted.

The Hon. JESSIE COOPER: I was pleased to see on page 22 of this morning's *Advertiser* a photograph of the newly-decorated Premier's room in Parliament House. It has been beautifully refurnished with antique period furniture and will be appreciated by all members who wish to see Parliament House upgraded. However, the rooms occupied by members of the Legislative Council which, as honourable members, know, are mostly shared have not been redecorated, to my personal knowledge, in the past 15 years. As the structural renovations to Parliament House are now almost complete, I ask the Minister whether the Government will consider upgrading all members' rooms, paying special attention to the supply of comfortable chairs to replace the present venerable couches, which I doubt were ever comfortable even in Queen Victoria's day (when I think they originated) and which are certainly not worth the cost of repair?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I will draw this matter to the attention of my colleague who is responsible for these matters and see whether he can comply with the honourable member's wishes. I am satisfied with what I have in my room in Parliament House.

The Hon. R. C. DeGaris: Do you ever use it?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: It is used when it is necessary for me to do so. I suppose honourable members opposite who have been members of past Ministries would have been in the same position then as I am now. I am speaking only as a result of my own impression as a Minister, having regard to the time it is necessary for me to use my room. I daresay that most honourable members who use their rooms more often than do the Ministers consider that their furniture should be upgraded. I will draw the matter to my colleague's attention and let the honourable member have a reply as soon as it is available.

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: I draw the attention of the Acting Minister of Lands to the accommodation presently being provided in this building for the press. Will the Minister draw the attention of the Minister whose responsibility it is to the conditions being imposed on members of the press because of their accommodation here, and see whether some improvement can be made?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I shall be happy to refer the Leader's question to my colleague.

SUPERPHOSPHATE

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. M. B. CAMERON: My question relates to the vexed subject of superphosphate, about which the Minister of Agriculture has made some public statements. It relates in particular to the problems on Kangaroo Island, where superphosphate now costs \$50 a tonne. After Christmas next, when the subsidy is finally revoked, it will cost an extra \$11.80 a tonne, entailing a cost to each farm of about

\$5 000 to \$6 000, with heavily reduced returns on all products of the island. Has the Government initiated any move to put a submission on behalf of the farmers of Kangaroo Island to the Industries Assistance Commission to have the superphosphate subsidy retained; would the Government support such a move if it was undertaken; and, finally, would the Government provide information from soldier settlers to assist in any such submission, if undertaken?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: Many avenues are open to Kangaroo Island growers who wish to make submissions to the Industries Assistance Commission. I understand that some statements already have gone forward from organizations in South Australia. I repeat what I previously said publicly when the removal of the subsidy was first mooted. I thought then that it was a mistake, and I still hold that view. I hope to have discussions with Senator Wriedt, but whether we can alter Cabinet's decision is another matter. However, I believe some scheme should be implemented under which the small farming community, as against the big farmer, could get some help with subsidies. Regarding the Kangaroo Island situation, I daresay there are many organizations through which these people could make submissions or direct representations to the Industries Assistance Commission.

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES: I seek leave to make an explanation prior to asking a question of the Acting Minister of Lands.

Leave granted.

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES: I understand that the Industries Assistance Commission questionnaire to be filled out by individual farmers in support of their applications for a subsidy or bounty on superphosphate is complex and difficult to complete. Will the Minister consider allowing an Agriculture Department officer to assist grower organizations in presenting their case to the commission?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: My first impression is to say, "No, I will not consider this request", because there are already many avenues open to existing farmer organizations, which have competent staff (probably equally as competent as some of the Agriculture Department staff) to do this work. Further, I do not believe it is a role in which officers of the department should become involved. However, if some organizations have difficulty in filling out the form, I am willing to examine the form to see whether we cannot have it altered so that people can more fully understand it.

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES: It is to enable them to put the case properly.

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I am surprised that the honourable member has such little faith in the organizations representing the farming community. Indeed, I am sure there are competent people within these organizations who are capable of filling out these forms.

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. M. B. CAMERON: I understand that the Industries Assistance Commission has indicated that it is willing to provide advice and assistance to anyone who wishes to make a submission to it. In the case of Kangaroo Island I think the Minister did not really answer my question, which related specifically to the fact that almost the whole of the island was affected by the cost of freight. This is a problem peculiar to the island, so that individual submissions will not really achieve much. Rather,

it should be a total submission. Obviously, the Government, or more particularly the Lands Department, has the necessary expertise through dealing with the soldier settlers on the island. Rather than our receiving assistance from an Australian Government department, which will not have the same information that this State's Lands Department has, I ask the Minister whether he is willing to supply someone from that department to advise and assist the community on Kangaroo Island with its submissions.

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: The previous question referred to the Agriculture Department but, as the Lands Department is involved on Kangaroo Island, I will take up the matter with that department and see what can be done.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: Over the past couple of days I have received a number of telegrams and telephone calls regarding certain aspects of the first report of the Royal Commission into Local Government Areas. Specific complaints are being lodged regarding some sections of the report. Will the Minister, if he agrees to the request made yesterday by my colleague, the Hon. R. C. DeGaris, for a cooling-off or waiting period, be willing to listen to specific objections from certain areas of local government in relation to the report as it affects their own problems?

The Hon. D. H. L. BANFIELD: I shall refer the honourable member's question to my colleague.

MEMBERS' TELEPHONE CALLS

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: I seek leave to make a short statement before asking a question of the Minister who is Acting Leader of the Government in this Chamber.

Leave granted.

The Hon. A. M. WHYTE: I am personally concerned (and I believe all other members of this Council are similarly affected) that members of this Council are not privileged to reverse the charges on telephone calls to Parliament House. I understand this privilege is extended to House of Assembly members, most of whom have well appointed electoral offices within their constituency which they can contact. Over the past few years my telephone charges have been increasing from \$500 to \$600, and I think this year I will pay the Postmaster-General's Department about \$1 000, taking into account the increased charges. The anomaly is that, if I were to reverse the charges on a call to one of the departments in which I have some friends, someone would be kind enough to telephone the typist in this place, who would then ring me back; there is no saving if I am prepared to put up with the humbug. In my opinion, this is a right we certainly should have. Will the Minister approach the Premier or Cabinet, whichever is the more appropriate, stating the facts and requesting that members of the Legislative Council be allowed to reverse telephone charges when calling this place?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I shall be happy to do that.

HEALTH CENTRES

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I seek leave to make a short statement before directing a question to the Minister of Health.

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: In February this year the South Australian Hospitals Department granted \$26 000 to a Flinders University research team to study community

health centres. The department proposed that the first centres be established with Commonwealth funds at Ingle Farm and St. Agnes, and the research team was to concentrate in those areas. However, in May, the Commonwealth Minister for Health (Dr. Everingham) announced three community health projects which were planned by the South Australian Government and which would be financed in the financial year ended June 30, 1974. One grant was for the purchase of property at Clovelly Park (the centre to be known as the Southern Clinic) involving \$110 000, another grant was for the purchase of vacant land at Noarlunga (the clinic to be located within an intended regional health centre) involving \$90 000, and the third grant was for the purchase of property at Mount Gambier involving \$50 000. As there seems to be conflict between the locations to be researched by the research team financed by the South Australian Hospitals Department and the locations announced by Dr. Everingham, as there is further doubt whether the Commonwealth Government has acted on the recommendations of the research team, and as it has been difficult to understand whether in fact the research team has had time to report its findings, would the Minister clarify the position and say what is the correct position in regard to these matters?

The Hon. D. H. L. BANFIELD: What the honourable member has said would lead one to believe that the Ingle Farm project had not been proceeded with. However, that is not correct: the Ingle Farm project is going ahead. The other projects that the honourable member has mentioned are also going ahead. True, it was originally thought that some of them would have to be completed before June 30 to qualify for the full Commonwealth money, but negotiations are going on at present with the Commonwealth to extend the scheme for another 12 months. I will get the honourable member information about the report from the project team.

EFFLUENT DISPOSAL

The Hon. M. B. CAMERON: I seek leave to give a brief explanation before asking a question of the Minister representing the Minister of Works.

Leave granted.

The Hon. M. B. CAMERON: Some time ago there was publicity in Mount Gambier about the duplication of a pipeline to take effluent from Mount Gambier for disposal at sea. Some concern is felt in the area about problems associated with raw effluent going into the sea and polluting sections of the sea adjacent to, and in fact some distance from, the outlet pipe. It is considered that any additional pipe will only aggravate the problem and cause a pollution problem on the beaches in that area. Has the establishment of an effluent treatment plant with the money that would be spent on duplicating the pipeline been considered, because the problem that already exists will have to be faced one of these days, and it is better to start now?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I will draw my colleague's attention to the question and ask for a report to be supplied as soon as possible.

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: Will the Minister of Agriculture ask the Minister of Environment and Conservation whether the Environment and Conservation Department has undertaken any study into the effect of the disposal of sewage from Mount Gambier into the sea? If the department has not undertaken such a study, will the Minister see that it is undertaken, and will he present the findings to Parliament?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I shall refer the honourable member's question to my colleague and bring down a report.

METRICATION

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES: I seek leave to make a short statement before directing a question to the Minister representing the Minister of Transport.

Leave granted.

The Hon. R. A. GEDDES: It is possible to buy units to convert motor car speedometers so that both speed and distance are shown in metric equivalents. These units can be obtained cheaply, and it appears to me that certain sections of the Second-hand Motor Vehicles Act may be nullified, as it would be possible for a person to convert his speedometer to kilometres, including the odometer measurements. The odometer readings on the new unit may not coincide with the odometer readings of the original speedometer. He could then trade in that vehicle. As I understand the relevant Act, some of that Act's provisions that were designed to assist the public could be nullified. Will the Minister look at the problem with a view to trying to see that fairness prevails for those who purchase a secondhand car with a converted speedometer.

The Hon. D. H. L. BANFIELD: I shall, refer the honourable member's question to my colleague, and I appreciate the honourable member's concern for people who could be got at.

NURSING HOME COSTS

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: Many people have recently been concerned about the plight of elderly people in nursing homes. Honourable members will know that the increase in nursing home costs has far exceeded the increase in pensions. In fairness, it should be said that the institutions concerned did not increase their costs until the last possible moment. Nevertheless, the increases have left some elderly people in a very embarrassing position. I am aware that the State Government recently offered some help pending an increase in assistance from the Commonwealth Government, and I am also aware of some press reports in this connection. Will the Minister explain, for the record, the details of the assistance provided by the State Government? Can he say when the State Government's assistance commenced and when the Commonwealth Government is expected to take over the obligation?

The Hon. D. H. L. BANFIELD: The State Government has expressed concern about nursing home costs and the plight of pensioners. Earlier in the year representations were made to the Australian Government seeking additional benefits for nursing homes. Negotiations were progressing very well with the Australian Government when there was an interruption as a result of the double dissolution, which occurred at about the time the Australian Government was about to announce increased nursing home benefits. The South Australian Government decided that something would have to be done in the meantime to assist pensioners, and it offered to pay \$2 a day for all pensioners in non-profit nursing homes and also in private nursing homes, which were informed that this benefit would be available only until the Australian Government was able to increase its subsidy. The State Government's assistance began to operate on July 1, and since then we have received word that the Australian Government is to give an additional \$26.95 a week to the

nursing homes. The Australian Government will commence its payments on August 1, so the State Government is paying an extra subsidy of \$2 a day as from July 1, and that assistance will finish on July 31.

ARTHURTON-KADINA ROAD

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I seek leave to make a short statement before asking a question of the Minister of Health, representing the Minister of Transport.

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I refer to that section of the Arthurtown-Kadina Road on Yorke Peninsula between the northern boundary of the Clinton District Council and the township of Agery. Apparently the Kadina District Council, to the north, has received grants and has sealed its section of this road to the Kadina council's southern boundary, but the section below Cunliffe measuring about 9.6 kilometres and stretching south to Agery is unsealed, and local residents in that area feel justified in seeking further funds for the sealing and completion of the road. Will the Minister ask his colleague to take up this matter with the Highways Department to see whether some assistance can be given to the relevant district council so that this section of the road can be sealed?

The Hon. D. H. L. BANFIELD: I shall refer the honourable member's question to my colleague and bring down a report.

TRANSPORT DELAYS

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. R. STORY: It has been reported that 50 000 cases of oranges have been lying on the wharf in Melbourne since about June 1—a considerable time for a perishable article to be held up anywhere. As this fruit belongs to South Australia and as, under the terms of the legislation, it belongs virtually to the Citrus Organization Committee, what action has the Minister taken in this regard? Will he see what can be done about that consignment of fruit if it has not already reached its destination? Further, what action can be taken at Commonwealth level to prevent a recurrence of such a hold-up?

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: The fruit referred to belongs to the people who are exporting it. I believe that one of the problems has been associated with shipping, which as honourable members know is a problem today. There was no way in which I could speed up the procedures. I discussed the matter with the shipping authorities; not only the citrus but also other goods were held up as a result of the lack of shipping. I also referred the matter to the Commonwealth Government.

The Hon. C. R. STORY: It is not a matter a lack of shipping. This is a demarcation dispute.

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I understood that it was lack of shipping. Nevertheless, I shall investigate the situation.

HOSPITAL STRIKE

The Hon. V. G. SPRINGETT: I believe that about 400 staff members of the Royal Adelaide Hospital are on strike, but a press article states that the patients have not been suffering at all. Can the Minister of Health explain how such a large proportion of the staff can be away without the patients suffering? If that is possible, does the Minister believe that there may be a certain amount of over-staffing at the hospital?

The Hon. D. H. L. BANFIELD: There is no question of the hospital being over-staffed. I understand that the dispute at the Royal Adelaide Hospital yesterday concerned

the domestic staff and that it was only a short stop-work meeting. The members involved ensured that there was a skeleton staff, so that the patients did not suffer unduly during the stop-work meeting.

HEALTH AUTHORITY

The Hon. C. M. HILL: Will the Minister of Health say whether he is taking any steps to create a unified health authority in South Australia, as recommended in the Bright committee's report on health services in South Australia?

The Hon. D. H. L. BANFIELD: Although steps are being taken to implement most of the Bright committee's recommendations, the Government is not at this stage taking steps to form a health authority, as recommended in that report.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE: HON. A. F. KNEEBONE

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

That two months leave of absence be granted to the Hon. A. F. Kneebone on account of absence overseas on official business.

Motion carried.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Hon. T. M. CASEY (Minister of Agriculture) brought up the following report of the committee appointed to prepare the draft Address in Reply to His Excellency the Governor's Speech:

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

2. We join with Your Excellency in expressing regret at the lamented recent death of His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester.

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

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

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON (Midland): I move:

That the Address in Reply as read be adopted.

I should like first to turn my attention to a problem with which I have become closely associated in recent months. I have been appointed by the Premier as chairman of a working party that is investigating reconstruction proposals for the irrigated vine-growing areas. I wish to speak more generally about reconstruction problems in relation to agriculture as a whole. Reconstruction is not something new: indeed, it has been with us almost from the earliest settlement of the State. Anyone who travels on country roads can witness the deserted, ruined farm houses that are a continual reminder of the steady process of farm amalgamation. The original surveys of most of our farming areas were based on sections of 32 hectares because that was considered to be the optimum property size.

While the structure of agricultural holdings continually changed as productivity increased, and while farmers became capable of handling larger areas, substantial Government involvement in structural change is new and dates back only to the rural depression of 1970-72. At this stage it became obvious to everyone in the community that the agricultural policies of the previous 20 years were totally inadequate. These policies of subsidies and tax concessions never catered for the needs of the rural community as a whole, benefiting only a privileged few. As an example, I will quote some figures from the recent Green Paper. In table 6.1 it is shown that in the wheat

industry, for the three years between 1969-70 and 1971-72, 22 per cent of wheatgrowers with a net farm income below \$2 000 received 10 per cent of the subsidy paid on wheat by the Australian Government, whereas the 23 per cent of wheatgrowers with net farm incomes above \$10 000 received 44 per cent of the subsidy. Taking roughly equal groups of farmers, the wealthy received more than four times as much support from the taxpayers as did those growers who were in a position of genuine need.

The figures from the wheat industry are easily translated into comparable figures for all other industries that received commodity support. Tax concessions, the other part of the policy, favoured the wealthy to an even greater degree. All honourable members are aware of the situation in which a wealthy farmer could maintain a new plant completely at the taxpayer's expense. It went something like this: the farmer would buy a new header for, say, \$10 000. He would then be able to claim \$2 000 as an investment allowance and \$2 000 for depreciation in the first year. At the end of the first season he would trade in the machine on a new header for, say, \$8 000. If he paid a marginal rate of tax of 50c in the dollar, his tax saving on the \$4 000 tax allowance would be \$2 000, which would compensate him for the loss on the machine. The low-income farmer pays little or no tax (certainly not at the marginal rate of 50c in the dollar) and, as he probably buys secondhand machines, he does not benefit from the perks of the investment allowance.

The Hon. T. M. Casey: He hasn't any choice, has he?

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: That is correct. Now, these policies have been swept away. The rural reconstruction programme was the first attempt to channel assistance to the people in genuine need rather than to the more wealthy sections of the rural community. The immediate task was a rescue operation for those who had over-committed themselves on short-term borrowing. Money was lent to those who had a genuine chance of staying in the industry so that they could convert their short-term finance into long-term loans at reasonable interest rates. This gave them a vital breathing space, and subsequent rises in prices for agricultural produce have fully justified this part of the scheme.

A sequel to the debt reconstruction programme was a retraining scheme. It was considered that not all farmers could be saved by this breathing space and that some would never come through. Subsequent price rises have meant that this was unduly harsh and that many more farmers could have been helped. However, the approach at the time was for the farmers who refused assistance to receive retraining. The programme proved a dismal failure. Again, quoting figures taken from the Green Paper, more than 6 000 farmers were refused debt reconstruction. Only 498 applied for retraining, and 106 persons actually undertook courses. That means that only 1.8 per cent of the people in likely need are being catered for, which is surely a shocking record.

The other part of the scheme was finance for farm build-up. Originally, this had little relevance, as farmers were desperate for survival and very few had sufficient optimism even to consider further property purchase. Now, with the upswing in prices, and with a return of optimism, this is the only part of the scheme that is functioning actively. The economies of scale in agriculture are very limited, at least if one excludes the intensive industries of pigs, poultry, and feed-lot cattle. Studies by

the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and others prove the basic soundness of the medium-size production unit. It can compete quite successfully with the large unit, which soon finds the combination of supervision and distance extremely costly.

In other words, the basic concept of farm build-up within the rural reconstruction scheme has a sound economic foundation. To convert marginally subviable units into medium-size farms will result in profitable enterprises. My only criticism of rural reconstruction authorities is that they seem to have failed to grasp this basic economic background to their task and instead have acted as rather specialized bankers for a particular type of property purchase. There is little point in detailed criticism; it is a new concept. While the Canadian and Dutch Governments have had a great deal of experience, it is new to us. It is much more important to be constructive and to suggest how the scheme might evolve into something more effective. First, I see a need to go out and talk to farmers. Unfortunately, many farmers consider having forms in triplicate and interviews in city offices as a completely alien world. There is a need to provide a counselling service on the farm to discuss with farmers proposals to put their business on a sounder basis. Property purchase I consider to be only one part of these discussions. The role of the counsellor must be much broader. He must help the farmer formulate plans for his future, both personally and for his business. Once the horizons are expanded it becomes obvious that there are many ways of expanding the farmers' enterprise and cutting overhead costs besides property purchase. Reconstruction schemes should be sufficiently flexible to cover co-operative machinery pools and more intensive use of land, or whatever is necessary to achieve economies of scale.

As I see the role of the counsellor, he must involve the farmer. He must motivate the farmer toward improving his livelihood. The second stage is to see that the farmer is sufficiently well equipped with technical skills to handle the expanded enterprise, and only lastly is it necessary to inject capital funds to carry out the proposals. The present emphasis on loan funds puts the cart before the horse. Only when the scene has been set and the farmer motivated and trained is it necessary to provide the loans. Even here, I see a changed role for the reconstruction authorities. They should be more on the side of the farmer. Having gone through these planning processes, they should help him present his case to the bankers, who would be completely separate. Perhaps we are asking too much of the Australian farmers. To quote A. F. Davies in his book *Australian Democracy*.

The characteristic talent of Australians is not for improvisation; it is for bureaucracy.

We wish to break down this bureaucracy, but Davies also notes that, even in rural areas where the traditions of self-help and individualism are strong, the habit of leaning on bureaucracy is too deeply embedded to be resisted. Davies continues:

The characteristic political form of the countryside is not the local committee of management but the deputation. There is a decided preference for waiting your turn with the bureaucracy rather than making your case by voluntary effort.

During the depression years of the 1930's, this led to a proliferation of bureaucratic agencies to help the farmer, whereas a similar situation in the Canadian prairie provinces led to the creation of self-help agencies. I see rural reconstruction more in the role of equipping farmers with the necessary skills, both managerial and technical, to help themselves. Rural reconstruction has been referred

by the Australian Government to the Industries Assistance Commission for evaluation. Let us hope this will give it new impetus and make it more effective and meaningful for the rural community.

The Hon. C. W. CREEDON (Midland): It is my privilege to second the motion moved by my colleague the Hon. B. A. Chatterton. I am pleased to be associated with this programme that I know will keep us hard at work, justifying the claim that the South Australian Parliament has the reputation of being the most active and progressive State Parliament in Australia. The major subject on the lips of everyone at the moment is inflation, and that is why I want to say a little on the subject. It is a world-wide problem and a symptom of the sickness of the system under which we exist. The continual emotional chatter about having a great unemployment pool is akin to wishing that very catastrophe to happen. It seems to be the duty of Opposition politicians to frighten or scare. Their methods and actions in the past are nothing to be proud of, and now their attitude seems to be that they hope the Government does not find an answer. We have a bold, imaginative, and adventurous Australian Government intent on doing things for the little people. There must be new ways to fight inflation with its constant erosion of the worker's pay packet and the endless price increases.

The attitude of Treasury officers and economists is disheartening and only takes us back to square one. Such attitudes are disheartening in our world of new ideas and a novel approach. I believe the Australian Government will solve this problem and that it will avoid the massive unemployment predicted by the pessimists who support, and would actually welcome, unemployment. It is obvious that the greatest barrier to successful Australian Government action on almost any problem is the existence of the States. We are all Australians, and it is not necessary to have imaginary lines dividing us when, without those lines, without the State Governments, we could work together as one nation to do the greatest good for all. We are a nation divided by the acts and words of conservative politicians, who know only too well the effectiveness of the old adage "Divide and conquer". Dividing gives more positions and more power to those who espouse their cause. It gives them greater opportunities to exert their will on the community and to extract the greatest monetary gain from it.

Section 92 of the Australian Constitution provides that there will be no commercial barrier between the States, yet we tolerate all sorts of other barriers that can be more personal in effect, the most important of which at the moment is the inability of the States to agree to hand over some of their powers (which they are incapable of using, anyway) to the Australian Government to help that Government contain the raging inflation problem. This highlights the selfishness of the States and raises the question why we, as Australians, should be divided by imaginary lines. Why do we need separate State Governments and separate State facilities when in most cases they duplicate the Commonwealth facilities? Do we need and can we afford different sets of laws governing each State? Outsiders might be excused if they concluded that we were living in the feudal era. However, I am wandering from the subject.

I was speaking about inflation and the selfishness of the States, and I should not pass over that subject without making mention of the selfishness of the conservative and reactionary political Parties of Australia which governed this country for 23 years and which were responsible for

great bouts of inflation and big pools of unemployment. They could not correct these problems in the short term when confronted with them; in fact, it took a near election defeat in 1971 and an election defeat in 1972 to knock some sense into those Parties. Although it is said that experience is the best teacher, unfortunately it is difficult to knock sense into a brick wall. At one time there was a cry to the Australian Government to impose some control, yet when the Government attempted to obtain additional power by referendum it was these same people who were among the first to cry "shame". Indeed, they made the electorate afraid with their false propaganda.

Further, it is the counterparts of these people in the other State Governments who act just as wantonly, dangling at one moment some prospect of control and then, at the next moment, tying it up with all sorts of strings. Therefore, even if a reasonable settlement is ever made, it will probably be too late. I hope I have made my point clear because, sooner or later, the Australian people will realize that parochial State Governments rob them of their opportunity to progress as a nation.

I now refer to the report of the Royal Commission on Local Government Areas. The report recommends a drastic cut in the number of councils, and this recommendation will be disappointing to members of many existing councils and may cause friction within councils that have already amalgamated. Many councils wish to retain their own identity, even though there has been insufficient rate revenue to maintain their staff and council offices. Many councils were content to purchase their machinery and equipment and to maintain their roads through a system of Government grants: this applied particularly to district councils. Corporations, although they had larger rate revenues, found it difficult to service ratepayers, build the many roads and footpaths, install drainage, and provide parks, gardens, sports facilities and the 101 other things required by citizens out of the revenue paid by citizens.

Corporations still had to have machinery and equipment, and were up to their ears in debt, yet they received only a little Government assistance. These are, I believe, the two examples of local government operation in this State. They exemplify the great waste of taxpayers' funds in providing such machinery and equipment. The pity was that none of the equipment was ever used to its fullest extent. In some cases machinery and other equipment was lying idle for up to two-thirds of the year. It is in these times, when inflation and its effects are being referred to by everyone, that it is appropriate to take action to rationalize some aspects of our everyday life.

The Royal Commission's report represents a forward step and, I believe, a saving to ratepayers of their hard-earned money, which will now be put to use in such a way that people will see that they are receiving value for their rates paid. This is no time for parochial small-town attitudes. The people's interests are at stake: local government is the form of government nearest the people and, whether we like it or not, people like to have all the essential services available to them. They demand good roads, drainage, sporting facilities and many other amenities. Generally, I do not believe people worry too much about matters which are difficult to understand, such as foreign affairs, the balance of payments, industrialization, mineral rights and many more.

The Hon. T. M. Casey: Or whether the Liberal Party changes its name.

The Hon. C. W. CREEDON: That is the least of their worries. People are not concerned with these problems:

they are concerned mainly with things happening right at their door, and they believe that matters of national importance should be left to elected members and other people trained especially to solve these problems in the best interests of the community.

Local government has long passed the horse-and-buggy stage. In by-gone days, it may have been necessary to have small council areas because of the slowness of travel. Some areas may once have been an economic proposition, but that circumstance certainly does not prevail today. Now, nearly everyone has a car and, although not everyone has a telephone, telephones are now a common facility within the reach of most people. These amenities put the town hall and the district council office within easy reach, especially as these offices are usually close to shopping centres.

Many people interested in local government are grateful that this Government has had the courage to face the fact that it was time local government boundaries were reshaped. This should have been done years ago. It will bring about a more efficient and better utilization of labour, machinery and equipment, so the ratepayers can justly expect a more efficient use of their rates.

In the last session we considered a Bill dealing with local government matters which did not become law, and I am pleased to notice that His Excellency said that the Bill would be revived this session. Although some of the matters in the Bill may not seem of great importance to everyone, they are most important to people involved in local government, and I hope that the Bill will have a better fate this session than it did in the previous session.

The Hon. T. M. Casey: I think the Hon. Mr. Hill will support it this time.

The Hon. C. W. CREEDON: That will be a change. I refer now to the voting system applying to local government. Many people say that the current system is democratic, but I believe that it is far from that. I believe it is one of those sorts of system that discourages people from taking an interest in matters in which they should be interested.

The Hon. R. C. DeGaris: What change do you recommend?

The Hon. C. W. CREEDON: I believe in a system of compulsory voting.

The Hon. I. C. Burdett: Is that democratic?

The Hon. C. W. CREEDON: Of course it is, because people will learn something about the system with which they are most concerned, a system that can be beneficial to them if they live with it and if they take an interest in it. Although there was no mention of this matter in the Governor's Speech, I hope that the Government will eventually legislate to introduce compulsory voting in local government elections. This is a system that many councils will appreciate. They would appreciate some opposition, as many councillors do not like being elected solely because they are the only candidate. Compulsory voting will improve this situation. The only other complaint I have about local government is the system of rating. While I favour an unimproved land value rating system because it is the fairest system to the ordinary man, I do not think that what we have is the best; it is not a system that we could call perfect. At the same time, the capital or rental value system is most unfair, because people are rated on the things around their houses. The man who clears the weeds from his footpaths, looks after his concrete footpaths and has a tree in the middle of his lawn is forced to pay higher rates. I hope that in due course the Government will consider a system that is fairer to all ratepayers.

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

SESSIONAL COMMITTEES

The House of Assembly notified its appointment of Sessional Committees.

ADJOURNMENT

At 3.22 p.m. the Council adjourned until Thursday, July 25, at 2.15 p.m.