

been completed within reasonable time to be brought before the House. I think that, under the circumstances, it is better to postpone the second reading of the measure until such time as the amendments are ready. It is my intention to proceed with the Gas and Electricity Bill to-morrow, unless I am prevented from doing so by some unforeseen circumstances, for as long as can be reasonably expected. At the moment I am not aware of any other urgent business to be submitted to the House, but I expect that to-morrow some messages will arrive from another place, which will provide some ground for the arrangement of our business.

The Hon. G. NESBITT: Does the Attorney-General propose that the House shall sit on Friday?

The Hon. H. E. MANNING: No.

The Hon. G. NESBITT: Or on Monday?

The Hon. H. E. MANNING: I am not certain about Monday.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

House adjourned at 5.33 p.m.

## Legislative Council.

*Thursday, 28 March, 1935.*

Printed Question and Answer—Leave of Absence—  
Local Government (Superannuation) Amend-  
ment Bill—Moratorium (Amendment) Bill—  
Gas and Electricity Bill (Ministerial Statement)  
—Special Adjournment—Adjournment (Supply  
of Wheat to Drought-stricken Farmers—Gold  
Dredging on Macquarie River—Assistance to  
Indigent Families—Stock and Station Agents  
Bill)—Dubbo Gas and Electricity Bill—  
—Adjournment.

The PRESIDENT took the chair.

The opening Prayer was read.

## PRINTED QUESTION AND ANSWER.

### PRICE OF WHEAT.

The Hon. P. M. MCGIRR asked the VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL,—(1) Is it a fact that wheat is only 2s 4d. per bushel at country sidings, and that the cost of production is at least 3s. 6d. per bushel? (2) Is the Government aware that 80 per cent. of the farmers are on the verge of bankruptcy

through the low price of wheat? (3) Is it a fact that machinery and plant owned by these farmers are wearing out, and that they cannot possibly be replaced unless immediate steps are taken to increase the price of wheat so that they will be able to maintain their horses and plant? (4) In view of the disastrous results of small yields and the low price of wheat at present, will the Government take immediate steps to fix a price for wheat to the grower of at least 3s. 6d. per bushel? (5) Is it a fact that the wheat-buying companies in New South Wales, the millers and the large bakers, are all associated in the same companies, and all responsible for reducing the price of wheat to the farmers? (6) Will the Government at once take steps to have an inquiry, or a Royal Commission appointed, so as to give the producer an opportunity of getting to the root of this combine which is depressing the farmers?

*Answer*.—I am informed:

(1) The present price of wheat is approximately 2s. 7½d. per bushel, country sidings, and it fluctuates from day to day. The Royal Commission on the wheat industry estimated that approximately 50 per cent. of the wheat-growers can produce wheat at 3s. per bushel, or less, at local sidings, while a further 25 per cent. can do so at costs up to 3s. 10½d. per bushel, and the balance (25 per cent.) produce at a greater cost than 3s. 10½d. per bushel.

(2) Evidence is not available to indicate that 80 per cent. of the farmers are on the verge of bankruptcy through the low price of wheat. (3) This matter is dealt with in the report of the Royal Commission on the wheat industry. (4) The question of assisting wheat-growers has received consideration by the Commonwealth and State Governments, and funds have been made available by the former from which wheat-growers are receiving a bounty at the rate of 3s. per acre on wheat grown for grain, and, in addition, 3d. for each bushel of wheat marketed. Further funds are to be made available by the Commonwealth Government to the States in order that assistance may be given to farmers who have suffered from specially adverse conditions and do not harvest a normal crop. (5) No

information is available to support the statement made. The Royal Commission appointed by the Commonwealth Government has made exhaustive inquiries into the wheat and bread industries. It is now inquiring into the flour industry in New South Wales.

(6) The opportunity sought has existed for more than a year past, and still exists, during the sittings of the Federal Royal Commission on wheat, flour and bread. If the hon. member has any evidence to offer, or knows any person with evidence to offer in support of his allegations, he should communicate at once with the secretary of the Royal Commission on wheat, flour and bread, Commonwealth Bank Buildings, Sydney.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

The PRESIDENT announced the receipt of a message from his Excellency the Governor intimating that leave of absence had been granted to the Hon. G. Nesbitt for a period of twelve months from 10th April, 1935.

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT (SUPERANNUATION) AMENDMENT BILL.

Bill read a third time and returned to the Legislative Assembly with an amendment.

#### MORATORIUM (AMENDMENT) BILL.

Bill read a third time and returned to the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

#### GAS AND ELECTRICITY BILL.

##### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

The Hon. H. E. MANNING (Attorney-General) [4.36]: Certain amendments to the Gas and Electricity Bill, of an important character, are in course of preparation, which made it necessary for me to inform the House yesterday that it was undesirable to proceed with the bill until they had been circulated among hon. members. I was led to expect that they would be ready this afternoon, but it was not until the House adjourned yesterday that I was informed that other amendments were also in course of preparation, and would not be ready in time to allow the debate on this measure to be proceeded with this afternoon. In the circumstances I regret that I

could not inform hon. members yesterday that it would be impossible to take the bill to-day, and I ask their concurrence to have the debate on the second reading of the measure stand over until next sitting day. I may mention that I intend to move later that the hour of meeting next Tuesday shall be 5.30 p.m., instead of 4.30 p.m.

#### SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT.

Motion (by the Hon. H. E. Manning) proposed:

That the House at its rising this day do adjourn until Tuesday next at 5.30 p.m. sharp.

The Hon. J. M. CONCANNON [4.38]: I have no protest to make about the proposal to meet at 5.30 p.m. on Tuesday next, but I should like an assurance from the Attorney-General that we shall then be able to proceed uninterruptedly with the Gas and Electricity Bill, and conclude its consideration. It is an important and comprehensive measure, and my colleagues and I have given a good deal of time to studying its intricacies, consequently we hope that its discussion will proceed without interruption.

The Hon. J. R. GARDINER [4.39]: I should like to ask the Attorney-General whether, before they meet on Tuesday next, hon. members will have an opportunity of inspecting the amendments to the bill?

The Hon. H. E. MANNING (Attorney-General) [4.39], in reply: In reply to the Hon. Mr. Gardiner, I have reason to believe that the amendments to the Gas and Electricity Bill will be available by Monday. In view of the request made by the hon. member I shall see that copies are posted to hon. members at the House, so that they may peruse them.

In reply to the Hon. Mr. Concannon, so far as I can determine the bill will be proceeded with uninterruptedly next week. Of course, I am speaking about the future, and I should like to make the reservation that that statement is subject to the absence of any unexpected happening.

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

## ADJOURNMENT.

SUPPLY OF WHEAT TO NECESSITOUS FARMERS—GOLD DREDGING ON MACQUARIE RIVER—ASSISTANCE TO INDIGENT FAMILIES—STOCK AND STATION AGENTS BILL.

Motion (by the Hon. H. E. Manning) proposed:

That this House do now adjourn.

The Hon. H. C. MOULDER [440]: As some of the country areas in this State are becoming drought-stricken, will the Attorney-General approach the Minister for Agriculture with a view to enabling stock-owners, who may require wheat for the purpose of hand-feeding their stock, to obtain it from silos in the areas affected, at the lowest possible value?

The Hon. G. D. BASSETT [441]: I wish to support the request of the Hon. Mr. Moulder. Owing to the ravages of the grasshoppers quite a number of central districts have become drought-stricken, and hand-feeding will have to be resorted to within the next fortnight. It will be very convenient if the stock-owners can obtain their supplies of wheat at the silos.

I should like the support of this House in my vigorous protest against persons being allowed to enter upon private lands along the river banks of New South Wales, to obtain permission to bore for alluvial gold, and then to sell their rights to a company which immediately starts dredging operations on the river bank. That is being done at present along the banks of the Macquarie River, and some of the best producing land in Australia is being ruined to enable these companies to obtain a paltry amount of gold. Although the market value of this land may not be considerable, we have to look hundreds of years ahead, and if we permit the land to be destroyed by dredging operations, we shall lose its productive value for all time.

The Hon. J. F. COATES [443]: If the Government accedes to the request of hon. members to assist farmers in drought-stricken areas to obtain wheat, I ask it also to take cognisance of the fact that notwithstanding the improvement in the affairs of the State, there

are still in the city and the principal country towns many families which, during the coming winter months, might well receive assistance from the Government in the form of blankets and cheap bread.

Motion (by leave) withdrawn.

## DUBBO GAS AND ELECTRICITY FRANCHISE BILL.

The PRESIDENT reported that he had received a message from the Legislative Assembly agreeing to the Legislative Council's amendments.

## ADJOURNMENT.

Motion (by the Hon. H. E. Manning) proposed:

That this House do now adjourn.

The Hon. H. C. MOULDER [444]: I wish to mention another matter, as I may not be here next week. I am the president of the Stock Agents' Association of this State, the members of which were led to believe that legislation in the form of a Stock and Station Agents Bill would be introduced before the House adjourned. I should like the Attorney-General to bring under the notice of the Premier the fact that a promise to that effect was given, but has not been carried out. My members are very disappointed, and I hope that if the bill cannot be introduced during this session the Government will, if returned to office, immediately and publicly announce that this measure will be one of the first to be introduced.

The Hon. H. E. MANNING (Attorney-General) [446], in reply: In reply to the Hon. Mr. Moulder and the Hon. Mr. Bassett, who have referred to the need to facilitate the supply of wheat to necessitous farmers, I shall certainly bring the matter under the notice of the Minister for Agriculture, and intimate to him the views of hon. members on the subject. The Hon. Mr. Bassett also referred to the question of prospecting for gold along the banks of the Macquarie river. That matter also will be brought under the notice of the Minister. The suggestion of the Hon. Mr. Coates to give relief to indigent

families in the city and in the country towns will receive consideration. With regard to the second matter raised by the Hon. Mr. Moulder, I assure him that the Stock and Station Agents Bill has been passed over only through effluxion of time, and not for any other reason. I have no doubt that it will take its place in the next list of bills prepared by the Government.

The Hon. A. K. TRETHOWAN: The trouble with respect to wheat is that there are no facilities at country silos for weighing it out. Under the present arrangement the wheat is shot into trucks, sent to Sydney, and weighed there!

The Hon. H. E. MANNING: I shall certainly bring the difficulty referred to by the hon. member under the notice of the Minister. It may be possible, for instance, to use silos which are not filled to their full capacity, but whether that would meet the difficulty or not I cannot say.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

House adjourned at 4.49 p.m. until  
Tuesday next at 5.30 p.m.

## Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 28 March, 1935.

Printed Question and Answer—Questions without Notice—Assent to Bills—Centenary Celebration (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill—Bills Annulment Bill—Infantile Paralysis: Sister Kenny's Treatment (Ministerial Statement)—Death of Mr. W. J. Ratcliffe—Sessional Order: Additional Sitting Days—Forestry (Amendment) Bill—State Cannery (Sale) Bill—Dubbo Gas and Electricity Franchise Bill—Superannuation (Amendment) Bill (second reading)—Local Government (Superannuation) Amendment Bill—Wool, Hide, and Skin Dealers Bill—Friendly Societies (Amendment) Bill (second reading)—Allocation of Time for Discussion—Adjournment (Assault Case, Paddington—New South Wales Trotting Club Limited—Conveyance of School Children).

Mr. SPEAKER took the chair.

The opening Prayer was read.

### PRINTED QUESTION AND ANSWER.

#### RAILWAYS DEPARTMENT: TIMBER PURCHASES.

Mr. MATTHEWS asked the DEPUTY PREMIER AND MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT,—

(1) Will he inform the House whether

it is a fact that (a) Mr. Hudson, Mr. Parsonage (Government Railways Stores Department), Mr. Robinson, Mr. White, Mr. Linley, and Mr. Whyman, of the Car and Wagon Department, conducted an inquiry into certain purchases of large quantities of timber; (b) that their inquiry disclosed that because the Stores Branch at Eveleigh did not follow the usual practice of carrying sufficient supplies of timber to meet the requirements of the various departments, large quantities of dried and kiln-dried timber were hurriedly purchased at extortionate prices in November last by certain officers, and that those officers were given special first-class concessions? (2) Is it also a fact that the inquiry referred to in (1) also disclosed that (a) after only a few weeks in use carriages had to be taken out of service through the use of the hurriedly-purchased timber; (b) that large stacks of that timber had not only warped but were found to be seriously affected by borers; (c) that large quantities of that timber had been sold at considerable loss to the Railway Department to A. Clements, of 18 Rose-street, Darlington, on sale order No. 3710? (3) Will he inquire and inform the House whether an order (No. T.N. 36) for a further large quantity of timber was placed with Messrs. D. Hardie and Sons Ltd.? (4) Is it a fact that the timber so ordered from Messrs. Hardie and Sons Ltd. had already been condemned by Car and Wagon officials and works managers at Randwick, Chullora, Eveleigh and Clyde because it was affected by borers? (5) Will he inform the House if the officers who conducted the inquiry referred to in question (1) were (a) enjoined to observe secrecy; (b) paid bonuses for their work? (6) Was the purchase of the timber referred to in question (4) found to be the responsibility of Mr. McClelland by his failure to maintain the supply of sufficient first-class stocks? (7) If the answers to the foregoing questions are in the affirmative, will he take suitable action to see that officers are appointed who will protect railway revenues?