

ten years was so that the mines operating in the various districts during that ten year period would repay some of the capital cost as well as ordinary working expenses during that period.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time and reported from Committee without amendment; report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE—ROYALTY ON HEWN TIMBER.

The Hon. H. M. HAWKINS (Minister for Social Services) [4.55]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

I should like to indicate to hon. members that to-morrow it is proposed to proceed with the second reading of the Soil Conservation Bill. I suggest that the Air Navigation Bill should be left until my colleague—the Attorney-General—is back in the House, inasmuch as he was present when the discussion took place in reference to the introduction of that legislation, and he is far more fully equipped than I am to deal with it, and to answer any questions on the constitutional aspect that may be asked.

The Hon. J. CULBERT [4.56]: I rise to make the strongest possible protest to the Minister for Mines and Forests against the action of the Forestry Commissioner, in increasing the royalty on hewn timber. The position is that in October last, through the representations of the Australian Timber Workers' Union, the royalty on crossing timbers 10 feet x 6 feet was increased by 1s. 6d. per 100 super. feet. Quite recently the Forestry Commissioner has increased the royalty on those timbers to the extent of 1s. 4½d. per 100 super. feet, leaving only 1½d. for the cutters and thereby depriving them of the benefit we had secured for them. I think the increase in the royalty is quite unwarranted and unjustified, and I trust the Minister in charge of the House will bring the protest under the notice of his colleague, the Minister for Mines and Forests, to see if the old royalty cannot be restored. I think that

these men have been very harshly treated. There are approximately 1,200 men engaged in supplying hewn timbers to the Commissioner for Railways.

The Hon. H. M. HAWKINS (Minister for Social Services) [4.57]: In reply to the Hon. Mr. Culbert I shall convey the matters raised by him to my colleague, the Minister for Mines and Forests, and ask that special attention be given to the matter.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

House adjourned at 4.58 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 10 August, 1938.

Mines Rescue (Validation) Bill — Soil Conservation Bill (second reading) — Adjournment (Business of the House — Dust in Wheat Silos).

The ACTING-PRESIDENT took the chair.

The opening Prayer was read.

MINES RESCUE (VALIDATION) BILL.

Bill read a third time.

SOIL CONSERVATION BILL.

SECOND READING.

The Hon. H. M. HAWKINS (Minister for Social Services) [4.54]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

There is no more important question the world over than the need to protect that from which primarily our wealth comes—the land. The dangers of soil erosion have long been recognised by competent authorities, but in view of the pressing problems calling for immediate action, those which call for the long-range view are apt to be delayed in treatment. In our own State, the end of virgin land resources is definitely in sight. I recently read a statement to the effect that there is no great tract of

new country in a safe rainfall zone that could be used to rehabilitate any ruined settlers from abandoned farms, especially wheat farms. Some time ago Cabinet appointed a sub-committee which carefully considered this matter, and following its deliberations a departmental erosion committee was formed. As a result of the report of that committee it was resolved to send abroad Mr. E. S. Clayton, the senior experimentalist in the Department of Agriculture. I may say that his report is not only very interesting but also very fascinating reading for those who are deeply concerned with this important subject. Following his comprehensive report and the further information gathered, it was decided to prepare the necessary legislation, which is now submitted. In this matter, we are, of course, concerned not with geologic erosion, which is a natural process, but with accelerated erosion, which is caused by man's action. We are all aware of the unwisdom of clearing timber and grass from steep slopes, which has brought down not only the rich humus but also the whole of the surface soil. This is one of the problems concerning which the good of the whole may entail in some degree a measure of restriction on the few, but every effort has been made to meet the situation justly. There is a somewhat full explanatory note to the bill and that will give hon. members an outline of its provisions. At this stage I shall simply indicate some of these provisions. The bill provides for a director of soil conservation services. It will be seen and distinctly understood that he will act under the instruction and jurisdiction of the Minister, and that further, there is in this bill no departure from the practice of ministerial responsibility.

The Hon. J. M. CONCANNON: Which Minister will be in control—the Minister for Mines and Forests, the Minister for Agriculture, or the Minister for Lands?

The Hon. H. M. HAWKINS: From memory, the bill does not state which Minister, but simply refers to the responsible Minister. My information has been prepared by the Department of Mines,

which has had more experience in geological matters than any other department. Speaking from memory, I think the bill refers to the responsible Minister in whom it shall be vested.

The Hon. J. F. COATES: The bill provides for the existing department, without naming it!

The Hon. H. M. HAWKINS: That is so. The bill also provides for the conducting of experimental and research work in relation to soil conservation and for the utilisation of the services of various departmental officers who are in touch with this problem. The interjection by the Hon. Mr. Concannon has reminded me that this question affects the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Lands, and the Department of Mines, and it is necessary to have the fullest co-operation between those three departments in order to gain the desired results. The bill also provides for the preparation of schemes for soil conservation and for proclamations of areas of erosion hazard. It provides for the payment under certain conditions by owners of contributions towards the cost of work carried out, subject to appeal to the Land and Valuation Court. The bill also provides for the constitution of an advisory committee, the vesting in statutory corporation of certain work, and the appointment of a catchment areas protection board. I have no doubt that the House will be in entire agreement with the main purposes of the bill. In Committee the opportunity will be presented for a discussion on detailed matters. It is not intended to proceed with the Committee stage to-day, so there will be full opportunity for members to consider the bill in detail. I am satisfied that hon. members are keenly aware of the necessity for action on the part of the Government to combat soil erosion, and I think that they will agree that at this stage I should give an outline of the bill, with the assurance that in my references to the bill I have omitted nothing that is essential. I accordingly commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. J. M. CONCANNON [4.40]: I agree entirely with the Minister in charge of the bill that the conservation of soil is of paramount importance. I think that is recognised almost the whole world over. A few weeks ago I noticed in the press that scientists at an international conference in one of the European countries pointed out that soil conservation is one of the most outstanding problems confronting this generation. I agree with the Minister that the progress of our cities depends on the progress of our rural production. We would never have a city such as Sydney or any other capital city in the Commonwealth to-day if we did not possess a wonderfully recuperative soil and we were not blessed by Providence to such an extent. Therefore, it is our duty and responsibility to do everything possible to assist the man who makes Australia what it is to-day—the man on the land. It is only necessary to look round the country to observe the devastation caused by soil erosion. I recollect that when the House was considering the renewal of leases under the Western Lands Act, the late Sir Arthur Trethowan gave some idea of the tremendous wastage caused by soil erosion. Not only did he point out the devastating and irreparable damage in the western areas of the State, but he also referred to the damage in other arable parts of the State.

A notable example of the damage created by man's carelessness and lack of consideration in the past is to be observed on the north coast of New South Wales. The Minister said the clearing of timber from rich slopes provided no grip for the surface soil and led to an immediate disturbance of it. It is necessary only to go a few miles out of Sydney to observe between Campbelltown and Camden, on the main Southern Highway, the effects of erosion on the surface soil slopes near those towns. I appreciate the importance of the bill, and my only regret is that we, in Australia, did not introduce this legislation many years ago. The legislation is so belated that the damage done might have been averted if legislation such as

this had existed in the past. When the sub-committee was appointed and had carried out its deliberations, the Government, as the result of its recommendations, decided to send abroad Mr. Clayton, senior experimentalist of the Department of Agriculture. At this stage, I desire to pay a tribute to the Government's choice of Mr. Clayton for that important investigation. He graduated through the Department of Agriculture until he reached the position of experimentalist, and in my opinion, there was no man in the State who was better equipped than Mr. Clayton to carry out the work of investigation. His report, as the Minister has pointed out, is an epic. It is most valuable to any citizen who cares to study the problem.

I suggest that it is not necessary to live in the country to appreciate the effects of soil erosion. Mr. Clayton, as pointed out by the Minister, went abroad and examined the problem of soil erosion in other countries. On the necessity for the bill, hon. members will be in entire agreement. I asked the Minister whether the Department of Mines and Forests would control the service and in which department the director would be established. It should be borne in mind that soil erosion is not a geologic problem, but affects the Departments of Lands and Agriculture, and I am pleased the director will have power to call on the services of officers of any other department. Still hon. members are rather in a quandary as to the department in which the directorship shall reside.

Hon. members appreciate the wonderful work carried out by the Department of Agriculture in assisting the farmers. It is a department which does not earn any revenue, but it renders a service second to none to the man on the land. When the work carried out by the scientific officers of that department—bacteriologists, plant breeders, biologists, and those other officers in associated departments—is considered it is realised that a tremendous amount of work is performed by these scientific officers.

That assistance is provided gratuitously by the State for the benefit of the man on the land.

I am pleased that the bill has been introduced. I have gone into the problem thoroughly, because I have taken a keen interest in soil erosion. It might be interesting to know that when I was a young man I took a course in agriculture at the Technical College for twelve months under Professor Henry Lord and learnt some of the rudiments of agriculture. I did a great deal of work in my garden at Drummoyne, where I carried out certain small experiments based on the knowledge I had gained. I am conversant with the requirements of the State, and I sincerely hope the bill will give the director power to enter upon lands and carry out certain work which he considers necessary to mitigate the tremendous difficulty which confronts the man on the land. I commend the bill to hon. members. I do not intend to make a long speech, but I consider that something must be done to prevent a continuance of the devastation of our arable lands.

We should do something more than allow the director to advise the man on the land; what action should be taken to deal with soil erosion. It should be compulsory for the farmer to farm his lands scientifically. We have had a wonderful record of primary production in the past. We have a wonderful future, and I sincerely trust that, with assistance and confidence, the bill will do all that is expected of it. I make the suggestion that the Minister should appoint Mr. E. E. S. Clayton to the position of Director of Soil Conservation, because he is a brilliant young Australian, with outstanding qualifications.

The Hon. J. F. COATES [4:48]: I am pleased the Government has introduced this legislation, because soil erosion is annually costing Australia millions of pounds. Only a few years ago, when travelling down the Queensland coast by steamer, we ran into a dust storm, the dust having come from the centre of Australia. For five hours

the steamer could not be navigated because of the dust that was leaving Australia to settle in the sea. I have seen the devastation of the country around Kansas, in the middle of the United States of America, where the farmers are being driven almost into poverty because of the loss of the soil, and where every effort is being made by the employment of appropriate methods to save it for the farmer. One can detect in different parts of the world the results of neglect in combating soil erosion. Even in the far north of China, in the Loes district, a great area has been ruined as the result of the soil having been blown from over the mountains to the southern part of that country. As one district became poor, another one benefited. Incidentally, that area is the one part of China where the population has not increased, because erosion has rendered the soil incapable of producing to its full capacity. Evidence of erosion will be found in the Alps of Bavaria or in Switzerland. There, apparently, water has been responsible for the devastation. Standing on the Alps of Bavaria and Switzerland, one can observe mountains which, though beautiful to the eye, do not bear one blade of grass, because the surface soil has been washed away. These are examples of what we should endeavour to avoid, and I commend the Government for introducing this bill to save us from expensive mistakes which have been committed in other parts of the world.

The Hon. J. RYAN [4:52]: Since all hon. members are apparently agreed upon the principle of this measure, there is no necessity for making lengthy speeches. Whatever discussion is required or desired can be contributed in Committee. All the same, I desire to make a few observations about the reports compiled by those gentlemen whose names have been mentioned during the debate. I shall be as brief as possible; but I have taken a great interest in the matter for several years and I have a list of cuttings which, if I attempted to read them, would occupy a number of Hansard.

I desire to refresh hon. members' memories in regard to this legislation. The bill was introduced in the Legislative Assembly last December. The matter has been discussed for several years, and public interest in it has increased with the growth of discussion. It is possible that the bill would have been put on the statute book earlier but for two important happenings. First, some months were occupied by the 150th anniversary celebrations; and, secondly, the general election intervened. These matters took up considerable time, and the Government was not able to submit the bill to Parliament, as I believe Ministers desired, at an earlier stage than the present. The bill is now before hon. members, and I wish to quote a few sentences from reports submitted by those distinguished gentlemen whose names have already been mentioned in this debate. Dr. Guthrie, who has made a comprehensive study of the position in Australia, as well as in South America and South Africa, wrote, *inter alia*, that, generally speaking, the losses from erosion were greater in New South Wales than in any other State of Australia. I agree entirely with the tribute paid to Mr. D. E. S. Clayton by the Hon. Mr. Concannon. The service which he has rendered to the State, and the education which he has given to the public are beyond value. Among other things, Mr. Clayton stated:

In many of the wheat districts gullying and surface washing are so severe that whole paddocks have been destroyed for cultivation and have been retired from cropping.

Mr. Clayton also stated:

We have no great untouched area of Crown lands suitable for wheat-growing on which to rehabilitate farmers from abandoned areas. Our land resources in good rainfall districts are strictly limited. We have not the millions of acres that America had to play with—and lose—before we take action. America has lost 100,000,000 acres. That testimony from an expert who has visited and studied the effects of erosion in the United States of America is most interesting.

According to Mr. A. H. E. McDonald, Director of Agriculture in New South

Wales, in most cases serious erosion is occurring on land which has been intensively cropped for twenty-five or thirty years. The humus has been exhausted, and the country is not now in a position to absorb heavy rain. The director admits that the problem, particularly in the inland areas, is difficult, and will require all the skill and knowledge of farmers, assisted by the intense investigation of agricultural scientists, to devise a suitable farming system that will economically achieve this object.

I need not remind hon. members that rural production is the basis of all our wealth. Mr. Clayton said that our destiny is wrapped up with the surface six inches of soil. I do not think that the essence of the problem could be put more concisely or effectively than it has been in those few words. We are not alone in that respect, as the experience of most countries attests. Hon. members have before them a copious explanatory note on the bill, and I was particularly impressed with the last paragraph. It states:

In broad outline, the bill is designed to offer a service to the community in general and to the agricultural and grazing interests in particular. The object in view is the maintenance of productivity to ensure the permanence of our development, the rational conservation of our resources, and the protection of the State's major asset—the land—against the far-reaching effects of erosion by wind and water.

That, I regard as a very admirable summary, put most concisely and with a literary force attractive to a man with a literary mind. In the Legislative Assembly this bill was treated mainly, although not perhaps entirely, as a non-party measure, and I feel certain that hon. members here will consider it in the same spirit and according to the best traditions of this Chamber.

The Hon. H. M. WRAGGE [4.58]: As I did not have the pleasure of hearing the Hon. Mr. Concannon's earlier remarks, I cannot say that I agree with all his sentiments. However, with those sentiments which I heard him express I cordially agree. I was gratified to hear his commendation of this bill, which represents the initial efforts to control

the ravages of soil erosion. It is unnecessary for me to deal with the problem in a general way, because it is apparently well known to all hon. members; but to several aspects of the bill I desire to refer, particularly as I shall not be present when the measure is being considered in Committee. I hope to bring under the notice of the House an amendment which could with advantage be adopted. Perhaps this aspect had been overlooked by hon. members. To saddle a property with the description of being a soil-erosion area would probably have the effect of depreciating its value. It is very necessary, therefore, that any proclamations which may be issued should not be for a too lengthy period. Furthermore, the owner of an eroded property should have a summary remedy in the event of its being proclaimed an eroded area, and if any expense incurred by conservation methods is attached to the holding, he should have the right to show that the amount is excessive. Personally, I do not think that the bill sufficiently safeguards the man on the land in this respect. A property on the side of a hill may be badly eroded and a lot of expense may be required to bring it up to any decent standard. If the man owning that one property is charged with the whole of the cost of doing the work it may involve him in an extremely heavy outlay, yet it may be that the reason his property is eroded is that some settlers higher up on the hill have denuded the hillside of trees, making it easy for storm-waters to wash down and cause the erosion. Another point is that when you cure the subject land, to which I have referred as being so badly eroded, you benefit not only the owner of that subject land but those of other properties which may be miles away. You may benefit Crown lands that are within a mile or two of that area, or you may benefit lands which are held by shires. But there is no provision in the bill to say that the court shall take into consideration, not only the subject land in question, but also other lands which will be beneficially improved as the result of

the charges imposed upon the owner of that particular block. Subclause (5) of clause 18 says:

Where the Minister is of opinion that, having regard to all the circumstances, it is just and equitable that the owner of any land upon which any work has been executed under this section . . .

and so on. But it does not say what are the circumstances which the Minister is to take into consideration. Possibly that may not be a matter of major moment, but following that we read later, that:

The Land and Valuation Court shall have jurisdiction to hear and determine the appeal . . .

First of all, the Minister decides the amount which the owner of the land shall contribute, and if the landowner wishes to appeal he goes before the Land and Valuation Court. But there is nothing in this bill to say what are the circumstances which the Minister, or the Land and Valuation Court, shall take into consideration. That is a matter of some importance; a circumstance which the court is to take into consideration when hearing the appeal should be stated in the bill. The bill should state that the court is to consider what lands are improved by this particular work; not only the work on the man's holding, but having relation to all the circumstances. It is only right that the court should consider which lands, no matter whether they belong to the shire or whether they are roads, or whatever they are, will benefit, because they all should bear their modicum of the expense. To arrive at an exactly equitable ratio of the expense would be extremely difficult. The judge of the Land and Valuation Court is a very able man, and he would naturally say, "What are the circumstances I have to take into consideration?" He would say, "Subsection (5) says 'the Minister . . . having regard to all the circumstances.' But I do not know what the circumstances are, and it is impossible for me to hear the appeal properly without being specially directed in regard to that."

I am sorry that I shall not be here during the Committee stage, because that

point ought to be taken into consideration. Again, there is no provision that the Land and Valuation Court should hear the appeal at the place where the land is situated, and that ought to be provided. To require the land-owner to go perhaps 500 or 600 miles, or 300 or 400 miles, as the case may be, in order to prosecute his case in Sydney, would be wrong. He would have to leave his farm, and he would have to take his witnesses for that long distance—and he would need to have plenty of witnesses. It is putting too great a hold over him by the Crown, and I think that that should be remedied. It would be much better if the hearing were to go before the local land board, but if it is the desire that it shall go before the Land and Valuation Court, there should be a specific direction; as was put in the Water Conservation Act; at my instance—but which is not as good there as it might be—giving a direction to the judge that he should go to the particular place to hear the appeal. I am sure that every country man will commend my suggestion in this regard. I defy any man to hear an appeal properly, without looking at the land itself; it would be impossible. Alternatively, to prepare all the evidence on affidavits or to produce *viva voce* evidence to show the state of the country would be an enormously expensive, complicated and difficult task; and I take it that we do not want to make these tasks difficult and complicated for the men affected; it is bad enough that they have to be charged with something that is often the result of no fault of theirs.

Incidentally, the cure of erosion is not simply a single job; it is a job for many men. There is the agrilogist; there is the engineer, and there is the forestry man; and then there is your experienced farmer. All these men have to combine to make a definite scheme, not only for one block, but for the whole country-side. There, again, it is very essential that the Act be not enforced in any piecemeal way, because you only make an improvement here and there, and the whole job of soil conservation is not very much

advanced: You should have typographical maps, and these should be made as the result of air survey.

As regards the charge on the land, I should have preferred that advice should be given by local committees in the way of training the man on the land, and showing him what can be done by tree-planting, and by contour drainage. That, I think, would have a wonderful effect. As an analogy, I should like to say that wonderful work has been done by the Department of Agriculture; that fact was mentioned by the Hon. Mr. Concannon. In my own district we have had a representative of the Department of Agriculture, Mr. O'Reilly, who has been of great assistance for a number of years. He just came into our midst and did not make any pretence of special knowledge, but went quietly around the farms getting to know the farmers. Then, probably with their consent, he put in an experiment plot here and there, and labelled it as representing this or that type of seed. As the result of the efforts of that one man, the wheat yield in the Gunnedah district has been enhanced enormously. It would be impossible to state in monetary value what the efforts of Mr. O'Reilly have been worth to the Gunnedah district and the State generally. That class of work should be carried out under this legislation, by the association of Mr. O'Reilly with the district surveyor and the district engineer of the Public Works Department. A general survey should first be made and then we should apply the methods which have been adopted by the Department of Agriculture and to which I have previously referred. Because of our sins of omission in the past we are never likely to solve this problem completely. I have just read an extremely interesting book by Willard Price, in which he deals with the Japanese and their methods of afforestation. He states that anyone who cuts down a tree without authority is immediately sent to gaol. In this State anyone can denude a freehold area of timber, no matter what damage is thereby caused to neighbouring land. That shows how far we

are behind the Japanese in respect of afforestation and the prevention of soil erosion.

The bill also provides that any expense incurred is a charge on the land. I submit that it should not be a charge on the land until a claim is registered under the writs of causes and orders in the Registrar-General's Department. A person may buy a property and unless he makes inquiries from the Soil Conservation Service he will be unaware that there is charge on the land and will therefore be liable.

The Hon. J. M. CONCANNON: The two provisos at the end of clause 18 deal with that matter!

The Hon. H. M. WRAGGE: The buyer may make no inquiry.

The Hon. J. F. COATES: Read the second proviso!

The Hon. H. M. WRAGGE: Under that proviso the buyer has to obtain a certificate. Why should not the Soil Erosion Service file its claim as other bodies do and register under writs of causes and orders for encumbrances? The Conveyancing Act has been improved considerably in that connection, and we do not want to get away from it, because if we do the procedure will be more costly and there will be more chance of people bearing expenses that morally should not be borne by them. I therefore suggest that a slight improvement could be made to the bill in that direction. There is an analogous provision further on in the bill, and any amendment to clause 12 would have to apply to it.

The Hon. J. F. COATES: Is there any provision in the bill dealing with a land slide, which goes from one property to another and makes bad land good and good land bad!

The Hon. H. M. WRAGGE: No, and that matter should also be considered. The bill does not deal with the poor farmer who has to cut timber from the side of a hill in order to obtain a living and then finds that his fertile land is washed into the valley to the benefit of the owner there. If under this legislation he has to bear the expense of combating soil erosion on the hill the farmer

in the valley who benefits will not be compelled to bear any portion of the cost.

The Hon. A. A. ALAM: We could not cope with that!

The Hon. H. M. WRAGGE: We have to cope with it. Portion of the charge could be borne by the man who benefits from the soil erosion.

The Hon. A. A. ALAM: Who could estimate the benefit?

The Hon. H. M. WRAGGE: The value of the benefit should be estimated, so that the burden of the cost could be more evenly and properly met than would be the case under this legislation. I am afraid of what will happen under this bill unless the area of the burden is broadened.

The Hon. A. A. ALAM: The onus could be put on the Land and Valuation Court!

The Hon. H. M. WRAGGE: We should insert in the bill an amendment setting out the conditions which the judge must observe in assessing the amount of the liability.

The Hon. A. A. ALAM: He would have to be a Solomon!

The Hon. H. M. WRAGGE: There is a similar provision in other Acts. The expense of combating soil erosion should be distributed over a number of men, with public bodies and the Crown included. I commend to the House the amendments that I have suggested to the bill.

The Hon. SIR. NORMAN KATER [5.17]: As I have only recently returned to the State I have had no opportunity to study the bill, and for that reason I am sorry that the Minister did not give us a more detailed explanation of its provisions. I have no doubt that this measure will commend itself to city members who have had no experience of the country; in fact, the tenor of the speeches that have already been made rather indicate that. But I consider that the man who has had experience of the land will look at the bill with different eyes and will be very much afraid of the suffering that may be

caused by some of the iniquities contained in it. For many years I have had experience of the Central Western Plains, and for some time I lived in the Molong district and also on the coast. I certainly have not noticed any serious damage caused by erosion. Undoubtedly some surface soil has been washed off the hills, but that process has been going on for many centuries. Soil has gradually been deposited by rivers on to alluvial flats and low-lying ground until they have become deep and rich in humus. This bill is quite unnecessary. Its object is good, but it could have been achieved in a better and simpler way. I am opposed to the setting up of another new department and another large body of public servants. I have no doubt that the head of the department would be an excellent officer, but nevertheless, he would find it his duty to provide work for himself and a large body of men under him. I suggest that instead of introducing this bill the Government should have detailed an officer, say, Mr. Clayton, to travel round the country advising the men on the land in the same way as does Mr. Whittet, an agristologist attached to the Department of Agriculture.

The Hon. J. M. CONCANNON: Does the hon. member know that Mr. Clayton has been doing that work for the last ten months?

The Hon. Sir NORMAN KATER: I am glad to hear that. It is an argument in my favour. What I object to is the fact not that the department can enter a man's land and carry out certain work, but that it can compel him to carry out the work, and to be saddled with the whole cost. Although a certain advantage may accrue to him, perhaps an equal or greater advantage may accrue to a number of owners of adjoining property. It, therefore, becomes a question of public advantage, and I think the expense should be borne by the general taxpayer, and not by the individual who carries out the work.

The Hon. Sir FREDERICK TOUT: It should be more widely distributed!

The Hon. Sir NORMAN KATER: Yes. Another very serious clause of the bill is that which makes the work done a first charge on the land. It takes precedence of all other charges such as mortgages. I think that will affect certain companies such as insurance companies, whose funds are largely lent as advances against broad acres, and I think that that is a matter that should be considered very seriously in Committee.

The Hon. H. M. WRAGGE: It will be a first charge—a Crown charge!

The Hon. Sir NORMAN KATER: It will be. The dust storms to which the Hon. Mr. Coates referred come from Central Australia, where soil erosion has been going on for years, but not because of anything man has done. Some of it comes from the country which is occupied and which is overstocked—not overstocked with sheep, but with rabbits and sheep. How a department can deal with that part of the land I do not know. With regard to the remarks of the Hon. Mr. Coates about the Austrian Alps, the summits of those mountains have been denuded of soil for countless ages. Some of them have no soil whatever. The rock has been worn away by glacial action, but a great part of the soil that has been deposited in the low-lying lands has made these lands extremely valuable. Geological erosion has been proceeding for centuries, and had it not been for that erosion a great deal of our lands to-day would not possess their productive value.

I must say that I commend the Government for the interest which it has taken in this matter, and although I think the effects of soil erosion are somewhat exaggerated, I think the amount of erosion that takes place is serious, and the Government is well advised and wise to take notice of it. But, as I said before, I think it has approached the subject in the wrong way. Take the question of ringbarking. Over a great deal of this country the rainfall is very small, and a great deal of the country is covered with natural timber such as white box. No grass will grow on it, and it is absolutely necessary to make

certain land into good grazing land by ringbarking a great majority of the timber. It may have been overdone to a certain extent, but ringbarking is necessary, though, of course, it leads to a certain amount of erosion. I admit that in certain districts the ringbarking has been unwisely carried out. Trees should have been left in the gullies to hold the soil together. In many cases that was not done, but it is now too late to deal with it. Judicious advice from departmental officers of the Department of Agriculture will prevent a great deal of erosion. Ring-barking has been absolutely necessary to make this country suitable for grazing, though it has helped to cause erosion which was absolutely inevitable.

I am afraid this bill will pass the second reading, but I urge the Minister to consider suggestions that may be made which I hope will make it fairer for the individual. If it is passed in its present state the general community may benefit a great deal, but certain individuals may be very severely penalised and unjustly treated.

The Hon. A. A. ALAM [5.28]: I agree in part with the views of the previous speaker, but after having travelled through America and Europe, I gained a practical knowledge of the effects of soil erosion. Hon. members who have not travelled overseas have little comprehension of the devastating effect of soil erosion. When I motored through America I was shown hundreds of thousands of acres which have degenerated into a state of semi-desert owing to the destruction of the trees. As far as the bill is concerned, I am in agreement with its provisions. It must be realised that Australia has so far only partially been affected by soil erosion, but we owe a duty to posterity. As an example, land west of Cloncurry, in Queensland, was fertile twenty-five years ago, but that fertility has disappeared, and to-day it will not carry a sheep or feed a bandicoot. I admit that the cost of coping with soil erosion will be serious for the farmers as a whole, and the Government should be careful in fixing

the charges. As the bill stands, not one farmer out of ten may be able to finance the scheme. Nevertheless, the bill should go through. We owe a duty to posterity, but where possible the onus should not be placed on the farmer to pay the whole cost in a lump sum, but the system adopted by the pastures protection boards, where a period of twenty years is allowed for payment for wire netting, might be adopted. The farmer should be given a period of up to twenty years or more to meet the cost.

The Hon. T. ARMSTRONG: The bill provides for that!

The Hon. A. A. ALAM: If he has to pay for the cost immediately the work is carried out, it might seriously jeopardise his possibility of getting a little credit on his land. Banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions require good security before they will lend money. Therefore any charges detrimental to the first mortgage should not be allowed to accumulate; otherwise the free flow of money will be impeded.

Rampant ringbarking has been widely condemned as being a factor responsible for soil erosion; but settlers were forced to ringbark in order to clear land on which to graze stock and grow crops. The prosperity which we now enjoy is due largely to the ringbarking carried out during the last thirty years. Ten years ago in the Mudjee district hardly an acre was cultivated; now hardly an acre of scrub will be found. Thousands of acres of trees have been ringbarked and destroyed, but unfortunately owing largely to lack of funds, no replanting has been undertaken. As this was virgin country, erosion is not at present a menace there, but unless prompt action is taken the district may be ravaged in future.

The proposal to set up expensive machinery in connection with combating erosion requires consideration and the Government is bound to act judiciously. The bill has imperfections but, as a whole, it is a good measure. As a result of collaboration among experts, I hope that gradually the bill will be made fair, humane and practicable. With the

Hon. Sir Norman Kater, I hope that the bill will not impose a heavy charge on individual farmers, because the man on the land is encountering serious difficulties to-day.

The Hon. Sir GRAHAM WADDELL [5.34]: When the Minister replies to this debate, I hope that he will explain whether the bill provides for expert local advice to be given to laymen to enable them to adopt proper methods in order effectively to combat erosion. A landowner may have every intention of accepting his responsibility to conserve the soil, but unless he receives expert advice upon the matter his efforts may be futile.

The Hon. H. M. HAWKINS: I shall explain that provision later!

The Hon. Sir GRAHAM WADDELL: In regard to soil erosion, the Government has some obligation. In the past successive Governments took no action to cope with the problem, and as time went on the difficulties which it presents have become accentuated. The object of the bill is to safeguard the national asset—the land—and therefore the Government should shoulder its share of the financial obligation involved. Many men of the younger generation have settled on land ravaged by erosion, for which they were not responsible; but they are asked to bear the whole cost of rectifying the trouble. That is unfair.

The Hon. Mr. Wragge referred to another vital aspect: If hon. members have had experience of contour draining, which is probably the most effective means of coping with the problem of erosion, they will know that contour draining will often divert heavy waters into a harmless direction. If it were not for contour draining, the persons who would suffer most from the ravages of erosion would be the owners of properties situated in valleys. When the owner of land upon hill slopes carries out proper contour draining, he confers a great benefit upon the owners of properties at lower levels. The contention

of the Hon. Mr. Wragge that there should be a division of the expense incurred in combating erosion is sound.

Extreme overstocking is another cause of erosion; but this matter has been only lightly touched upon in this debate. When the Government subdivided large estates, it sometimes established men upon holdings where the layer of surface soil was so thin that it was only four or six inches deep. The soil was ploughed, although it should never have been, and that in itself has been the cause of much erosion. If this class of country had been left, as God intended it, as stock runs, it would never have been eroded to the extent that it has been. These are aspects which the Government should take into consideration. I commend the bill. Possibly some amendments which may be made in Committee will make it a very valuable measure.

The Hon. G. MULLINS [5.38]: The Hon. Sir Norman Kater referred to the transportation of dust from one district to another; and one hon. member desired to know where it was finally deposited. Perhaps I can enlighten him. On the valuable agricultural lands mentioned by the Hon. Sir Norman Kater, dust and wheat are mixed together and are sent to Sydney. After temporarily remaining in the silos here, the dust is loaded aboard ships and increases the weight of the cargoes of wheat. Recently the Federal Government voted £100 for carrying out the examination of a number of waterside workers who were suffering from effects of "the dust of death" as it is called. The Country party will be interested to know that 90 per cent. of the men who have been engaged upon loading cargoes of wheat have been vitally affected in the lungs as the result of dust conveyed from valuable wheat farms. When the silos were constructed it was intended to instal fans for the purpose of getting rid of the dust. The silos have now been in use for a number of years; but I regret to say that the Government has taken no action to ensure that the fans are operating:

I have that information from experts who work on the job, and country members can bear it out. I appeal to the Minister for Agriculture, and also to the Minister in charge of this bill, as those silos were built with the intention that fans should be used to eliminate the dust, to see that something is done now to clear out that death-dealing substance, in the interests of the members of my organisation.

The Hon. H. M. HAWKINS (Minister for Social Services) [5.41], in reply: May I join with other hon. members of this House in expressing appreciation of the concise and eloquent manner in which the Hon. Mr. Concannon placed his views before us. After all, we do rise superior to local considerations in this House when we have to deal with such a great question as this one. I should like to intimate to the Hon. Mr. Wragge that, while it is possible, and probable, that the Committee stage and third reading of this bill will be taken to-morrow, there is certain information which I desire to secure, and it may be that we shall not be able to deal with that stage of the bill, but on one or two matters I would like to give him information now. I give the hon. member my assurance that the judge of the Land and Valuation Court has been communicated with, and he has stated that he will definitely go to local centres if the volume of work so warrants. It will be understood that there may be a case in which only £20 or £30 may be involved, but if the work warrants it he will do so. I suggest that in view of the definite assurance in that regard, it is not necessary to place the provision in the bill. The views expressed by the Hon. Mr. Wragge are appreciated, but it is not anticipated that the charges under clause 18 will be large amounts, because major works are not contemplated. If large works are to be carried out the Government may subsidise or assume full responsibility for their cost.

In regard to the provisions of paragraph (b) of clause 12, of subclause (5) of clause 18, and of subclause (4) of clause 22, I may say, in regard to the first, that if circumstances so warrant,

the Crown may pay the whole cost. The other subclauses make allowance for part of the cost, if not all, to be borne by the Crown, and only where it is equitable to do so will an owner be required to pay any amount. My colleague, the Minister for Mines and Forests, who handled the bill in another place, intimated, too, that the circumstances to be considered would include the financial position of the owner, so that he will not be unduly harassed. In regard to the charges on the land, I am informed that these will be registered at the Registrar-General's office. The Soil Conservation Service will not keep the register. The general law, as laid down in the Conveyancing Act, will be strictly followed. When making a statement like that, which is pledging the Government, one speaks with a full sense of responsibility in saying that, as far as possible, that course will be carried out.

The Hon. Sir Norman Kater expressed regret that I did not deal at any great length with certain matters. If I may be allowed to make a personal explanation, I may say that this House desires, first, that every material portion of a bill should be mentioned, but that this should be done with due brevity, to serve the needs of hon. members, and my practice is that after I have prepared my own notes I always send them to the departmental officers and ask them to read them through, to make sure that I have not left out any material fact which should be explained to the House. Perhaps the hon. member was not here when I mentioned that I had personally arranged that we should not go into Committee on this measure to-day, and this was with the express purpose of giving hon. members every opportunity to consider the clauses before we do go into Committee. I said that because I realise that the bill is a bill of national importance, which will affect the interests of a large section of the community, and which, therefore, should not be hastened through this House.

There has been some suggestion that a new department may be created. There

is not to be any new department. The service will function as a part of the Department of Mines and Forests, and it will be a co-ordinating body.

The Hon. J. M. CONCANNON: It will be able to co-ordinate with other departments!

The Hon. H. M. HAWKINS: Yes, it will be able to use all existing services, and its staff will be relatively small. Another matter, arising out of that, was referred to by the Hon. Sir Graham Waddell. At this stage I desire to say that all owners will receive help from the service, and that experts are to be trained and made available for this purpose. The Government is assuming much responsibility by providing the service, arranging for demonstrations, and determining suitable control technique. In some cases it has been lack of knowledge, and not lack of thought, which has led to certain conditions, and it is the responsibility of the Government to supply the fullest and the best information to help the men who are affected by problems of this character. One appreciates that in these matters there may be differences of opinion regarding details, but generally we have appreciated the attitude and the outlook of hon. members of this House in dealing with the bill.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time, and committed formally.

ADJOURNMENT.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE—DUST IN WHEAT SILOS.

The Hon. H. M. HAWKINS (Minister for Social Services) [5.49]: I move: That this House do now adjourn.

May I point out that part of the business to-morrow is the further consideration of the bill that is now in the hands of hon. members, and another matter may come up from the Legislative Assembly. In regard to the matter which was referred to by the Hon. Mr. Mullen, I will bring that under the notice of the Minister who is in charge of that department.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

House adjourned at 5.50 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 10 August, 1938.

Printed Questions and Answers — Questions without Notice — Metropolitan Taxi Service — Parliamentary Functions: Standing Committees — Marketing of Primary Products (Amendment) Bill — Church of England (Bodies Corporate) Bill — Medical Practitioners Bill (second reading).

Mr. Speaker took the chair.

The opening Prayer was read.

PRINTED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

RAILWAYS: CONGESTION, BANKSTOWN LINE.

Mr. TONGE asked the PREMIER AND COLONIAL TREASURER,—(1) Is it a fact that there is acute congestion on the Bankstown railway line during business hours and that the Railway Department is unable to relieve same under present conditions? (2) Will he provide the Railway Commissioner with the necessary funds to quadruple this line as far as Campsie, so as to allow for the running of through trains to this centre?

Answer,—(1) This matter has been taken up with the Commissioner for Railways, who has advised that the present frequency of electric train services on the Bankstown line is as follows:—*Week-days*: During “peak” hours—2 to 10 minute intervals. Outside “peak” hours—15 minute intervals. *Sundays*: 15 minute intervals. During “peak” periods the services are arranged to meet traffic requirements, according to the volume offering at the various stations adjacent to city and suburban business and industrial areas. The Commissioner states that the Bankstown line trains during “peak” periods are not more heavily loaded than those on other suburban lines. He mentions in this connection that two of the three new electric train sets, which became available in July and August of last year, were allotted to the Bankstown line during the evening “peak” period and enabled two