

District should enjoy the same rights as apply to growers in districts under the control of the Commission.

The last provision to which I wish to refer is that which increases from £500 to £2,000 the value of works which may be carried out by the Trust without seeking the authority of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission. This is a most reasonable provision. Members of the Opposition support the Bill because we believe it is an attempt to assist the members of the Trust in their laudable efforts to bring about more efficient and more economic production within the irrigation district which they control.

**Mr. WHITING (Mildura).**—This Bill is primarily intended to improve the practical functioning of the First Mildura Irrigation Trust and to bring its administrative procedures more into line with those applying to the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission. The First Mildura Irrigation Trust is composed of six grower commissioners, all of whom are thoroughly skilled in the art of irrigation and of dried fruits and citrus production. The administration of the Trust is in the very capable hands of a manager, Mr. J. A. F. Oram, and the secretary, Mr. S. V. Nice—a locally born resident—and his staff keep well abreast of the bookkeeping. The outside staff varies from time to time but it usually consists of about 60 men engaged on developmental and maintenance work.

As a corporate body constituted in 1896 under the Mildura Irrigation and Water Trust Act, the Trust was formed to take over the irrigation undertaking from the Mildura Irrigation Company, a subsidiary of Chaffey Brothers Limited. As honorable members are no doubt aware, the Chaffey brothers were the founders of the settlement. It is the only remaining irrigation trust in Victoria, all other such trusts having been wound up when the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission was constituted in 1905.

The Trust was originally charged with the responsibility of maintaining the system designed and installed by the

Chaffey brothers, and despite many setbacks and difficulties it has continued to operate and maintain the irrigation system. Although the original plant, which was designed and installed by George Chaffey, was accepted as being equal to the world's best, in the course of time it became unserviceable and was in need of replacement. It is of interest to note that after 70 years of service the same engine and pump are now on show to the public adjacent to the Mildura Art Gallery and were recently dedicated by the Minister of Water Supply, the Hon. W. J. Mibus. In the meantime, other irrigation districts had been developed by Government finance, and the Trust sought similar assistance in the rehabilitation of its water supply system. In 1949, the then Minister of Water Supply, the Hon. H. E. Bolte, through the late Councillor Nat. Barclay, advised the Trust that the whole of the capital cost of the new works would be provided by way of Government grant. It is pleasing to note that since that time all Victorian Governments, irrespective of their political complexion, have given the Trust every assistance, through the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, in the work of building up Trust assets.

In the period from 1949 to June of this year, the pumping equipment has been completely modernized and electrified at a cost of £443,000. An amount of £474,000 has been expended on the improved and enlarged water distribution system, and a drainage improvement programme, which has involved the expenditure of some £72,000 to date, has been commenced. The works have been designed to serve an area of 19,500 acres. The policy of Government financial support for development of irrigation areas is in line with modern practice elsewhere in the world and, provided that the annual charges paid by the irrigators include adequate depreciation, it would appear to be a practical and equitable method of development.

It will be readily agreed that water is the greatest limiting factor in the development of intensive cultivation in

this State. Therefore, it is obvious that the least wasteful method of using water for irrigation is by pumping into a distribution system consisting of concrete-lined channels and/or concrete pipes.

I mentioned earlier the art of irrigation. There is much more to it than merely applying water to the soil at regular intervals. Most Mallee soils have a fairly high saline content, and, in addition, there is a varying salt content in the irrigation water. The problem is to prevent this salt from becoming concentrated in the root zones of the vines or trees. Obviously, this salt-laden sub-soil water must be removed, and thus we have underground tile drainage systems. Indeed, the whole process can be likened to the circulatory system of the human body—the heart taking the place of the pumps; the arteries, the water distribution system; the capillaries, the root zones of the plants, and the veins, of the most important drainage system. One can imagine the catastrophic effect on the human body if it were deprived of veins. The provisions contained in this Bill will permit expanded drainage projects to be undertaken.

I stated earlier that a total sum of approximately £450,000 had been expended on pumping plants and also on distribution facilities whereas only £72,000 had been spent on drainage works. It may well be that an increased amount has to be spent on drainage works at some future date. In short, it is my view that drainage is an essential part of irrigation.

The Trust method of administration is working extremely well and is an excellent example of decentralized and grower-controlled administration. It is only natural that, to be progressive, the commissioners should seek amendments to the Act from time to time to bring it into line with modern practice. A number of such amendments are included in this Bill. Broadly speaking, the matters to which the clauses relate are either in practice at present or have been found necessary in order to bring about effective administration.

*Mr. Whiting.*

Clause 3 refers to a re-definition of the irrigation district boundaries and will enable the Trust to incorporate an area of land between Redcliffs and Mildura, commonly known as the "mid-area," for which planned irrigation is proposed.

The "special improvement charge" referred to in clause 4 is particularly necessary to enable a levy to be made for the construction of capital works in order to supply water to the private lands in this "mid-area." The need then arises for the Trust to obtain suitable long-term finance for that portion of the cost which is to be repaid by landowners on an instalment plan. Clause 5 deals with the extinction of the original water rights still held on certain lands outside the irrigation district, which have reverted to the Trust because of the non-payment of rates. As it is not the desire of the Trust to hold these lands permanently, this clause will enable them to be sold as dry land.

The amendments to sections 17 and 18 of the principal Act, in clauses 6 and 7 of the Bill, refer to the amalgamation of the several existing drainage areas into one area having the same boundaries as the irrigation district, thus greatly simplifying the administration of the drainage operations of the Trust. There is also provision for the striking of a drainage rate to replace the existing special maintenance charge which has become unwieldy in view of the increase in postage rates and bookkeeping charges. It has been found over the years that some growers request the Trust to prepare plans and specifications and to construct private pipe-lines and other capital works at the growers' expense. The amendment in clause 8 will enable the Trust to keep its staff and equipment more fully occupied and recompensed in this direction.

Clauses 9, 10 and 11 propose amendments to various sections of the principal Act, and have all been recommended by the commissioners to bring the Trust's regulations and policy more nearly into line with that provided for the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission.

The Trust form of administration, with local responsibility for its success, has much to commend it, and I earnestly suggest that honorable members give this Bill a speedy passage so that its contents may be implemented during the current irrigation season.

**Mr. ROSSITER** (Brighton).—It might be asked where is the link between the far-flung empire of Mildura and the golden sands of Brighton, but what impels me to speak very briefly on this Bill is the firm friendship I had with the former member for Mildura, the late Mr. Nathaniel Barclay, D.C.M. If one can judge from the maiden speech delivered this afternoon, he is being well succeeded by the honorable member for Mildura. When Mr. Barclay was in London last year, he carried out researches into the effects on Mildura and the dried fruits industry of Britain's probable entry into the European Economic Community. I know that Mr. Barclay brought back with him a great deal of material which could be very helpful to those concerned with the welfare of the Mildura district, and I hope that in some way this material will be passed on to his successor. This is not a Bill dealing only with the dried fruits industry in Mildura, but is a measure concerned with irrigation in the Mildura district. I shall leave the question of the dried fruits industry to those who have more expert knowledge of it. I congratulate the honorable member for Mildura on a very auspicious and promising opening in this House.

The motion was agreed to.

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

### SEWERAGE DISTRICTS (POLLS) BILL.

The amendments made in this Bill, in Committee, were adopted.

**Mr. G. O. REID** (Minister of Labour and Industry).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a third time.

**Mr. STONEHAM** (Leader of the Opposition).—This controversial Bill originally consisted of five clauses. The Government agreed to delete clause 4 but persisted in retaining clause 3, despite the spirited opposition voiced by

members of the Labour party and members of the Country party. The deletion of clause 4 constituted a major amendment of the Bill, and consequently we felt justified in ensuring that the third reading be held over until to-day in order to give the Government another opportunity to reconsider the position of the special group of sewerage authorities—they are certainly limited in number—which have been in existence for more than ten years but which, for financial reasons, have been unable to carry out their works. I do not know whether the works have been finally approved for execution but they have been approved as suitable.

The Government should give these authorities the consideration they deserve rather than put forward the idea, which is contained in this Bill, of facilitating the actions of those who wish to prevent sewerage works from being undertaken. The Government should treat this special group of authorities as a separate problem, and, in view of the circumstances which have arisen through no fault of their own, grant extra financial concessions to enable the sewerage works to proceed. However, by this Bill the Government is doing the reverse. In my opinion, this is one of the worst measures to be placed before Parliament for a very long time. I hope the Government will give special attention to Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale. They are very important tourist resorts, and it should not be necessary for me to stress that sewerage facilities should be available at tourist resorts.

In regard to the remaining places which could be affected by the legislation I hope that the Government will heed the advice of the Opposition and do something of a positive nature that will resolve the problems of those authorities so that they can proceed with the construction of their sewerage works.

**Sir HERBERT HYLAND** (Gippsland South).—We appreciate the fact that the Government has dropped the very contentious clause 4 which would have had retrospective effect. We have considered clause 3 further and have decided to adhere to our previous proposal that it should be deleted. Consequently, we will