

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 5 OCTOBER 1933

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The TREASURER (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*) replied—

“ At 30th September, 1932—

	£
London	59,399
New York	2,353

This information was published in ‘ Government Gazette,’ No. 121, of the 14th November, 1932.

“ At 30th September, 1933—

	£
London	57,930
New York	2,068

These figures will appear in the usual monthly statement to be published in the ‘ Gazette ’ in the course of a few days.”

RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE OF COMMISSIONER OF MAIN ROADS, 1932-1933.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*) asked the Treasurer—

“ What are the details of the receipts and expenditure of the Main Roads Commission from all sources for 1932-1933, corresponding with the information contained on page 62 of the last report of the Auditor-General? ”

The TREASURER (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*) replied—

“ I understand the information will be contained in the Auditor-General’s report, and would suggest that the hon. gentleman await the receipt by the House of that report.”

CONDITION OF EIDSVOLD-CRACOW ROAD.

Mr. FOLEY (*Normanby*) asked the Secretary for Mines—

“ As heavy rainfalls between Cracow and Eidsvold have made the roads so impassable that communication with the field has been suspended for almost a week up to this morning, will he give consideration to the urgent request from the shire council that assistance be given in making the road to the field passable? ”

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. J. Stopford, *Maryborough*) replied—

“ The Mines Department is prepared to give consideration to the matter of contribution to roads to new mining shows, but it is not usual to assist with roads to already capitalised mines.”

LOAN AND SUBSIDY FOR SEWERAGE WORK IN BRISBANE AREA.

Mr. FUNNELL (*Brisbane*), without notice, asked the Treasurer—

“ Has any approach been made by the Brisbane City Council to the Treasurer regarding a loan and subsidy for sewerage work in the Brisbane area, and is the Government prepared to grant a substantial sum to enable this work to be proceeded with? ”

The TREASURER (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*) replied—

“ I discussed this matter informally with the Lord Mayor yesterday afternoon, and am meeting Alderman Lane, the works executive of the council, to-day.

THURSDAY, 5 OCTOBER, 1933.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. G. Pollock, *Georgetown*) took the chair at 10.30 a.m.

QUESTIONS.

NUMBERS OF EMPLOYEES IN DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR AND INDUSTRY IN SEPTEMBER, 1932 AND 1933.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowoomba*) asked the Secretary for Labour and Industry—

“ What was the number of employees of his department, excluding relief workers, paid from consolidated revenue, the Trust Fund, and the Loan Fund respectively, in—(a) September, 1932; and (b) September, 1933? ”

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY (Hon. M. P. Hynes, *Townsville*) replied—

“ The information is being obtained.”

PUBLIC BALANCES IN NEW YORK AND LONDON IN SEPTEMBER, 1932 AND 1933.

Mr. FADDEN (*Kanawda*) asked the Treasurer—

“ What balances were held in—(a) New York; and (b) London, on 30th September, 1932, and 30th September, 1933, respectively? ”

[*Mr. R. M. King.*

"The Government is prepared to provide the necessary finance this year for the purpose mentioned by the hon. member in order that useful employment can be given and that sewerage work be proceeded with more expeditiously in Brisbane."

PAPER.

The following paper was laid on the table, and ordered to be printed:—

Report of the Commissioner for Railways for the year 1932-33.

CITY OF BRISBANE ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. BRASSINGTON (*Fortitude Valley*) [10.35 a.m.]: At the outset of my remarks I desire to congratulate the Home Secretary for introducing this very interesting measure. It is essential that the people of the Greater Brisbane area should be given a mandate whereby the resources of their city can be developed to the uttermost. We who are living here realise what a wonderful city Brisbane really is. It is ideally situated, and as one who has visited most of the other capital cities in the Commonwealth, I can safely say that it is a capital which can be compared with that of any other State. It is for us to give to the people of Brisbane an adequate charter whereby this great city can be further developed, and whereby its people can enjoy greater benefits than those which are now their lot. Almost every tourist either from elsewhere in our own State or from overseas who visits our city expresses the opinion that Brisbane is one of the finest cities he has ever visited. That is a very fine recommendation. I am sure that as a result of the introduction of this measure and the translation into action of the principles that it contains an even greater measure of benefit will accrue to the people of the city of Brisbane.

Before discussing the Bill I wish to endorse the remarks of the hon. member for Maree as to the men who in the past laboured for the development of our city. It is only right that we should remember them for their efforts and pay to them the tributes that they deserve. Foremost amongst the pioneers who laboured hard on behalf of the city was my predecessor in the representation of Fortitude Valley, the late Hon. T. Wilson. For many years he gave valuable service to the city, and long after he ceased to take an active part in civic affairs he was instrumental in this Parliament in shaping and framing the City of Brisbane Acts which have been in operation for ten years.

I desire to join issue with one member of the Opposition on his statement that "The City of Brisbane Act of 1924" was premature. It must be remembered that at least twenty municipalities operated separately prior to the passage of the Act. Each operated on a different basis and each had a different policy from the others, with the result that the municipal affairs of the city were not conducted in the manner in which they should have been, and considerable confusion occurred. It remained for the original City of Brisbane Act to bring order out

of chaos. Hon. members opposite may dispute that statement, but what I say has been proved to be the fact. The principle of centralisation is being applied to industry throughout the world; and if that principle is sound enough for application to industry, it is also sound enough to apply to the principles of local government in the city of Brisbane.

The three outstanding principles contained in the proposed measure are, first, adult franchise for the people of Greater Brisbane; second, the abolition of the executive system, which was introduced by hon. members opposite; and third, the election of the Lord Mayor of the city by the people. Before dealing with those principles, may I be permitted to refer to the attitude of the Opposition during the present session? Their attitude has been one of opposition to any proposals by the Government. No matter what legislation the Government have brought forward, hon. members opposite persist in putting forward the same old arguments in an endeavour to defeat it. In particular, we hear the same arguments against adult franchise as proposed by this Bill that we have heard year after year. The same old gloomy propaganda has been indulged in by hon. members opposite. The time has arrived for them to realise their responsibilities and to understand that democratic measures merit constructive criticism and constructive suggestions. If they are not prepared to adopt that attitude, then I advise them to remain silent on these questions. During the whole of this debate they have endeavoured to belittle the endeavour of the Government to set up a better system of municipal administration in this city. They have complained that under this Bill non-ratepayers will be allowed to exercise the franchise. We can recall the hot political battles that had to be waged in the countries of the world before universal suffrage became an accomplished fact. We can recall the opposition to that principle offered by men of the same old Conservative type of mind as that now to be found inspiring the actions of the Opposition in this House. Despite the opposition to such a democratic principle, adult franchise was eventually won for the people, and I am glad to be a supporter of a party which aims at an extension of that principle. It will again enfranchise thousands of people who were disfranchised by the late Government. When speaking on the measure introduced by the late Government, I pointed out that the system of government in Australia provided for a Federal Parliament, State Parliaments, and municipal parliaments, and I argued then, as I do now, that municipal parliaments are in no way inferior to either the Federal Parliament or a State Parliament. The municipal parliaments are called upon to deal with domestic problems—those of vital concern to the people, and if it is equitable for the representatives of Federal and State Parliaments to be elected on the wide franchise, then I emphatically contend that the same broad franchise should apply in municipal government. I am glad that the principle is being endorsed by the Government, and I deplore the fact that it is being so strenuously opposed by hon. members opposite. They are prepared to oppose this principle in municipal government, but they have not the courage to denounce it in its application to Federal and State government.

Mr. Brassington.]

Hon. members opposite have advanced no sound arguments in favour of their contention that only the holders of property should be entitled to vote in local government. Can hon. members opposite argue that the present value of city assets has been created by the individual efforts of those owning or controlling the assets? They cannot justify such a claim nor can they argue that any one section of the community is responsible for the progress of the city. We argue that the asset value is a community value created by the combined efforts of members of the community. Consequently, we argue that all who have contributed to the common welfare in the creation of the community value are entitled to a voice in the administration of the city. Hon. members opposite have indulged in considerable destructive criticism, but they have made no effort to combat my contention. They contend that the franchise should be exercised only by the ratepayers. They have complained that properties upon which businesses are conducted have been heavily rated and they express the fear that if there is a reversion to adult suffrage these undertakings will suffer an injustice. A careful analysis of the arguments of hon. members opposite reveals that the very basis on which business is created and built up is public confidence. The very assets of business are created as a result of the trading activities of the community. As it takes the whole community to create those assets, and as a result of those assets business is enabled to make profits, it is reasonable to contend that the whole community should have a voice in the control of the affairs of the city.

Another point overlooked by hon. members opposite is that the public actually own public utilities. When we board a tramcar we pay our fares, and are handed tickets upon which are printed the words "Use the trams, you own them." That is true also of other public utilities. As the public own the utilities, we maintain that they should have the right to elect representatives to administer those utilities on their behalf.

Hon. members opposite centred a good deal of their arguments around what they say is the exclusive right of certain persons to exercise the franchise. Many members of the Opposition conduct businesses in this city. They object to non-ratepayers exercising the franchise; do they also object to non-ratepayers transacting business with them? Absolutely "no." That gives us confidence in arguing that if non-ratepayers are advantageous in business and building up business, then they should have the right of exercising the franchise in order that the affairs of the city may be regulated in the interests of all the people. One hon. member opposite referred to "hoboes" exercising the popular franchise. I support the hon. member for Merthyr in his contention that that statement was most unfair and unjust. I venture to say that when the time arrives for an appeal to be made to the public by hon. members opposite on behalf of their candidates in the city of Brisbane election, they will not address that appeal only to those citizens who pay rates, but will make it also to every other member of the community. Since every member of the community must be appealed to for help in solving the many difficulties confronting the development of the city, every member of the community should also have a voice

[*Mr. Brassington.*]

in its administration. On this important point I only desire to add that many of those persons who, through the depression, are unfortunate enough to be deprived of work at the present juncture and are compelled to camp in parks are, nevertheless, good citizens. The regrettable fact that they have been caught in the throes of the depression does not alter that. In times of plenty they were entitled to exercise the franchise under the owner-occupier system. Surely, in spite of their misfortune, they are entitled to exercise it under the existing economic circumstances!

I candidly believe that not one hon. member will regret the abolition of the executive system of government as provided for under the amending Act passed by the Moore Administration. Complaints have, from time to time, been made by present aldermen to the effect that as the executive possess all the inside information as to the affairs of the city they enter the council chamber at a great disadvantage in comparison with the latter. In fact, it is almost impossible for them to discuss matters with that freedom which they, as the representatives of the people, should feel. If hon. members opposite believe in the soundness of the executive system, why did they not complete the job when they introduced their amending legislation and provide that the whole of the city's affairs should be administered by the Lord Mayor and the executive? I cannot see why they provided for another fifteen aldermen at all, together with their emoluments, because those gentlemen were excluded from the privilege of dealing in detail with the affairs of the city. That is a point which hon. members opposite should explain. The executive system is not conducive to the best results, and I welcome the change that is proposed by this Bill. It is on record that on quite a number of occasions during the time the executive system has prevailed the council in session has disagreed with the recommendations made by the executive, which means that considerable discussion has occurred, much time has been lost, and very little progress has been made. I consider that whilst the executive system remains much confusion will continue and the very best results will not be secured for the people. I heartily support that portion of the Bill which aims at removing this unworkable system and constituting the council in such a way that the aldermen will have the opportunity of examining all proposals that come before them.

I also support the proposal that the Lord Mayor of the city should be elected by the people. In support of that contention I have only to recall my own personal experience in municipal affairs. Immediately after an election had taken place those persons who were fortunate enough to be returned as town councillors would form groups and considerable movements would be made to secure the election of various nominees. Such a system is unfair to the people who elect men to responsible positions. For a considerable time after the election of the present Brisbane City Council, I think I am safe in saying, various manoeuvres were carried out until the present Lord Mayor was elected. I desire to cast no reflection upon the gentleman who occupies that high office when I say that the people who voted at the last municipal election had no more idea of who would be Lord Mayor than those who were not entitled to vote.

It is a sound principle that the people of the city should have a voice in the election of the Lord Mayor, and for that reason I support the proposal in this Bill to bring about the change.

Before concluding my remarks I desire to join issue with the hon. member for Toowong on his statement that the Labour aldermen in the city council did not vote for a reduction of rates. The hon. member inferred that the Labour aldermen voted for an increase. On this point alone I question whether the present council, elected on a limited franchise, has given satisfactory service to the people of Brisbane. It is quite correct that the Labour aldermen of the city did not vote for a reduction of the rates, but it is also correct that they did not attempt to suggest an increase in rates. They were justified in the attitude they adopted, and it is my intention to state the facts of the case to clear up any misapprehension that may have been created by the hon. member for Toowong. The Brisbane City Council reduced the rates from 10½d. to 10d. in the £1. as a result of which there was a reduction in rate assessments of £45,000. If that action on the part of the city council were sincere and genuine, I would be the first to offer my congratulations and my support to them, but we find on investigating this so-called concession to the people that it is not all that its sponsors claim it to be. The estimates of the city works department for public services for the year ended 30th June, 1933—very necessary services—provided for an expenditure of £160,900. The proposal of the council to reduce the rates by a halfpenny in the pound will bring down the estimates of the works department for that year to £114,000, or a reduction of £46,900—which goes to show that whilst the council handed out to the people of the city a so-called benefit by reduction of rates they have done the people of the city a greater injustice by reducing the estimated expenditure in the works department by £46,900. The point is that in the estimates for the present year is an item of £37,500 for electric lighting of the city which cannot be reduced; consequently, only £76,500 will be available for all the other necessary public services under this heading—to pay wages, find plant, and carry out very necessary improvements throughout the city. This amount of £76,500 can be further reduced by 12 per cent., representing the cost of tools, materials, and other things, leaving approximately £65,000 for the payment of employees in the works department. I draw the attention of hon. members opposite and the general public outside to one or two other important facts in connection with this so-called concession by way of reduction of rates. At the time the council was elected under the special franchise introduced by hon. members opposite 806 men were employed in the works department. At present, thanks to the bad handling of the situation by the council, 603 men are employed and they are "rationed," getting work on only four and a-half days a week. The real sting in this rate reduction is the fact that as the result of the reduction in the works department estimates it will not be possible on the present basis for the council to employ more than 400 men. Thanks to this great achievement of the friends of hon. members opposite, it will mean that if some windfall does not occur for the council approximately 200 men will be discharged, and the responsibility

will be thrown on the Government of finding them work. The problems of the Government will be greatly intensified in consequence. Is a policy of retrenchment justified at this juncture in view of the depressed conditions? I reply to that question by saying that now is the time when every endeavour should be made to employ as many people as possible, so that they will be usefully engaged in the community and be able to use their purchasing power and so improve the position all round. This is not the time for further reduction in the number of persons employed by the Brisbane City Council. I sincerely hope that the people of Brisbane will not take much notice of the propaganda which hon. members opposite will use when the time comes to justify this action.

Mr. MAXWELL interjected.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: In the light of past experience I can only assume that hon. members opposite will endeavour to mislead the people of Brisbane, and make much of the fact that a reduction in rates has taken place. It is our duty to show the people of the city of Brisbane that this reduction in rates means no gain to them, but a considerable loss in the long run.

I noticed recently considerable controversy in reference to the appointment of a health officer in Brisbane. I consider that the appointment of such an officer is essential. We realise that one of the greatest problems the city has to face is that of public health, and before any cuts in expenditure or any unsound financial activity is indulged in, it should be the duty of the council to consider the health and welfare of the people.

Mr. MAXWELL: They do.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: There is considerable argument over the appointment of this proposed health officer. I am merely raising the point that the works department estimate has been cut to an unjustifiable extent. The allotment made could very well have been adhered to and much of the responsibilities of the city council could have been met as the result. I think it is wrong that the Brisbane City Council should reduce the rates in an endeavour to cover up an unsatisfactory position.

I propose to vote for the measure that is before the House if only for the reason that it will restore to many thousands of men and women citizen rights which were taken away by the late Government. When that was done these citizens were placed on the same level as those who were on a previous occasion disfranchised by the electoral laws of the Commonwealth Parliament—placed on the same level as those who were disfranchised for committing offences or because of their nationality. It is indeed pleasing to be able to restore to them their rights of citizenship. I venture to say that after this Bill has been made law and put into operation considerable benefit will accrue to the residents of the Greater Brisbane area.

Mr. C. TAYLOR (*Windsor*) [11.8 a.m.]: In discussing this Bill it is just as well that we should understand the meaning of a municipal local authority, its functions and method of control. A local authority has practically no executive powers whatever; if it has, they are of a minor kind. Local authorities are controlled by Acts framed by Parliament, and cannot go outside that Act to do anything which probably they would like to do. It has been stated during this

debate that the Greater Brisbane council is a third parliament. It is a rather poor apology, for the parliament to which hon. members have referred is governed and controlled—and told what it has to do—by an Act. A Parliament creates. The Brisbane City Council exercises only delegated powers.

The Home Secretary, and also the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, stated that citizens had been disfranchised by the amending Act passed by the Moore Administration. In point of fact, not one person has been disfranchised. Every person had the right to vote for his or her representative in the Parliament which passed the Act to which hon. members refer.

I was very sorry to hear the remarks made by the Home Secretary with regard to local authorities generally. He said, in effect, that until the introduction of the adult franchise no progress—or practically none—had been made in the local authority areas throughout Queensland. He must know better than that. It was quite refreshing to hear the remarks that have been made by the hon. members for Fortitude Valley and Marce. They paid tribute to the past members of local governing bodies in the metropolitan area and throughout Queensland. One has only to look round in Brisbane and other parts of the State to see the results of the magnificent work which was carried out by local authorities for very many years prior to the introduction of the adult franchise. In matters such as parks, the provision of sewerage, and health matters, excellent work has been done. If one consults the Auditor-General's report one will find that very large sums of money were borrowed by the local authorities throughout the past years and that very small amounts of repayment have ever been in arrears. I do not refer to harbour boards and similar institutions that have found themselves in serious difficulties. The figures I have in mind are a very high compliment to the local authorities who have carried out excellent work in this State. In addition, the expenditure of the money has been supervised by the Department of Public Works. All plans for local authority loan work must be approved by it and progress payments are made only with its approval. The operations of local authorities are almost completely under the control and supervision of the Government. They are so circumscribed by legal enactments that the local authorities are unable to do many things that they probably would like to do. During the past few days, for example, a suggestion was submitted by the Brisbane City Council to the Home Secretary relative to the control of the health of the city. The Home Secretary, quite within his rights, has expressed the view that the proposal does not adequately meet the situation. There is an example of the control of the Brisbane City Council by the Government.

I am opposed to the adult franchise in local government. It is unwise and unnecessary. I quite agree that the asset value of a community is to a very large extent a community created value, but the financial responsibility does not rest upon the whole community. If it is right to argue that every individual over the age of twenty-one years should be allowed to exercise the franchise in municipal government, then every individual of that age should carry

[*Mr. C. Taylor.*]

his share of the financial responsibility. We hold that the occupier is deserving of equal recognition with the ratepayer in this matter, but it is wrong to allow every individual in the community over the age of twenty-one years to vote at local authority elections. After the passage of this Bill there will be four votes in my home instead of one, and that will probably apply in the homes of many other hon. members. The Bill simply provides for a system of plural voting, a system roundly condemned by hon. members opposite in the past. It will probably mean three, four, five, or six additional votes in every home, and that is plural voting in the worst possible form.

The HOME SECRETARY: There must be three or four citizens in your home if there will be three or four additional voters.

Mr. C. TAYLOR: Yes, and good citizens too. There will be three or four additional voters but still only one citizen pays the bill. The city progressed in quite a reasonable manner in the days gone by prior to the introduction of the adult franchise in local authority affairs. The Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board was originally established during the regime of the Denham-Barnes Government but it became a political institution almost at the outset. The dreadful financial mess eventually created by the board can be attributed to the fact that it was largely a political institution. Eventually its financial position became so hopeless that the Government of the day—I think Mr. McCormack was Premier—became so “fed up” with its mismanagement and its loss of tens of thousands of pounds that they thrust the institution on to the Brisbane City Council without seeking the views of the board itself. The Brisbane City Council was not responsible for the tremendous load of debt accumulated by the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board. It was accumulated by a purely political board which had for many years controlled affairs in connection with water and sewerage in this city. To the Brisbane City Council was entrusted the Herculean task of straightening out the finances of that authority.

I do not say that the Brisbane City Council is by any means perfect, but it has done very excellent work. I agree with the sentiments of the hon. member for Fortitude Valley that the amalgamation of all local authorities within the area of the city of Brisbane has worked out to the advantage of the city. During the last two or three years the Brisbane City Council has certainly had the advantage of intermittent relief labour and unemployment relief funds provided by the Government, and these facts have greatly assisted in the carrying out of its activities. The city area was never in a better condition than it is to-day. Much of that improvement has been brought about by the employment of relief labour, and, therefore, can be attributed to the depression. If it had not been for the depression I do not believe that the hygienic condition of the city would have reached its present high standard. The construction of bitumen roads, water channels, and footpaths have all contributed to this desirable state of affairs.

It was quite refreshing to hear the hon. members for Marce and Fortitude Valley paying tribute to the valuable work performed by those gentlemen who were in

charge of local authority administration in this city prior to the creation of the Greater Brisbane authority. It is only right that such tribute should be paid to their services. All this work was carried out without emolument, excepting an annual allowance to the mayor or chairman in each case. Therefore, the very best thanks of the community should be tendered to them for their voluntary labours in developing the city to the state in which the present council found it.

Work by every man and woman is necessary in the interests of the community. No one will deny the assertion that the value of work of individuals cannot be assessed on an equal basis. That principle applies in local government. We cannot assess every person in the community at one and the same value. Differentiation must be made in every walk of life. Those persons in the community who by business ability and intelligence manage their businesses efficiently, or have been fortunate enough to accumulate property, should receive consideration in any decision as to what franchise should operate, in order that they may continue their business activities for the benefit not merely of themselves but of the whole community. What we want at the present time is successful business. We do not want legislation which will impede or strangle industry, because in the present struggle it is not worth one's while continuing in the face of superdifficulties. Sympathetic consideration must be shown to business if its promoters are to survive the depression through which we are passing.

If it is good to adopt the principle of the executive system in Parliament why should it not be applicable to the affairs of the city? It has been found efficient in conducting the affairs of Parliament and the State, for in the Cabinet we have the executive system. Therefore, it is only right and proper that the executive system should have a fair trial in the Brisbane City Council. The system has not broken down there, as some hon. members would lead us to believe. Our executive managers would not be human if they did not err at times. The business of the council is carried out much more expeditiously than when it was controlled by the obsolete committee system. The executive system should not be scrapped; it is worthy of a longer trial.

The greatest objection I see to the election of mayor by the popular vote is that an individual may be elected to that high and important office without possessing the requisite experience in local government or public work. It is quite possible that such a man might be elected, and it is essential that we should try to avoid any such possibility. From my own experience of local government work I know that so soon as an election has been completed there has been considerable discussion by the elected representatives as to who should be appointed mayor or chairman. More often than not a unanimous selection has not been made. At all events, even that system was preferable to the one proposed in this Bill, because the great danger to be avoided is the appointment of a mayor or chairman who may be entirely out of sympathy with, and may have no regard for the wishes of the majority of his colleagues.

I am opposed to the idea of adult franchise in the municipal sphere, because that system

does not work out to the benefit of the city. Certainly the first Greater Brisbane council was elected on the adult franchise, but, despite that, it comprised a majority of representatives opposed to Labour. That council did excellent work in co-ordinating the activities of the local authorities that were absorbed in the Greater Brisbane area. When one recalls that, in addition, the work of straightening out the tangle of the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board was thrust upon the council, one can appreciate the extent of the good work that was done. The owner-occupier franchise is the proper one for local government, and especially is that so in the city of Brisbane.

Mr. CONROY (*Maranoa*) [11.27 a.m.]: I quite agree with the hon. member for Windsor that the functions of a local authority are very important. Anyone who has had local authority experience will realise that. The hon. member also stated that it was the proper thing for all the people to have the opportunity of electing members of Parliament who enacted the local government laws. That is correct. I disagree, however, with the hon. member when he states that all the people should not have the opportunity of electing local authority representatives. If it is right and proper for members of Parliament, who enact local government law, to be elected by the people, then surely it is equally right and proper for local authority representatives, who administer the local government law, also to be elected by the people.

The main provisions of this Bill may be summarised as—

1. Adult franchise.
2. Election of mayor by the electors.
3. Abolition of the executive system.
4. Hearing appeals against valuations.

Some years ago a ratepayer franchise was in operation. When the City of Brisbane Act became operative in 1924, it provided for an adult franchise, but the legislation passed by the Moore Government in 1930 altered that system to one of an occupier franchise. The reason for the change is probably best known to hon. members who are now sitting on the Opposition benches. The old ratepayer franchise was restrictive, but the occupier franchise was still more restrictive and made no allowance for the interests of those who were genuinely entitled to a vote in the conduct of the city's affairs. The hon. member for Logan argued that only a bona fide occupier of a property was entitled to a vote. That is correct to a certain extent, although the privilege is given under the occupier franchise enabling one person to have more than one vote.

I would call attention to the definition of "Occupier" in "The City of Brisbane Act Amendment Act of 1930," namely:—

"The person in actual occupation of any land; or if there is no person in actual occupation, the person entitled to possession thereof."

That seems, on the face of it, to be quite reasonable. Subsection (1) of section 10 of that Act states—

"At the election of an alderman each elector shall have one vote only."

Mr. Conroy.]

But paragraph (iii.) of subsection (4) provides the opportunity for a person to have more than one vote. It states—

“When a corporation is the occupier of rateable land, such corporation shall, in writing, request the name of some one person to be entered in the occupiers’ register as the occupier of such land, and the name of such person shall be enrolled on the voters’ roll.”

The definition of “Corporation” in the Act is as follows:—

“Any company, firm, partnership, corporation, association, body of persons corporate or unincorporate, or joint owners or tenants in common, or joint lessees more than two in number.”

Therefore, any person who is not an occupier could obtain a vote or a number of votes by being nominated by a company, firm, partnership, or association.

As an illustration of that I might give the case of a partnership, firm, or association in Brisbane, for instance, comprising more than two persons. Each member of the firm would have a vote for his residence. They could then nominate any person to exercise a vote for the property which they occupied in Queen street. Possibly some hon. members are doubtful as to the correctness of this interpretation. During the last municipal election in Roma the matter cropped up, and the ex-Hon. Secretary and the solicitor for the local authority there advised to the effect that one person could be nominated by all the different companies carrying on business there. In order to satisfy hon. members on the subject, I will state what occurred. A man who occupied his own house was enrolled as the occupier of the house, and, in addition, was nominated, first, by the Motor Sales Service Company, then by another business company, the Roma Oil Corporation, Limited, and then by the Lander Oil Company. None of those companies were occupiers in the sense of being property-owners, or having residences in the Roma municipality.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: They were rate-payers.

Mr. CONROY: That is not the point. It was an occupier franchise, not a ratepayer franchise. Under the occupier franchise there is an opportunity for one man to obtain more than one vote, and that is one of the greatest weaknesses in the City of Brisbane Act. If it is good enough for a person to have one vote for election of members of Parliament, then it is good enough for one man to have one vote for the election of an alderman on a municipal council. That is an instance where, under the occupier franchise, one man was privileged to have more than one vote. Further, I know of a case where a man owns a piece of land of about 2 acres. His house is situated on one corner of the area. The husband, as the occupier, obtained a vote for the house. His wife claimed that she was the occupier of the adjoining piece of land; his son claimed he was the occupier of the land next adjoining, and then the daughter—not to be outdone—claimed that she was the occupier of another portion of the land. The result was that for one piece of land on which the rates were being paid by one person four votes were incorporated in one individual. That is the franchise that hon. members opposite desire in preference to the one

which I claim is the fair and proper way of electing not only members of Parliament, but also members of local governing bodies.

Mr. C. TAYLOR: You are giving four votes in my house instead of one.

Mr. CONROY: That is so; and are the other members of the household not just as much entitled to a vote? Not one person in the hon. member’s house will get more than one vote. That is the point.

Mr. C. TAYLOR: No.

Mr. CONROY: My experience is that the election of the mayor by the people is the proper method to adopt. Anyone who has had experience in municipal and local authority matters knows the great amount of “log-rolling” that is done in connection with the election of a mayor.

Mr. MAXWELL: You must have been in bad company.

Mr. CONROY: Probably I was. A man cannot always choose his own company. The hon. member was at one time mayor of Brisbane, and, no doubt, he knows the position.

Mr. MAXWELL: No.

Mr. CONROY: I was mayor of Roma on three occasions. The proper system is one which allows the electors to have the same opportunity of choosing the occupant of the mayoral chair as they have of electing the aldermen.

I do not know of any fairer or more reasonable method than allowing a police magistrate to deal with appeals against valuations. That system exists in local authorities outside the city of Brisbane. Why should it not exist here? It is just as fair and reasonable to allow a police magistrate to decide matters of valuation as it is to allow him to decide on other matters which come before him.

I admit that I have not had much experience of the executive system, owing to the fact that I am not living in the city. My own experience, however, is that these executive functions should be carried out by a committee appointed by the aldermen. I rose particularly to deal with the matter of adult franchise, and I am very pleased that the Hon. Secretary has brought down a Bill to restore it to the people of Brisbane. I have no knowledge of any ill-effects resulting from adult franchise in local government matters.

Mr. TOZER (*Gympie*) [11.42 p.m.]: When the City of Brisbane Act was passed the new Brisbane City Council had to assume control of all the local authorities within the prescribed area and responsibility for the indebtedness incurred by them. Just prior to that time the different local authorities within the area deemed it advisable to expend considerable sums of money in the interests of their respective localities. A tremendous debt had been accumulated and the new Brisbane City Council had a very hard road to hoe. However, substantial progress was made, and I regret that the Minister should have deemed it advisable to speak in a derogatory way of the men who had been associated with the various local authorities taken over by the Brisbane City Council. It cannot be denied that considerable progress was made in the different areas prior to the passage of the City of Brisbane Act and that considerable

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improvement has been effected since that time. Visitors who have returned to the city after years of absence speak in glowing terms of the wonderful improvements carried out in the city. In the early days that part of Milton just to the rear of the site of the present State school for boys was a tea-tree swamp. The area has been drained and wonderful improvements have been made. The same can be said of many other parts of the city. In the early days the chairman of the local authority was the only person entitled to remuneration, the councillors giving their services free to the community. It was only when the City of Brisbane Act was passed that it was deemed advisable to pay the members of the council for their services. I do not cavil at that.

The Act passed in 1930 by the late Government was passed with the object of providing a better system of management for the city. The new executive system was an improvement on the old committee system, but as it has been in operation for only three years a reasonable time has not elapsed to ascertain whether it has been the success which was anticipated. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley argued that if the executive system were to prevail there would be no need for the existence of the council. The same can be said of this Parliament. The bulk of the work is carried out by the Cabinet. I cannot see much need for the rest of the members of this Legislature. We might just as well not be here, for all the rights that we can exercise on behalf of the people.

The hon. member also said that the Opposition were opposed to all democratic legislation. We are not opposed to democratic legislation, but we do endeavour to improve the Bills that are introduced by the Government. When the hon. member sat in opposition he was the greatest culprit in opposing measures introduced by the Government of the day. He opposed practically every measure that was introduced. His arguments this morning were merely an echo of the arguments advanced by the Minister in introducing the Bill. It was splendid propaganda by the Government intended for consumption by the general public. The Minister repeatedly referred to the rich and the poor. Under existing taxation it is practically impossible for any person in this State to become wealthy. That is proved by an analysis of the incidence of income tax. An income of £5,000 a year is taxed by the Commissioner of Taxes to the extent of £3,000, and there is only a difference of £13 if the income happens to be £10,000. How can any person become wealthy under such taxation! A few people may possess assets valued at large amounts, but they are either mortgaged or frozen. The wealthy alluded to by hon. members opposite merely possess paper wealth.

I take exception to the statement of the Home Secretary that the working class is the most honest section of the community. No person can pick out any section in the community and say that it is more honest than another.

THE HOME SECRETARY: The whole of the argument on your side is to the effect that the people who do not pay rates are rogues and not worth a vote.

MR. TOZER: That has not been contended for one moment. There are black sheep in

every section of the people, as well as good people.

The main principle in this amending legislation is the granting of adult franchise. The Government believe in adult franchise because they get an advantage from it. If they did not get an advantage they would not be such ardent exponents of it. The Minister made a statement that under the owner-occupier franchise introduced by the Moore Administration 79,495 voters appeared on the rolls of the city of Brisbane, while the number on the State rolls under the popular franchise for the same area was 174,189. He contended therefore that the amended franchise disfranchised 94,894 voters. They were not really disfranchised at all because they were not entitled to the local authority franchise. The principle fought for during many years was "no taxation without representation." Why not apply the converse and say, "No representation without taxation?" The conceding of adult franchise confers on the people powers to elect persons to local authorities although they are non-ratepayers. Power can be given to such elected representatives to impose additional taxation on owners of property. That is the danger we must face under adult franchise. The Minister contended that adult franchise had brought about improved conditions in the city. He believes that under this new system Labour will control the new city council. The greatest mistake ever made in local government matters was the introduction of party politics. It is far better that party politics should be eschewed in local government and that its representatives should be elected on merit only. Under this measure Labour politics must be introduced into the affairs of this city, because Labour will nominate its ticket and that forces its political opponents to nominate candidates.

I submit that the reintroduction of the adult franchise in the case of the City of Brisbane will mean the enfranchisement for local authority purposes of many people who have no stake in the city at all. Many of these people may not be residents of the city in the true sense of the word. They may come to the city, stay sufficiently long to qualify for enrolment, vote, and then move on. It is in view of those circumstances that we on this side do not approve of the adult franchise but favour the owner-occupier franchise in local government affairs.

The hon. member for Maranoa argued against the owner-occupier franchise on the ground that it permitted plurality of voting, and in support of his contention the hon. member cited the case of certain corporations. I contend, however, that if such a corporation were a ratepayer it had every right to delegate its authority to vote to one of its officers. Then the hon. member quoted an instance in which four votes had been recorded in respect of one allotment of land. It may have happened that the land in question was an area of 1 acre, subdivided for ownership purposes into four parts, but in actual fact not subdivided by fences. If four persons were registered as the owners of the four blocks in question, each would be entitled to a vote; but if one person were the owner of the four blocks he only would be entitled to vote, and then only once. As a matter of fact, conversely I could give instances where people who were actually paying the rates did not vote, the right being

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exercised by a tenant or a share-farmer in possession of the land. I still contend that the owner-occupier franchise is fair and equitable. I do not approve of extending the privilege of voting in the local government sphere to a person who has no responsibility in that connection.

Mr. FOLEY: But these people have interests to be conserved.

Mr. TOZER: Why not give every one the right to vote in the affairs of the unions? We are all interested. You only give your financial members the right to vote.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I hope the hon. member will address the Chair and will not invite argument.

Mr. TOZER: Only the members of a company, association, or other such organisation are entitled to a voice in the administration of its affairs. No outsiders are permitted to interfere. The chairman or governing officer of the organisation is elected usually by the committee appointed by the members. Why should there be any different system in local government administration in Brisbane?

Mr. FOLEY: There is no analogy.

Mr. TOZER: There is. An exceptionally good man may be a candidate for the mayorship. Such candidates are generally leading men in a community, and if they are beaten they cannot obtain a seat on the council. Would it not be far better if some provision were made under which, although they were beaten in the election for mayor or chairman, they could be allowed to take up the position as aldermen? It would be advantageous to have their services. I consider it is a mistake to go back to the system of the election of mayor by all the people, because it is possible that a man who has not taken a very active part in municipal affairs may have become a favourite with certain sections and may be appointed to the position. The objective of the Bill, I take it, is to get the best men possible on local authorities.

The system of appeal against valuations is to be altered by the Bill. The system brought about by the Act of 1930 was introduced with the idea of simplifying matters and helping the ratepayers. It has had a trial for only three years, and now the Government think it advisable to go back to the system of appealing to a police magistrate. I have no objection to appeals being made to a police magistrate other than on the ground of the delay which takes place. If there are many appeals the time of the police magistrate is taken up to such an extent that he cannot attend to all of them promptly. We have known appeal courts in connection with country shires to last six weeks. If both parties are represented by counsel considerable delay is necessarily incurred. I do not know whether it is not a retrograde step to depart from the present system of appeal. It is the practice of local authorities to appoint a committee to investigate appeals and make suggestions. I do not know whether that practice is adopted in the Brisbane City Council, but in the country very often fifty or sixty out of 100 appeals can be settled with reasonable compromises, and the balance only come before the police magistrate. If that practice is adopted here I see no objection to the system. Our aim is to help the ratepayers to get their appeals settled in the cheapest and most reasonable way.

[Mr. Tozer.

Those are main provisions of the Bill, which I trust will work in the way the Government think it will—I do not say that a Labour council will be elected—and in the best interests of the city of Brisbane. Brisbane is the capital of the State and the people in the country look to Brisbane for an example. The people in outside districts considered at one time that Brisbane was a good place in which to invest their capital. I have had instances of people coming to me with money to invest on condition that it must be invested in Brisbane, which was going ahead. They said they could see that Brisbane was the best place for investment. But the position has been altered, because owing to the heavy rating in Brisbane properties have become more or less valueless. People are not now looking to Brisbane as the place in which to invest their funds. Nearly all the businesses in the State have their headquarters in Brisbane, so that we all have an interest in the progress of Brisbane. We do not want to see further taxation imposed. Brisbane is carrying really more than it can afford at the present time. Our suggestion is that taxation should be reduced and private industry given a chance. I trust that the Bill will work out as satisfactorily as the Minister thinks it will.

Mr. BAYLEY (*Wynnum*) [12.5 p.m.]: There are many points on which I find myself differing with the members of the Government on this Bill, but I recognise that most of those things are simply matters of opinion; for instance, whether the city shall be governed under the executive system or under the old committee system, whether the election of mayor shall be in the hands of the council or by the whole of the people. I do not propose to discuss those things this morning, because, to my mind, they are small in comparison with what may be termed the principle of the Bill, that is, the question of the franchise. In addressing themselves to this Bill, hon. members opposite have stated that the Brisbane City Council is in reality a form of parliament. The hon. member for Maranoa drew the analogy between this House and the city council. He said that because members of Parliament were elected by popular franchise, so also should the city aldermen. Neither he nor any other hon. member made any endeavour to prove the analogy. We know what Parliament is. We know the powers that are vested in Parliament. They are of three kinds—judicial, legislative, and administrative. It is true that we have delegated our judicial powers to the judiciary, but we have retained our legislative powers in full and we have delegated our administrative powers to the members of the Cabinet, although at the same time we reserve the right to criticise and take action if necessary. The Brisbane City Council has no judicial power; it has no legislative power, if we exclude the right to draw up ordinances. Any body of men which has administrative power only is not a parliament and there is no analogy between this Parliament and the Brisbane City Council. Under its powers of administration the Brisbane City Council has a very wide scope of action. It deals almost entirely with those things that most affect the daily life of its people—the citizens of Brisbane. Carrying out its duties, it is compelled to expend vast sums of money. The privilege of doing these things is accompanied by a responsibility and a duty. That

duty is to levy taxes on the people of this city, sufficient to cover the expenditure. Those taxes take the form of rates, and it is limited only in the amount of rates it may levy, firstly, by the need, and secondly by the ability of the ratepayers—together, of course, with their forbearance. We must not overlook that aspect of this question, and we should see to it that nothing is placed on the statute-book to rob the people who should have the power to control the expenditure of money and to see that it is properly spent. What do the Government propose to do? They propose to extend the franchise to every adult citizen.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BAYLEY: Hon. members say, "Hear, hear!" What is the result? Hon. members opposite will recognise that it is just as essential that a machine may be stopped when required as it is that it may be started. The more direct the control over the machine the better for all concerned. So long as control of the city council is vested in the ratepayers, that control is direct; subject to certain limitations, it is immediate. If the money that the people pay in the form of rates is misspent, either intentionally or unintentionally, those people have it within their power to say to the people who are spending this money, "You shall continue no longer in charge of the affairs of this city." Hon. members opposite may claim that that will be the position under this Bill, that it will be in the hands of the citizens to say, "It is our intention to replace you at the next election." But that action is slow, and is not direct for the reason that under its proposal the Government will place alongside the people who find the money tens of thousands of other people who are not interested in how that money is spent.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: They are interested.

Mr. BAYLEY: Those people are only actuated by the desire to have as much money spent as possible.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Not necessarily.

Mr. BAYLEY: They are not called upon to furnish any of the money. I admit that the common sense of the average elector will in the long run see to it that justice is done to the ratepayers of the city, not because he desires justice to be done, but because it does not pay him, as a citizen, to have money ill-spent over a lengthy period. For a short period it may pay him, but sooner or later the conclusion will be forced upon him that whilst at the outset it was to his advantage to seek the present gain, in the final analysis he has lost. Before he comes to that realisation much damage will have been done to the city and to the ratepayers in that they will have been called upon to pay more than they should have paid for the upkeep of the city.

Mr. FOLEY: You are building up an imaginary case.

Mr. BAYLEY: I am not. I am building up a case based upon my knowledge of what has occurred in Brisbane during the past ten to fifteen years. The hon. member for Normanby knows that the Brisbane City Council is constituted as it is to-day because the things to which I have referred did occur, and that the people realised that whilst the previous council spent much money

on their behalf, eventually it was not to their good, but led to their undoing.

The Home Secretary has argued that it would be undemocratic to have other than the adult franchise; but he exhibits a wrong idea of democracy. If democracy demands that something shall be given to those people who are not entitled to it, and that those people who are entitled to something shall be deprived of it, then democracy must fail. It will fail because justice will no longer enter into its scheme of affairs. That is all I ask: I ask that the Government, through this Bill, give justice to those people who are compelled to contribute the expense of running this city—the ratepayers.

Mr. FOLEY: That means an injustice to those who create the value.

Mr. BAYLEY: The hon. member for Normanby would not have his idea carried to its logical conclusion. He argues that the people who do not pay rates and taxes by their labour assist those who own the property to pay them.

Mr. FOLEY: Hear, hear!

Mr. BAYLEY: Would the hon. member enfranchise the graziers and other primary producers who support the financial institutions in this city?

Mr. GLEESON: If they lived in this city.

Mr. BAYLEY: Would the hon. member for Ipswich enfranchise the people who live in the West and who send down their thousands, tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands of pounds each year to the retailers of this city?

Mr. FOLEY: They have votes in their own area.

Mr. BAYLEY: They have. I ask for justice, and justice only. I ask that the people who find the money should call the tune. Unless the Government will agree to that, they have no conception of justice.

Mr. SIZER (*Sandgate*) [12.16 p.m.]: The hon. member for Wynnum has stated the case against the Bill very well indeed. The principle of adult suffrage in local government has been discussed on many occasions, and there appears to be little hope of an agreement on the subject. The hon. member for Wynnum dealt with the matter in a lucid way.

Mr. KEOGH: He lives at Cleveland.

Mr. SIZER: That matters not. The matter should be more seriously considered than it is being considered by some hon. members opposite. Nothing is to be gained by merely making the statement that the measure is democratic and allowing it to rest there. That might be only the beginning of the argument if democracy did not seek a remedy for itself. The Bill does not provide the measure of justice advocated by the hon. member for Wynnum. That is the position to which hon. members opposite are quite prepared to drift. It is no use my making a long speech and thus delaying the passage of this motion, because the result is a foregone conclusion. My aim is simply to record the fact that the Government are making a big mistake. This legislation may give them a temporary advantage, but ultimately it will have a most detrimental effect.

A very unwise provision of this Bill is the abolition of the executive system. To-day is the day of quick decision and quick action. To go back to the old system of a

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multitude of committees with councillors running round the city making this and that inspection in order to decide whether a drain or a road should be constructed or not is in this scientific age too ludicrous to contemplate. To-day we need advice of the highest technical character from men of capacity, and with all due deference to hon. members opposite, and to members of local government bodies, to say that they can become experts in the multitudinous subjects which come within their ambit is stating something which every person knows is not a fact. The Government are about to recreate the old committee system under which three of five members of a committee can veto the advice of their technical officers and officials. That is most unsound. I am not wedded to this democratic principle of which some people talk of the desirability of the people's representatives getting nearer to direct administration and responsibility. Let us have the best brains possible to the end that we shall get the best work done.

Mr. LLEWELYN: That is what they are doing in Germany with Hitler.

Mr. SIZER: That may be so, but that is what is being done in Italy. I am closely watching the experiment in Italy under Mussolini. In fact, I am most interested in it. Many people in the world to-day are not prepared to say whether Mussolini has failed, or whether his system will ultimately be the system by which the world will emerge from the melting pot. Personally, I believe our own system is the best, but our old democratic system must "deliver the goods" if it does not desire to be supplanted by some other system. Much of the work coming within the ambit of the Brisbane City Council is of a highly technical character. The administration has been more efficient under the executive system than under the old committee system, and more efficient than the results that accrue from the new-old system which will be inaugurated upon the passage of this Bill. It will be a case of aldermen wrangling over the needs and requests of the ratepayers, and of their overriding the advice of their technicians who later on will be called in to destroy the work embarked on by men who did not possess the necessary practical knowledge, thus adding tremendously to the costs of the community. That is always the end of interference with technical officers by laymen. That is the strong objection I have to the committee system. Speed of administration has been much greater under the executive system than under the old committee system. Speed in decision is extremely important to business and industry to-day when time is so important. Things have changed very quickly in recent years and administrators are called on to make decisions quickly. That has been possible under the executive system. I prophesy that in a short space of time the Government will see what a huge mistake they are making.

The election of mayor by the people is not of very great moment to me. The main point is that the person elected should be a capable man, because the administrative work of the city of Brisbane needs such a man. The present occupant of the office of Lord Mayor was elected under the existing system. He has proved himself to be a most efficient administrator and a

worthy first representative of the city. If comparisons must be made in the matter of experience or energy between occupants of the office under the old and new system, it must be freely admitted that the present occupant has been quite successful. His work has been outstanding and he will have nothing to fear when he appeals to the people for re-election. I personally am not very much concerned whether the Lord Mayor is appointed by the council or by popular vote. Still, it would be better to allow the present system to remain as it apparently has been satisfactory.

Some extraordinary arguments were advanced by hon. members opposite. It seems to be the inherent belief of these hon. members that if Government or semi-government authorities spend money they are solving the economic problem. One hon. member commented upon a remission of rates as being a great mistake, as it resulted in something being done and some other thing not being done. What hon. members opposite fail to realise is that the greater the exaction of taxation by Government and semi-government authorities, the greater is the call on the Government to solve the problem for the obvious reason that private enterprise is unable to do so because of excessive taxation. The most that Governments can do is to help to some extent, but to argue, as hon. members opposite continually do, that the present world problems will be solved by an increased expenditure by Governments—and the expenditure of borrowed money at that—is to approve of extracting money from sources where it can be profitably utilised, for the purpose of giving it to authorities who put it to a very doubtful use. To suggest that as a solution of the economic problem is to my mind too ludicrous for further consideration. The fact that even hon. members on the Government side have no real faith in that step as a solution of the problem may be judged from the fact that they are not prepared to carry it out to the fullest extent. It is easy for them to advance the argument, because it avoids some awkward political difficulty. In short, the argument appeals to those people who want to take the easy road in solving the problem.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Will the hon. member connect his remarks with the Bill?

Mr. SIZER: The point I am making is concerned with this Bill, Mr. Speaker, because arguments were advanced by hon. members opposite, particularly by the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, on the question of the rates that were imposed. The hon. member was arguing on false premises. I consider it is a mistake to make any alteration which will permit of the condition of affairs visualised by the hon. member for Fortitude Valley. I feel, therefore, that a pungent point in my criticism of this Bill is that the adult franchise may result in a considerable increase in rates which will be detrimental to the people generally, and will not solve the problem that so actively concerns all thinking people.

The question of adult franchise has been discussed on numerous occasions. I regret the Bill; it is unnecessary. The unwisdom of abolishing the executive system will soon be shown. The present franchise is fair and just and there is no fundamental reason why the Government should change it. I oppose the measure.

[Mr. Sizer.]

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*) [12.29 p.m.]: I imagine that what should concern the House on a Bill of this kind is the necessity of giving the best possible opportunity to the city of Brisbane to obtain the most efficient government that it can. Our main objective, in a city that is taxed to the extent that Brisbane is, is to determine how the burden may be lightened and how the citizens of Brisbane may secure the best possible administration.

In introducing this Bill, the Home Secretary said that the city of Brisbane municipal charter was the widest in the world. There is nothing very advantageous in a charter being wide; the main considerations are how successful it has been, whether it has increased the rating, whether improvements have been carried out, and whether the best system of local government has been given to the citizens. If the people of Brisbane do not now get value for the money that is collected from them, how will they get better value by the alteration that is contained in this Bill? Those are the things we have to consider on a question like this. Experience has shown that the introduction of adult franchise into local government has not improved conditions, has not reduced the rates, and has not given the people better administration. The fact that a man lives in Brisbane but has no financial responsibility does not prove that he will be a capable administrator, and the bringing of politics into local government is of no advantage. A man who is elected to the Brisbane City Council has to look after the tramways, electric light, water and sewerage, and health of the city. What does it matter whether a man is Labour, National, Country Party, or Communist, so far as the administration of these things are concerned? His duty is to give the best service, but if he is Labour, his opinions are dictated by a caucus, irrespective of whether he believes in them or not, because there is a plank in the municipal platform of the Labour Party which requires him to abide by the decision of the caucus. It does not matter what a man's politics are so long as he gives service to the people. But they should be quite apart from municipal affairs.

A suggestion has been made by the hon. member for Fortitude Valley and other hon. members opposite that the chief function of the city council is to provide employment; but it is nothing of the sort. The chief function of the council is to get the best value possible for the contributions of the people—to give them the best service in return.

Mr. G. C. TAYLOR: Like the Grey Street Bridge!

Mr. MOORE: One can point to all sorts of mistakes, but how are we to remedy those mistakes by widening the franchise—by merely saying that we are going to give more people the right to vote—people without responsibility?

The HOME SECRETARY: We are righting a wrong.

Mr. MOORE: It is not a question of righting a wrong, but a question of perpetuating a wrong, when we give people without responsibility the right to vote as to how the money of other people shall be spent. The point of view from which such a proposal as this should be judged should not be how much has the other man to pay

--in a few years it may be so—or whether at the present time it is going to benefit a voter by enabling him to secure employment, or give him higher wages and fewer hours of work. Such a policy will not give a better return in administration, nor in the end will it make it possible for workers to enjoy continuous employment, or for business people to develop the city.

The Home Secretary suggested that everybody who has an insurance policy or a deposit in a bank is interested in the city of Brisbane. That is perfectly true, and it is the duty of the Government to see that the institutions looking after the investments and savings of the people are not likely to be called upon to pay extravagant and extortionate rates owing to the mistakes of the people who fix them without having any responsibility in the matter. We should recognise that such bodies are vitally interested in the administration of the Brisbane City Council, and give them the charter which will give the best value to the community.

The Bill also proposes to abolish the executive system. The executive system was not adopted in the Bill of 1930 merely for a whim; it was established because the committee system which had operated in the past was condemned by previous mayors, who advised that the executive system would give greater satisfaction and result in greater economy to the people of Brisbane. It was not adopted merely because we wanted a change for the sake of a change, but because experienced members of the council pointed out that the committee system was inefficient. The executive system has been in operation for only three years and should have a fair trial, but the Government are going back to the committee system, not because it is going to be of any advantage, but because it is the policy of a political party. What we should aim at is to give the Brisbane City Council the most efficient and economical form of government.

Experience does not suggest that municipal administration can be improved by allowing persons who do not pay rates the right to vote at local authority elections. The Home Secretary said that it was only since adult franchise was introduced in municipal matters that the health of the people was properly looked after.

The HOME SECRETARY: Nonsense!

Mr. MOORE: Could anything be more absurd or further from the facts. It is suggested that this form of municipal government is going to be a shining light to the world. There is no city in Australia which has got adult franchise and Brisbane cannot be compared with Melbourne as far as civic pride is concerned.

Mr. W. T. KING: You say there is more civic pride in Melbourne than in Brisbane?

Mr. MOORE: I certainly say that. Anybody who knows what sort of a place Melbourne was thirty or forty years ago, and knows that city as it is to-day, can see what the civic authorities have done and the results and benefits that have been obtained from their administration.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Is that why you imported people from the South?

Mr. MOORE: Quite possibly. I do not mind where brains come from.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Moore.]

Mr. MOORE: When any Government want brains they should advertise and get the best brains in the world. I do not care where they come from, whether it be Cork, Melbourne, or China. If you want ability, nationality has nothing to do with it. The main thing to do is to get somebody who has had experience and who knows how to think—a man who can use his brains.

The HOME SECRETARY: And comes from outside Queensland.

Mr. MOORE: Not at all.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MOORE: Some of the highest appointments made during our term of office were of Queenslanders. The proposition that giving everybody a vote will result in greater ability in the council cannot be established in any way whatever. The Government, unfortunately, are not concerned about that. All they are concerned about is to give everybody a vote, irrespective of his responsibilities. That is not the way to get efficient or economic administration, and it is not the way to look after the interests of those very people whom the Minister was concerned about when he spoke of the people who had invested their money in insurance companies and in banks.

There are two or three things in the Bill about which I am not very clear. The Bill provides for the appointment of a board to redistribute the electorates. I do not know quite how that will be done; whether the Government are going to trust the people—

Mr. P. K. COPLEY: It will not be done as unfairly as was your electoral redistribution.

Mr. MOORE: I do not think much of the hon. member's standard of fairness.

Mr. P. K. COPLEY: Not with your standard.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MOORE: Are they going to trust the people who elect the members of the Brisbane City Council to appoint this board? The Bill does not say what this redistribution is, nor who is going to pay for it. Is it to be done by the Government? If it is to be done in a reasonable way, it is essential that it shall not be done from a political party point of view. These suggestions of unfairness by the present Home Secretary are a condemnation of the electoral officers. (Government dissent.)

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member seems to insinuate that the electoral officers were dictated to by the Government as to what they should do. If the Government do suggest that, I say they have no right to keep in the position of chief electoral officer of this State a man who could be dictated to by a Government as to the method he should adopt in defining electoral boundaries. It is a very miserable sort of back-handed compliment. (Government dissent.)

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I hope that hon. members will cease interruption, and that the Leader of the Opposition will get back to the discussion on the Bill.

Mr. MOORE: The Bill provides for the appointment of a board for the purposes of the redistribution and the creation of

twenty divisions or electorates. It does not say how that is to be done or who is to do it, or on what basis it is to be carried out.

I do not approve of the alteration proposed in the method of hearing appeals against valuations. We think that the Land Court should be the court which should hear appeals. That court has had a great deal of experience in that class of work and the present method provides a cheaper and more speedy method of dealing with such appeals. It is a matter that requires a considerable amount of experience. My experience of appeals before police magistrates is that the magistrate generally arrives at a decision by splitting the difference between the valuation sought by the appellant and the valuation required by the local authority.

Mr. O'KEEFE: That is a reflection.

Mr. MOORE: I am not reflecting on anybody. That is my experience. I was associated with local authorities for many years, and I have appeared in court on behalf of the council on many occasions. A police magistrate has not sufficient experience to deal with the matters in the same way as a member of the Land Court, who is constantly adjudicating upon them. When I pointed out to another Labour Home Secretary the absurdity of having appeals heard by police magistrates he offered to send another police magistrate to hear the appeal. I would not agree to that. I am prepared to accept a decision given by a competent authority.

There is nothing in the Bill that will be to the advantage of the City of Brisbane, but much that will probably lead to extravagant administration and a heavy load of debt.

The hon. member for Fortitude Valley argued that with the existence of the executive system there was no further use for the other elected aldermen. The same can be said of this Parliament. Why not elect the Premier and the members of the Cabinet and allow them to govern the country? They do, in fact, govern the country regardless of what the other members of the party may say. We considered that the executive system provided a quick and efficient way of transacting the business of the council. It permitted of continuity of policy, whereas under the old committee system the policy was continually changing. The executive is in a position to decide small matters without the administration being choked by the interference of the council as a whole. It is not necessary that the council should debate small administrative matters. The departments demand an administrative head. Very little can be achieved by the committee system. The smaller the committee, the quicker the decision.

Mr. W. T. KING: You did not apply that principle to all the other local authorities.

Mr. MOORE: The Brisbane City Council was called upon to perform very important functions and to control water and sewerage activities, tramways, and electric light. We did not provide that the salary of £300 per annum to be paid to the aldermen of the Brisbane City Council should be paid to the aldermen of other local authorities, because we realised that very important work requiring much time had to be performed by the aldermen of the Brisbane City Council. The position of the Government is largely influenced by the operations of

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the Brisbane City Council—for example, much depends on the actions of the council as to whether land values appreciate or depreciate, or whether the people are prosperous and the city is progressive. The Government are charged with a very grave responsibility in providing a constitution for the Brisbane City Council. They should take very great care before proceeding on the lines suggested in the Bill. They have introduced the Bill, not because they believe that it will lead to greater efficiency but because they hope that a council of the right political colour will be elected to give employment to a greater number of people, and thus relieve the Government of some of their responsibilities. That might be an easy way of getting over the difficulty, but no one can claim that it will be for the benefit of the city and the State.

Experience suggested that a change was necessary. In the past many undertakings were inefficiently managed by the Brisbane City Council, and money was absolutely wasted.

If mistakes have been made in the past, that is all the more reason why the city should be protected against the possible waste of money in the future. It is also another reason why we should aim at a more efficient administration of the city—an administration which will be more economical on the whole. The granting of adult franchise, and the introduction of politics into the civic affairs of Brisbane will entirely eliminate the civic responsibility of the Labour aldermen. That responsibility will become a secondary consideration. The first consideration of aldermen will be loyalty to the platform of the party as laid down by a conference of all Labour bodies in Queensland. That platform is agreed upon, irrespective of what the results may be. It may be that the platform is agreed upon because of a desire to give employment to a large number of people at a high rate of wages. If that be so then the civic responsibility of the representative of the people is lost sight of, because his first duty is to carry out the instructions of his party. What is the good of that policy to the city of Brisbane? Absolutely none. That has been the motive actuating the Government in bringing down this Bill. We know what happened in the Brisbane City Council lately when a reduction in rates was agreed upon. The arguments of the Labour representatives were not that the ratepayers had too great a load of taxation to carry and consequently must have a reduction, but that the council must give greater employment and a reduction of rates would lead to a curtailment of staff. They did not look at the question from the point of view that it was going to be better for the city, or whether the people would get value for the money, or whether the people had too great a burden to bear. They lost sight of the fact that almost £500,000 of rates are outstanding and cannot be collected.

The HOME SECRETARY: The object was to catch votes next April.

Mr. MOORE: Of course, that was the object. That is exactly the position, and I am glad that the Home Secretary recognises it. I agree with him that the object was to catch votes next April.

The HOME SECRETARY: A decrease in rates took place just prior to the last election

also, and immediately the new council was elected they were increased again.

Mr. MOORE: The Labour representatives voted against the principle of rationing from exactly the same motives. Their idea in doing so was to secure votes next April. The affairs of the city should not be administered with a view to catching votes at the succeeding election, but with a view to more efficiency. The aldermen recognise that one of the great difficulties in the way of a return of prosperity is the enormous amount of rates which the people have to carry. The great burden of rates has in many cases completely eliminated the equity value of property. The desire of Labour representatives has apparently been to depreciate rather than to appreciate property values. That must be the ultimate end if no relief in taxation is afforded.

The HOME SECRETARY: Why did the council not reduce the rates last year, and not just prior to the election?

Mr. MOORE: The hon. gentleman may just as well ask why the Federal Government did not give £7,000,000 relief in taxation last year. The reason is obvious. It is because the finances did not give them an opportunity to do so.

The HOME SECRETARY and Mr. KEOGH interjecting.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The speaker must not be interrupted. Hon. members know that as well as I do. If the Home Secretary wishes to reply he will have forty minutes in which to do so. I hope he will restrain himself until that opportunity arrives.

Mr. MOORE: The possibility of giving relief in taxation arises from the administration of the council. It has been possible in the past year to effect certain economies, which were not possible previously. Similarly, the Government curtailed expenditure last year because they did not have the money to spend. A reduction of rates is one of the best things which could possibly happen, and the Home Secretary should be one of the first to congratulate the council on an endeavour to curtail expenditure and reduce the burden of taxation now borne by the taxpayers. The idea of the Home Secretary and some aldermen is that this reduction has been made only with a view to catching votes. That is an extraordinary argument. The whole aim and object of the Home Secretary should be to secure good and efficient administration. He must recognise that the Government are suffering owing to the large exactions being made by the Brisbane City Council. This has led to the depreciation of property values in and around Brisbane, which is not helpful but detrimental to the Government. The main object behind the action of the council is to inspire confidence and thus appreciate the value of property. If anyone thinks that confidence will be engendered by giving the municipal franchise to a large number of people who are attracted from country districts to the city in order to secure relief work, then I cannot agree.

It seems to me that, against all the lessons of past experience, we are retrogressing by passing this Bill. The Bill is introduced without good reason and without conferring an advantage on anyone except possibly on the Government, who may say, "We will

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be relieved of some of our responsibilities if the burden is placed upon the ratepayers"—a burden that will be largely determined by people who have no responsibility in providing the money. I cannot imagine any Bill that will do more damage than this; in fact, such legislation is almost unbelievable by people who live outside Queensland. When I told a Sydney man the other day that the Government were introducing a Bill to provide for adult franchise in municipal government, he could hardly credit it. Nor can anyone else who has any knowledge of what has been accomplished under the ratepayer franchise in other cities of the Commonwealth. For example, it would be difficult to find more civic pride than in Adelaide, where the ratepayer franchise obtains. Melbourne is another shining example of what can be done under the most unpropitious circumstances. With practically no natural advantages, Melbourne has been so improved that it is one of the most picturesque cities in Australia. I suppose that no other city has more natural advantages than Brisbane; yet it is the most highly-rated capital city in the Commonwealth.

I oppose the Bill, which rather than ameliorating conditions will make them worse. The people of Brisbane are to be commiserated with in this retrograde step of the Government, for although the burden cannot be definitely gauged, we can from past experience estimate approximately what it will be.

Mr. P. K. COPLEY (*Kurilpa*) [12.57 p.m.] As the representative of a metropolitan constituency, I cannot allow the opportunity to pass without congratulating the Government on their stand in this matter. It is certainly in accord with the promise made to the electors in the metropolitan area that this Bill would be introduced, and I am pleased that the Government have given effect to that promise at the earliest possible moment.

One provision I am pleased to see is the abolition of that pernicious system of an appeal from Cæsar to Cæsar, where a dissatisfied ratepayer's appeal from a council officer's valuation is adjudicated upon by other members of the council staff. A ratepayer may say, "Your valuer has placed a certain value upon my property. I can give you instances of sales—not forced sales—in the vicinity of my property, and I can prove conclusively that the valuation you have placed upon my property is too high"; nevertheless the council, solely concerned with the revenue aspect of the matter, will say, in effect, to the present City Valuation Committee, "You cannot let your brother-officers down; you have to uphold our valuations." That is in distinct contrast with the statement made by the Leader of the Opposition when dealing with police magistrates. I was astounded to hear him say that officers who have spent many years of tried service in the interests of the community take a disinterested view of the cases that come before them and say, "We'll split the difference between the appellant and the local authority concerned." It does not become any hon. member to take that point in relation to officers who have spent years of study and service in petty sessions offices throughout the State. It has been my privilege to appear before police magistrates sitting as valuation appeal courts, both in Brisbane and outside centres, and it has

been my experience that although they may not have the technical knowledge of land of members of the Land Court, they do all in their power to make themselves au fait with the claims of both parties to the appeal.

I would suggest that instead of having separate authorities dealing with land tax valuations, local authority valuations, main road and railway resumptions, and schools, we should endeavour to have one authority, like the Valuer-General's Department in New South Wales, to deal with all land valuations.

I would like to refer to statements made by the Leader of the Opposition about a recent discussion in the city council with regard to a reduction of rates. Rate reduction affects almost every person in the city. I contend that the recent action of the governing body in the Brisbane City Council was purely a political gesture. A Labour alderman, quite correctly I contend, said that any reduction in rates would have the effect of more retrenchment of employees of the council. It would mean that even those employees who were at present rationed would be less able to pay the rates which were accumulating on their properties. A Labour alderman very definitely stated that the action of the council in reducing the rates savoured of a desire to have more men placed on the unemployment market, and I quite agree with him. Since the advent of the unemployment relief system—and particularly since the advent of this Labour Government—the Brisbane City Council has shown no endeavour to keep its present employees occupied, but is endeavouring to place as many as possible on the unemployment market and make them a burden on the Government. Hon. members will remember that on the eve of the 1929 election, under the Jolly Administration the civic government handed out the fine Christmas gift of sacking 250 men. That is typical of the anti-Labour Party.

I am very pleased to see that the executive system is going. There is a very slight analogy between the executive system in the city council and the cabinet system in the State Parliament. We, of course, have a membership of sixty-two in this House, and it would be impossible for us to sit in committee and deal with details of all matters, but a small executive of four men in a city council composed of twenty-one members savours of star chamber methods. Hon. members will realise that people are availing themselves at the present time of the emergency legislation dealing with the finances of the people. Many people go to the court for relief from conditions operating under sale notes covering purchases of their homes and with regard to money borrowed upon mortgages. The tender system seems to be creeping in, and I venture to say that if the tender system of the city council continues many more influential persons in the community will go to the members of the party to which they belong and obtain advantages over the unfortunate man who is unable to pay rates, and therefore attempt to defeat—in many cases they will defeat—the operations of the financial emergency legislation. These matters should all be dealt with in open council, when it would be impossible for such things to happen. Such a state of things is impossible under the State Government, and therefore the analogy between the executive system in the council and the Cabinet system breaks down.

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I am pleased to see that the Government are giving the city council the right to borrow for the purpose of renewing, redeeming, or floating loans.

I was interested to hear the Leader of the Opposition say quite definitely that he did not know what the clauses of the Bill meant so far as the redistribution of the wards is concerned. I think clause 8 of the Bill is very definite. Interjections were made this morning on the question of redistribution, but I feel certain that this Government will not adopt the method of redistribution of electorates that was adopted by the members of the Opposition when they were the Government. I am sure a fair redistribution will be made.

During a period of three years the legislation passed by the Moore Administration, which took away from the people any right of franchise in civic government is the only legislation of its kind in the world, with the exception of a small amendment made in Italy. Although I may not own any property, I nevertheless have certain civic rights. For instance, I have the use of the roads and other facilities coming under the administration of the city council. Should I not also have a voice in the election of the body administering matters affecting my personal comfort, liberty, and freedom? It is rather scandalous and will stand to the everlasting shame of the Moore Government and its supporters, that whilst they placed restrictions on natural-born Queensland subjects aliens obtained privileges because they were in a position to own land. The hon. member for Wynnum was delightfully inconsistent in one or two of his statements this morning. He was talking in platitudes. One of his arguments was that because the adult franchise was to be granted to citizens some people would want as much money spent outside as in the Greater Brisbane area. Whether we accept or reject that reasoning, we should turn to his next sentence in which he said the people would benefit in the long run when the right thing was done. The latter statement contradicts the former, and I feel certain that it was the right one. The people exercising the adult franchise in the Greater Brisbane area will see that the right thing is done. It is useless for the hon. member to put forward the further platitude that the provisions of the Bill will cause confusion and that the present city council is the cause of the evils of the past. One must attribute the major portion of the hopeless state of affairs in the city council to the Jolly Administration. There is no doubt about that, and there is no gainsaying that fact. There are but six Labour aldermen in the present council and on the face of it the hon. member's suggestion is a reflection on the intelligence of the members of the Opposition. I cannot, of course, concede to the hon. member for Wynnum the truth of his contention that with the adult franchise certain persons will receive something to which they are not entitled. Neither can I agree to the statement he made that others would be deprived of their exclusive rights. No section of the community has exclusive rights in local administration. It is a wrong deduction for the hon. member to make. Because of these two statements I feel that he is absolutely wrong in his remarks that democracy must go. That is not demo-

cracy at all. There is no question of democracy at all. His argument is almost in the same category as the suggestion that because a squatter sends his wool to Brisbane he should have a vote in the civic affairs of that city.

I do not wish to go very thoroughly into this matter, especially in the dying hours of the debate. I am heartily in support of the action taken by the Government. There are certain features of the Bill that I would have liked to see extended; however, I am pleased to hear that the rate of interest on arrears of rates is definitely fixed at 5 per cent. It may be that even that rate is high, but I realise that there is a very sound argument in favour of it. I am satisfied that the Government will deal with these matters as they arise and as needs demand.

Mr. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*) [2.12 p.m.]: I have been associated with local government for nine years and I am totally opposed to the principle of adult franchise in that arena. At the present time over 15,000 persons are either receiving rations or performing relief work in the city of Brisbane. The city council elections are to be held next April. Under the proposed franchise the workers referred to, their wives and relatives over twenty-one years of age will have the right to vote, and it will be quite an easy matter for them to swing the result of the poll and to bring about a change in the control of the municipality for the ensuing three years. Conditions are continually changing. It may not be very long after the elections before a number of these people are fending for themselves in fields far removed from the metropolis.

Of course, I recognise the method by which a Labour Government seeks to retain political control. They would give almost everything that did not belong to them to maintain themselves in power. They would spend money lavishly for the purpose. A limit should be placed upon the amount of money that a local authority can borrow. There should be restrictions in some way quite apart from the mere approval of the Home Secretary or any other ministerial head. The matter is deserving of the most careful consideration. Under the local authority law which obtained in the old country a proposal by a local authority to borrow had to be submitted for the careful consideration of a tribunal. The matter was not left to the Government for decision although their permission had to be obtained. The proposal was submitted to experts, who were capable of analysing it. A report had to be submitted to the tribunal charged with the duty of deciding the matter and that tribunal had to consider, amongst other things, whether the people were opposed to the proposal, whether it would be for the benefit of industries within the area, and whether the district was financially capable of meeting the cost involved. Their decision was final despite the fact that the council was elected by the ratepayers of the area.

I object to the alteration of the franchise in view of the alarming growth in local authority indebtedness. How are the councils to escape from their financial burdens? It has been said that arrears of rates in the city of Brisbane amount to over £500,000, that in New South Wales they amount to over £3,000,000. How are the owners of

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small allotments in the different areas to overcome this accumulation of debt? Land is placed upon the market in a most injudicious way, quite regardless of demand, and it is sometimes purchased by people who feel confident that it would be wise to purchase for speculation in the future. If the Government were to introduce a Bill to provide that land should not be subdivided for town allotments except under certain conditions they would bestow a benefit upon the municipality. Reference has been made to the method of appeal, but how is it possible to-day to arrive at the true economic value of land? Only recently a number of blocks were sold by the Brisbane City Council for the recovery of rates. The land was valued by the city valuator at £100 a block, but the council was compelled to accept £1 per block because better offers were not forthcoming. Why did they take such an offer? The original purchaser unthinkingly bought that land and made it something upon which the council could levy a rate. The council recognised that it was better to sell that land for £1 per allotment because immediately it changed ownership rates could be recovered on it. Just how long the new purchaser will hold this land and continue to pay the heavy impost in rates is difficult to foretell.

I have in my mind several cases of hardship in the matter. A few weeks ago I discussed a case with the Brisbane City Council. A young man unthinkingly purchased a piece of land in the city area, believing that some day he would be in a position to make a home here. Financial stringency came along, and he found himself in difficulties. The people who sold him the land on the easy time-payment system forced him through the court and eventually got their money. Then the Brisbane City Council came along with a demand for £61 arrears of rates. The council garnished his wages. He then consulted me. After considering the whole facts, I told him that the best thing he could do, as he did not owe any other money, was to go insolvent. I then discovered that, as a public servant, he could not go insolvent. He found the £61 to satisfy the demand of the council, and the question then arose whether the council would garnish his wages again in respect of an amount of £70 owing on rates on another property, or whether the council would submit it to auction to satisfy the arrears. That is only one instance of hundreds in this city. No one can estimate the value, or tell what the value of land is. I know instances of mortgaged property in this city upon which £300 and £400 is owing in rates. The mortgagee has no hope of getting any payment from the mortgagor and cannot foreclose, because he would be saddled with the property which is now practically unsaleable. How can we arrive at any definite value of property? That is where the crisis in this city and other places will arise. Some day there must be a definite writing down of values. If those standing behind financial institutions were prepared to act in that direction, we would soon know where we were. I venture the opinion that in this city alone two-thirds of the people owning property have no definite financial interest in it. The equity is swallowed up by mortgage and arrears of rates to the Brisbane City Council. There is no relief from rates which accumulate from

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year to year. In my opinion, these are difficulties which should engage the attention of any Government before any interference with the franchise. Adult franchise in local government enables a person to vote in a district in which he is residing, notwithstanding that he may have no interest in it.

There are other reasons why I am not prepared to welcome this Bill. It embraces an area too large for the proper administration by a single authority. We have embraced in the Greater Brisbane area a large area of land which certainly is not required for city purposes. The popular franchise will enable the representatives to be chosen from the more populous centres, leaving the big area on the fringe of the city with little or no voice in its administration or control. Under those circumstances I am quite against the proposal, and shall vote against it at every stage.

Mr. WATERS (*Kelvin Grove*) [2.22 p.m.]: I believe that this Bill will have the approval of the electors in the city of Brisbane, who, after all, are those most concerned with its effects. Despite all that has been said, and may be said, from the Opposition benches as to the evils of adult franchise in local government matters, there can be no dispute as to the soundness of the policy of the Labour Party in this respect. Adult franchise is one of the basic principles of democracy. If adult franchise is not conceded in local government matters, then there is no particular reason why it should be provided for in the State or Federal spheres. In the early days of Australia's development, before the creation of federation, the property vote was almost universal throughout Australia, and still exists in the election of members to the Legislative Council in various States. Despite this fact, the people generally have come to the conclusion that the property qualification is no qualification at all in an enlightened community. After all, many people have inherited or acquired property by questionable means; at any rate, quite a number have done so. The mere fact of the possession of property does not carry with it any particular qualities of statesmanship enabling the owner to administer local government or any other governmental activity. People who do not own property but are nevertheless residents of the city are just as much entitled—probably more entitled—to a voice in the administration of local government affairs. They would probably make better electors and better aldermen than people whose only outlook on a proposal for the improvement of the city is whether it will affect their business interests or not.

The Greater Brisbane council is probably the first experiment of its kind in Australia, and, despite what hon. members opposite may say, has justified its existence. The underlying factor of its success is the fact that in the initial stages and up to comparatively recently all residents have had a voice in the election of those who would administer the affairs of the city. It is frequently argued by opponents of adult franchise that the man who pays rates has a special claim for consideration and that municipal affairs are of greater concern to him than the person who neither owns nor occupies a house. I cannot see the force of that argument, because the property qualification has no bearing on the intelligence of the individual, nor does it cause

a person to be possessed of statesmenlike qualities. It certainly would be interesting to see whether, if Australia were embroiled in war, the advocates of the rights of property would be equally emphatic on the point that the people to defend the country must possess property or be ratepayers. I think most of these advocates would urge that all should "do their bit," and if people are called upon to come to the aid of the nation at a time of crisis, there is surely no reason why the nation should deprive them of the municipal franchise in the days of peace.

This Bill provides for the reversion to the committee system. The hon. member for Hamilton suggested that Labour aldermen were against the executive system because the committee system enabled them to get some cheap publicity, as under the committee system they could speak in council on matters of trivial importance. The hon. member should be the last one in this Chamber to accuse anyone of indulging in cheap publicity. May I remind him that some people get publicity that they do not desire!

The hon. member for Oxley was very wright to think that under this legislation unemployed people may get votes. According to the hon. member for Oxley, it is a crime for a man to be unemployed. What the hon. member forgets is that most men are unemployed because of circumstances beyond their control. Merely because they are out of employment is no justification for depriving them of a voice in the government of the country, because they, after all, are the people most affected in the Federal, State, or municipal sphere. They should not be deprived of the right to vote at a municipal election. The hon. member for Oxley waved a pamphlet issued by some Labour organisation in the North and from it he read that the candidates who were standing in the Labour interests had stated that if returned they would see to it that decent wages and working conditions were given to the municipal employees. The hon. member was horrified at such a suggestion, which to his mind was something that should not happen in the municipal sphere. But, after all, municipal authorities should not shun their obligations to the community. The Brisbane City Council or any other local governing body has just as great an obligation to see that unemployment is kept down to a minimum as anyone. There is no reason why it should dismiss workers and cast the onus on this or any other Government. If every employer of labour and every Government in Australia followed the same tactics as the Brisbane City Council has done we should have a very sorry state of things.

The present Brisbane City Council has contributed seriously to the responsibilities of the Government with regard to unemployment. The council has taken every opportunity to ration its employees, and, where they could be dispensed with, to throw them upon Government aid. We see work being done by relief workers in the city which in the first instance it was never intended to do with relief labour. The council is dodging its obligations to a considerable extent. Neither the Brisbane City Council nor any other municipal body should be able to escape from its obligations to the community as employers of labour.

The council seems to have done everything possible to depreciate the working conditions of its employees in regard to hours of work, and has rationed them to a considerable extent. The council has in particular made the conditions of the tramway employees very hard indeed. So soon as the 44-hour week was introduced the council made an application to the Industrial Court for an extension of rationing, but I am glad to say that the court did not grant their application.

I believe that this Bill will receive the endorsement of the majority of the people at present residing in the Greater Brisbane area. I have no doubt that if the adult franchise had been in operation at the last Brisbane election a Labour council would have been elected. The Moore Government altered the franchise because they knew that their term of office was coming to an end, and that when the electors had the opportunity they would deal with the Jolly Administration in no uncertain manner. But for the property qualification at the last Brisbane City Council election the Labour Party would have been supreme in the council. I believe that at the forthcoming election, with the adult franchise restored, the people will deal with the men who have been mismanaging the affairs of the city during the last three years, and pass them into oblivion.

The municipal sphere is one of the most important of governmental activities. The municipal representatives come into direct contact with the people, and I believe that a city like Brisbane would be more progressive if a Labour council was in charge of the administration of its affairs, because after all a Labour council is the only body which can satisfactorily legislate for the whole of the people. The Civic Reform Party, which attempted to get into office at the last election, was composed in the main of prominent business people backed by certain institutions in Brisbane, which supplied large sums of money to its candidates with the object of—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. WATERS: I am probably out of order, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the Bill, and I trust that the people of Brisbane, now that they have the opportunity of exercising the adult franchise, will see to it that at the next Greater Brisbane elections a Labour council is returned.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. E. M. Hanlon, *Uthara*) [2.35 p.m.], in reply: I have listened with a great deal of interest and attention to the debate upon this measure. A very noticeable feature of the debate has been the consistency with which hon. members opposite stick to their opposition to a Greater Brisbane city at all. One naturally expects opposition to and intolerance of anything new or progressive from a political party which has always been noticeable for hanging on to things as they are and hating change, progress, or advancement of any kind. I especially object to the manner in which hon. members opposite lick their lips in anticipation of evil overtaking the city of Brisbane. One after another they prophesy all kinds of evils for the Greater Brisbane area. They blame adult franchise for being responsible for many of the things they object to, but they cannot blame it for being fully responsible for the £18,000,000

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debt which the city owes to-day. If they are honest they will admit that the bulk of that debt was in existence before Greater Brisbane was established at all. Very little of that debt has been incurred since that time. Perhaps some of the undertakings were too huge, but after all it is better to make mistakes in doing big things than to confine oneself to doing the small, mean things in civic life. If the establishment of the Greater Brisbane system has been responsible for anything it has, at all events, given the outer suburbs some chance to develop and has given the people of our community some chance of having a decently governed city. We have only to look at our magnificent main roads system to realise the benefits of the change. If it were not for those roads Wynnum and Sandgate would still be mosquito-ridden, small, isolated settlements, and not the progressive modern suburbs that we find them to-day. Similar development has been going on all about us. We find the working people building homes in suburbs which are connected by a network of very fine roads. Had we still the pettifogging councils that we had in 1924, bodies which only fiddled and tinkered with municipal problems, we could not possibly have made the improvements that we find to-day.

During the debate hon. members opposite have made certain statements in defence of their idea of representation of property. The substance of every statement made by hon. members opposite in regard to adult franchise has been made by their political predecessors, who were also in opposition to adult franchise in State or Federal affairs. So soon as any enlargement of the franchise was foreshadowed it was met by the same arguments that have been made here to-day by hon. members who are supposed to be the representatives of the people in this Parliament. They argue that a person must have a stake in the country, and their idea of a stake is the ownership of a house. The working man has a stake in the country; it is the welfare of himself, his wife, and his children. When one looks back and sees the progress that has been made one realises that the arguments of hon. members opposite are ridiculous. Progress commenced when the people, as a people, began to secure some rights in their own government and in such things as public safety, buildings, the establishment of factories, the building of shops, sanitation, health, and means of transport.

The Leader of the Opposition said that the conferring of the adult franchise on the people will prove of no benefit to the city council. He said it was a matter of securing brains. Brains are very valuable in all forms of government, because we had experience in this State of a period of three years during which brains in the people controlling the State were noticeable by their absence. I agree with the hon. gentleman that brains are valuable in municipal affairs; they are just as valuable in State affairs. What the Leader of the Opposition apparently overlooked in the matter of adult franchise in civic affairs is the wider sense of responsibility of the people governing the city and their responsibility to the people who elected them, as a people. They are responsible to the people who desire to be decent, clean, happy, and prosperous, although they may not be ratepayers, and not to a section who are concerned only with dividends, interest, and profits or businesses. That is the distinction. The council will be responsible to

the whole of the people. The hon. member for Aubigny is a very fine illustration in that respect. All he need do is to throw his mind back to the time when he contemplated the passage of a Bill to prolong the miserable life of his Government. He no doubt remembers very well the night when the people of Brisbane gathered in the City Hall in thousands to protest against the proposed action of his Government. He soon realised his sense of responsibility to the people. He did not ask of the people in that hall whether they paid rates, whether they owned premises, whether they had offices in Queen street, or anything else. The indignation of the citizens of this city who had gathered to protest against his proposal compelled him to surrender very promptly indeed.

Mr. MOORE: I was not even interested.

The HOME SECRETARY: The people of the city of Brisbane gathered together that night saw to it that the hon. gentleman became interested. He then realised his sense of responsibility to the citizens as a whole and not merely to the property-owners.

The hon. member said that my statement about the progress of this city under the adult franchise was a reflection upon the past mayors and past councillors. That was nothing of the kind any more than the talk of Magna Charta would be a reflection upon the personal honour and integrity of King John. It is more than likely that King John's ghost would say, "Hear, hear!" in this Chamber to the arguments advanced by hon. members opposite. Probably King John used the same arguments with the barons, for it is the same argument that has been persisted in by Tory parties right through the ages. The people to whom I have referred carried on local government to the best of their ability in accordance with the laws of the time. In order to secure a seat in any legislative chamber or in any municipal council, they had to pay heed to the demands of the business people and the property-owners, whose demands were not always in the interests of the people as a whole. I did not reflect upon the personal character of past aldermen. I contended that progress had been made since the people as a whole had secured some voice in State and municipal affairs.

The hon. member for Hamilton stated that it was a pity that political warfare had been introduced into municipal affairs. From the point of view of the hon. member, there is not the slightest doubt that it is. For a long period of years the political party of which the hon. member is a member had a monopoly in local government affairs; there certainly was no political warfare, because there was only one political party. The objection to the introduction of political feeling arose only when people of Labour convictions began to enter local government affairs. No objection was raised when members of Parliament belonging to the political party of the hon. member were members of local authorities. In my own native town of Ithaca members of this House were members of the council for years, but nobody raised any cry about it. The Hon. A. G. C. Hawthorn was a member of that council for many years. He was a member of a political party and a man with definite political convictions. Hon. members opposite did not say that his being there was wrong. They said that it was quite right

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that he should be there, because they also belonged to his political party. It was only when Labour candidates began to enter the Ithaca Council chamber and other council chambers throughout the State that hon. members opposite decided that political feelings in local authority affairs were bad, because a political influence hostile to them was creeping in.

Hon. members opposite have also said that the Bill was one to give the Labour Party an advantage at the forthcoming city elections. The hon. members for Hamilton, Oxley, and Sandgate have insisted upon that. They seem to think that the only object of a Labour Government in passing legislation is to get a political advantage for themselves. The Bill is not a Bill of that kind. When discussing the proposed alteration of the franchise by the Moore Government in 1930, the hon. member for Hamilton frankly told a meeting in his electorate that the Bill his Government were to introduce was designed to keep the Labour Party out of the Brisbane City Council.

Mr. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The statement of the hon. gentleman is absolutely untrue. I never made the statement.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Home Secretary must accept the denial of the hon. member for Hamilton.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do accept it. I am glad to hear the hon. member deny it. I hope, too, that he will see that the press that published the statement also accepts his denial. The report went on to say that the hon. member regretted the intrusion of party politics into local government affairs, and expressed the view that they should be kept out. It also stated that he said that the proposed amendment of the City of Brisbane Act was being made by his Government so as to put an end to party politics in municipal affairs by putting an end to the Labour Party in the Brisbane City Council. I hope that the hon. member will see that the paper that published the report contradicts it.

Mr. RUSSELL: Stick to facts.

The HOME SECRETARY: I shall give the hon. member some more facts. It is said that the Bill is to give an advantage to the Labour Party at the forthcoming municipal elections. Even if the Labour Party were sure that every Labour nominee at the forthcoming municipal elections would be defeated as a result of this Bill, we would still introduce it, because the Bill is based on justice and seeks to give the people a voice in municipal affairs. We shall legislate in the interests of right and justice for the people, irrespective of how our candidates fare during the elections. We cannot afford to lose sight of the need for a principle of a free and wide suffrage in municipal affairs for the sake of avoiding the possible loss of a candidate at the next municipal election.

To illustrate further the stupidity of the arguments of hon. members opposite, let me quote two aspects of municipal government in Brisbane. Greater Brisbane was created by a Labour Government who were as wide awake as any Government who have sat on the Treasury benches. They deliberately created in the interests of the people a city with a 10-mile radius. Hon. members opposite objected to a 10-mile

radius, considering it to be too big. The Government of the day said that this radius was necessary in order to give the city room for expansion and development. Had there been a desire on the part of the Government to control the affairs of the city they could have created a greater Brisbane with a 3 or 5-mile radius and thus prevented the party represented by hon. members opposite from ever having much of a voice in municipal government, in Brisbane. A greater Brisbane area with a 3-mile radius would return an almost unanimous Labour team to the council.

Mr. MAXWELL: You flatter yourself.

The HOME SECRETARY: To realise the chances, the hon. member has only to scrutinise the results of the various elections during the last fifteen or twenty years in respect of electorates within a 3-mile radius of the General Post Office. He will then know that almost every such election has returned a Labour majority. It would have been in the interests of the Labour Party to restrict the radius. The Labour Government of the day realised that they had very little chance of winning seats in the outer area, and that the outer area has more or less made a National majority on the council possible. The fact that the Government insisted on doing the right thing by the people of Brisbane disposes of any suggestion of ulterior motives on their part. Let us take the last two elections in Brisbane and see if any political advantage was reaped by the Labour Party as a result of adult franchise. The 1927 elections were held on adult franchise, which enrolled 130,000 voters. The 1930 elections were held on the restricted franchise introduced by the Moore Government. Under that franchise 94,000 electors were disfranchised. The Labour Party secured far better results in the 1930 elections than it did in the 1927 elections. Anyone scrutinising the figures would be justified in asserting that a restricted franchise was of advantage to the Labour Party, but we are not concerned about which side gets the advantage. We realise the right and justice of giving votes to all citizens of Brisbane and we are giving them that right under this Bill.

The hon. member for Oxley asserted that the Moore Government's Bill had had a beneficial influence on the finances of the council. The hon. member, as a metropolitan representative, should have a more intimate knowledge of the financial affairs of his city. It is true that the council closed its last financial year with a credit balance of £80,000, but that result was achieved by getting rid of the permanent workers and carrying out the bulk of the operations of the city under the system of relief work. The Brisbane City Council actually imposed on the State in respect of work which should have been done by its permanent staff. It is an easy matter to save money by paying off regular hands and using in their place the fund created by the Government in order to provide food and shelter for the unemployed. The financial rule of the Brisbane City Council during the last three years has certainly been no advertisement for the Act which created it.

The hon. member for Oxley objected to any person having a vote if he was resident in the city a month or two only. We all know that when election time comes round the hon. member bestirs himself in getting

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people on the roll in order that he may secure their votes. It troubles him not how long those people have been resident in his electorate. It savours of insincerity when an hon. member encourages the enrolment of people resident only a month or two in an electorate for the purpose of securing their votes at the State election, and then seek to deny the same people votes in local government matters.

The favoured argument of hon. members opposite has been that boarders and other persons do not pay any rates to the city because they are not the heads of households; and they contend that therefore they should be deprived of the franchise. That argument is shallow. We all know perfectly well that consumers purchasing goods from any store or emporium pay the rates on city properties in exactly the same way as they pay the wages of the employees, the interest on the overdraft, and the profits of the shareholders. When a customer enters an emporium to buy a shirt, a pair of boots, or a pair of trousers the shopkeeper does not apportion the cost, setting aside so much for rent, so much for taxes, and so much for interest. Assume that the cost price of a shirt is 4s. Fifty per cent. is added for overhead expenses, which include rent, rates, insurance, employees' wages, and all the other costs of running the business, making the price 6s.; 1s. is wanted for dividend, making the price 7s.; and the customer is told, "The price is 7s.; take it or leave it." The rates are included the same as any other form of overhead cost. Hon. members opposite would lead us to believe that the commercial community did not know their overhead costs. One would believe that they added their "overhead" to the price of goods without taking rates into account. The fact is that no person could exist in business who did not know his overhead costs and did not include in his prices every item of those costs. If the argument is sound that the boarder, the person who occupies a flat, or the person who sleeps in the park, does not pay rates, why all the fuss about the reduction to the people in Customs duties? We find the press bursting into headlines about the relief to the community from a reduction in Customs duties. I have never paid 1s. to the Customs Department directly. How is the reduction to affect me? There are one or two hon. members here who, by virtue of being in business, perhaps pay direct taxation to the Customs Department, but the number of people in Queensland who pay direct taxation to that department is very few indeed. But there is not a person in this State who does not in the food or the drink which he consumes pay some portion of the Customs duty collected by the Commonwealth Government. Every consumer in this State is paying Customs duty every time he buys an article. The purchaser of a tin of tobacco pays 5d. or 6d. to the Customs Department—not directly, nevertheless he pays it. According to the arguments put up by hon. members opposite the only people who should have a vote in Federal politics are the importers, because they are the people who directly pay the vast amount of Customs revenue. The argument is as logical in the one case as in the other. The consuming public pay all costs on commodities, whether Customs duties, interest on overdraft, rent, rates, the cost of the proprietor's motor car—all these items

are added charges to the cost of all commodities. In the last analysis the consumer of any article is the person who pays all these costs. Every consumer in Brisbane pays his share of the rates of business premises in Brisbane exactly as he pays his share of the Customs duties collected by the Commonwealth Government.

Hon. member after hon. member has harped upon the cry that irresponsible people who do not directly pay rates—I have proved that they indirectly pay them—will mispend public money if they have a vote in municipal affairs. They have a vote in State affairs, and they do not pay direct taxation to the State. If it is right to disfranchise them in municipal affairs that principle holds good in State affairs. It certainly holds good in a Chamber where only yesterday the Treasurer outlined an expenditure of £16,000,000 of the people's money. If the 94,000 people who were municipally disfranchised by the late Government are sufficiently honest to participate in the election of members of Parliament to consider the expenditure of £16,000,000 of public money, I fail to see that they are too dishonest to participate in the election of representatives of the city in which they live. These 94,000 people are voting for the expenditure of money throughout the State; yet hon. members opposite say that they should be denied a voice in the spending of money collected in their own city. The argument is fallacious. This statement is becoming such a common slander, and is repeated so often that hon. members opposite will begin to believe it. It is a slander upon the poor people—upon the non-property owning people—to suggest that they are not honest—

Mr. R. M. KING: No one ever said they were not honest.

The HOME SECRETARY: The claim of hon. members opposite that they are irresponsible and will waste public money is a claim of dishonesty. If in my own department I spend public money without due regard to honesty and value, then I am a rogue. If a person does not see that money entrusted to his care in a fiduciary capacity is spent honestly, then he is a rogue, and the member of Parliament does not have regard to honesty and value in the expenditure of public money is a rogue. The same holds good in municipal and business affairs. If the hon. member for Windsor allows someone in his warehouse to spend money on behalf of the firm, he expects that person to spend it fairly and honestly. I know the hon. member would not be so foolish as to contend that because the employee concerned had no financial interest in the firm he was going to steal the money in the absence of the hon. member. Why then say that about people who look after municipal affairs? If it does not apply in his own business it does not apply in the municipal business.

Mr. C. TAYLOR: I said nothing of the kind.

The HOME SECRETARY: Hon. members opposite keep saying that these people will waste public money if they have any say in the representation of the council. If that applies to public men it applies also to business men, importers, or producers who would be prevented from employing anyone unless they had some financial

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interest in the undertaking, on the ground that if these people had no interest in the undertaking itself they would disregard honesty and fail to give value in service to the firm concerned. The same principle applies in Government as in private enterprise. If we do not see that money is spent with due regard to the interests of the community we are no better than any other defaulting agent who mispends the money of his firm. Take the 66,000 women who are disfranchised by the Moore Government because they were not occupiers of property. Are they rogues? Hon. members opposite say they should not have votes, that they are not to be trusted; that not having property they should not vote because they would vote for somebody who would mispend money. History proves that these people have a far better sense of responsibility than those who are in the main the propertied classes of the community. When men are wanted to fight for their country no one asks whether they are ratepayers or not. Hon. members opposite would give a vote to Roberts, the cancer quack, who was exploiting the community to the extent of £500 a week with his bogus clinic. Being occupiers of premises such people are the salt of the earth in the judgment of hon. members opposite. The nurses at the General Hospital, properly qualified women, making their living in a noble profession, cannot be trusted, but spiliers like Roberts can be given votes! What a wonderful idea in selecting a class to govern the community—to divide people into two sections, one section which owns property and shall have votes, and another section who does not own property and shall not have votes. I could understand hon. members opposite making a case for giving the enfranchisement only to people who had some qualification of value such as education, professional knowledge, or even patriotism—I could understand their making a case in that direction—but merely to say they are going to divide the people into two sections and that those who have property shall govern the country while those who have not property shall not have any voice in it is inexcusable.

Another point made by hon. members opposite was the objection to the election of mayor by the people, but the election of mayor by the people is the only way of selecting an executive officer who will be responsible to all the city and not to one corner of it. Under this Bill the mayor will be the representative of all the city, and his urge and incentive will be to do his duty to the city. Without in any way reflecting upon the personal integrity of the gentleman who is Lord Mayor of Brisbane, we know that he has a drag upon him from his own ward. He is the chief executive officer spending the money of the city, and whether he favours his own ward or not he will be accused of doing so. If any work is done in his own ward people will say he is looking after that ward, looking after his nest and his own people, and acting against the interests of the rest of the community. He should be protected from any attack of that kind and be made responsible to the whole of the city; then there would be no room for a charge of that kind.

The Leader of the Opposition said there was in his opinion no advantage in having

a wide charter; but I cannot see any advantage in having a narrow charter or outlook. We have deliberately given the people of Brisbane a wide charter for a purpose. I know hon. members opposite cannot visualise the possibilities of the city of Brisbane or look ahead, but the opportunity exists for big things to be done for Brisbane under a wide charter. The Leader of the Opposition has been accustomed all his life to the affairs of a country shire, and as a critic of the administration of Brisbane he is not too well recommended from his own shire of Rosalie. We know that the new chairman of the Rosalie Shire Council had a good man-sized job ahead of him when he took over the management of affairs of the Rosalie shire from the Leader of the Opposition. One of the things that will always be remembered about that shire is that valuations were reduced for the purpose of enabling the council to dodge its due share of the precept made by the hospitals board.

Mr. MAXWELL: We had to reduce the average.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is correct. A twopenny-halfpenny advantage was to be had by putting the valuations down—the council could pass it on to the neighbouring shires. That sort of thing does not arise in the city of Brisbane at all. These means would never be of advantage to Brisbane. Higher ideals and broader motives are required for governing the capital city of this State.

I was interested to hear the remarks of the hon. member for Wynnum. He gave us a very learned discourse on the responsibilities of the various Governments. He said the city of Brisbane had no legislative power. The city of Brisbane has a legislative power, although it is certainly limited in its scope. This Parliament has only limited legislative power; so also has the Federal Parliament. The powers of the city of Brisbane are limited, but they are far wider than those of any other local authority in the world, and they will enable the men in control to do very big things for the city. The council is charged with the control of light, water supply, sanitation, cleansing, transport, maintenance of parks, beautification of the city, and all those amenities which a great city should possess. It has power to make ordinances of a very wide character, subject, of course, to the approval of the Governor in Council. The man of vision will have plenty of opportunities to show his ability as a member of the council.

The final argument of the hon. member for Wynnum was an attack on my idea of democracy. If democracy is as described by the hon. member for Wynnum, then I know nothing about the subject. He says that we are inconsistent in refusing to enrol, say, graziers from Western Queensland on the metropolitan roll. He says that we claim that the people who buy goods in the city pay rates, and therefore they should have the right to have their names on the electoral roll of the city. However, they would not be residents, and are in exactly the same position as I would be were I to buy goods from Longreach or Cunnamulla. I would not have a vote in those towns, simply on that account. I am not entitled to two votes for that reason. I reside in the city of Brisbane, and am entitled to vote only in the area in which I live and rear my family.

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The most important work which comes within the ambit of the Brisbane City Council is looking after the public health. We know that the public health is of paramount importance. We are realising the importance of health, especially in tropical or sub-tropical countries. Proper regard to the interests of public health in Australia is going to play a more prominent part in keeping Australia white than is the possession of battleships, but it is shamefully neglected in the city of Brisbane to-day. A system is in operation in which we find sanitary wagons with a capacity of ninety pans leaving the depot and going out to do the cleansing of an area containing 100 to 130 pans. The contractor for that service is paid so much per pan per service. The wagon goes out with ninety clean pans, and it is supposed to leave a clean pan at every house. It goes out with ninety clean pans and comes back with the collection from 120 houses. How is it done? Is that not a shameful neglect of the health of the community? Will the flies from those unclean conveniences merely settle on the noses of the ratepayers? Do they not menace the health of every member of the community? Are they not a menace to the poor and rich alike? Of course, they are. Health matters are of such vital importance to the people of this community that we would be failing in our duty to the people if we did not give every sane and honest adult a right to a voice in the government of the city.

Question—"That the Bill be now read a second time" (*Mr. Hanlon's motion*)—put; and the House divided:—

AYES, 26.

Mr. Barber	Mr. Keogh
" Brassington	" King, W. T.
" Bruce	" Llewelyn
" Bulcock	" Mullan
" Conroy	" O'Keefe
" Cooper	" Pease
" Copley, P. K.	" Smith
" Dash	" Stoptford
" Foley	" Taylor, G. C.
" Funnell	" Wellington
" Gledson	
" Hanlon	<i>Tellers:</i>
" Hanson	" Gair
" Hynes	" Williams

NOES, 22.

Mr. Barnes	Mr. Roberts
" Bayley	" Sizer
" Brand	" Sparkes
" Clayton	" Swayne
" Deacon	" Taylor, C.
" Kenny	" Tozer
" King, R. M.	" Walker
" Maher	" Wienholt
" Maxwell	
" Moore	<i>Tellers:</i>
" Nicklin	" Fadden
" Nimmo	" Russell

PAIRS.

AYES	NOES.
Mr. Copley, W. J.	Mr. Costello
" Waters	" Plunkett
" Collins	" Peterson
" Hayes	" Edwards
" Larcombe	" Daniel
" Bedford	" Morgan

Resolved in the affirmative.

Consideration of the Bill in Committee made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

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MOTOR SPIRIT VENDORS BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (*Hon. H. A. Bruce, The Tableland*) [3.17 p.m.]: I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

The Leader of the Opposition has contended that there is no reason why the Bill should provide that every person who sold motor spirit should keep proper books and accounts. He expressed the opinion that it would be sufficient to provide that the companies concerned should purchase a certain quantity of power alcohol, presumably, to do with it as they liked. He said that they could run it down the gutter, send it overseas, or use it for any other purpose whatever. All this Bill lays down is that the companies shall take so much power alcohol in proportion to the quantity of petrol sold. To ascertain the quantity of petrol sold, it is necessary for the companies to keep books, and that they should be open for inspection by the Government to determine the amount of power alcohol which they should take. That is really the main issue in so far as the keeping of books is concerned.

The Leader of the Opposition ventured the opinion that there would not be any likelihood of an increase in the manufacture of power alcohol during the next twelve months. The object of this legislation is to enable the factory to get rid of its present production of power alcohol. Once it is enabled to do so, it is logical to assume that the money received from the product can be employed in adding to the machinery with the object of producing a greater quantity. As I interjected when the Leader of the Opposition was speaking, we will then have rivers emanating from a spring. It is very difficult indeed to visualise the future increase in the production of power alcohol. Immediately after the Leader of the Opposition resumed his seat the hon. member for Kennedy spoke and referred to the Tully sugar area. This is a new sugar area. That hon. member foresaw the great possibilities of the extension to that area of the manufacture of power alcohol. His arguments were based on very sound grounds. To-day there is great dissatisfaction in connection with the assignment of cane lands. It may be quite possible to grow sugar-cane on unassigned lands for the manufacture of power alcohol, or it may be possible for the sugar industry to permit cane to be grown on unassigned lands, paying the fixed price for cane used in the manufacture of refined sugar and another price for the cane used in the manufacture of power alcohol. That would be a matter to be decided by the sugar interests. It certainly would give the sugar industry an opportunity of reviewing the whole position in the full knowledge that this was a new method of capitalising its products, and with the object of reorganising the industry. This could be done with the same zeal as that with which the industry was originally organised.

The Leader of the Opposition offered some criticism of the alcohol distillery at Sarina. He said that mistakes had been made in the purchase of the plant originally which had added largely to the costs. I did not take much notice of his remarks at the time because wastage of capital by private enterprise is quite common. I am given to understand that no mistake was made in the installation of plant at the Sarina distillery.

In 1927 the distillery started to make an alcohol-ether fuel which, in those days, was more or less a standard mixture in the power alcohol world. When commercial alcohol became possible there was a general turn to fuels containing small percentages of absolute alcohol, owing to the fact that with such a mixture carbonisation remained normal, and consumption was the same or even better, and the distillery at Sarina at once installed a more up-to-date plant. It would have been a mistake not to advance with the times, and it is considered that the Sarina works were particularly lucky inasmuch as the ether was still sold at a good price, instead of remaining at the distillery as waste. We all know that with the introduction of improved plants it is now being found necessary in all industries to scrap first-class machinery costing a great deal of money in order to make production more economical and cope with competition. I know a case where most up-to-date automatic boilers installed by a Brisbane company a few years ago have now to be scrapped to make way for more modern and more economical methods of production. The Sarina factory found it necessary to alter its method of procedure. That no doubt added to the immediate cost, but the object was to save costs later on.

From the way in which this Bill was dealt with by a portion of the press there seems to be some misunderstanding as to the method in which the power alcohol will be distributed. It is generally known that if the various oil companies were compelled to put the whole of the power alcohol output into their own mixture, it would merely mean that from 1½ to 2 per cent. would be added. That would be absolutely useless as a mixture, and it is not the intention of the Government to do anything so absurd. It is well known that the Shell Company of Australia Limited has for years taken the whole of the supply of power alcohol at Sarina for a mixture known as "Shellkol," on a 15 per cent. basis, the balance of their product being sold as "Shell" spirit. When this Bill becomes law the companies will be able to mix, say, 10 per cent. of power alcohol with the petrol ordinarily retailed by them and sell it under trade names that they will designate. I can give no better instance in that regard than the case of the Shell Company of Australia Limited with its "Shell" and the "Shellkol" products.

As will be seen from the following table mixtures of petrol and power alcohol are retailed in other countries under various names and in varying standards of admixture:—

Country.	Name of Mixture.	Proportion of Power Alcohol.
		Per cent.
France ..	Serco	13
" ..	Azur	14
" ..	Essence tourisme Eco	10
Italy ..	Carburant national Esso	20?
" ..	Shell Dynamine	20?
" ..	Super Victoria	?
Germany ..	Aral	10 to 15
" ..	Bevaulin ..	20 to 25
" ..	Albizol ..	15
" ..	Dynamine ..	10 to 13
" ..	Esso	10 to 13
" ..	Duoline ..	20 to 25
" ..	Olexine ..	10 to 13
" ..	Olesite ..	20 to 25
" ..	Motorine ..	15

That statement is particularly interesting in the light of the remark made by the Leader of the Opposition that the opportunities for expansion were not great. The hon. gentleman certainly lacked vision when he made it.

Mr. MOORE: I did not say that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Probably a more important matter raised was that concerning price. When this matter was under review by previous Governments and when the present Bill was in course of preparation by this Government, the price for first-grade petrol was 2s. 2d. per gallon. Since that time there has undoubtedly been a trade war in the petrol industry. In the last two months the price of petrol has increased in the United States, but synchronous with that increase the oil companies here have reduced the price by 7d. a gallon, so that the present-day price of first-grade petrol is 1s. 5d. per gallon. I have no doubt that, unlike the Great War, which left the whole world in debt, when the petrol war is over the companies will return to their normal price of 2s. 2d. per gallon, and will possibly add an extra 1d. to pay for the cost of the trade war. When they do that, not only will power alcohol at its present price be included in the mixture, but its production will show a wonderful profit which can be used for the purpose of extending operations.

I admit that to-day there would be some difficulty and necessity for adjustment. That is one of the reasons why we could not definitely lay down certain things in the Bill. Practically everything in the Bill has to be left to regulation. The hon. member for Cook, I think, found that he could not oppose the Bill, but what opposition he did offer was contained in the statement that he hoped that when the regulations were put into operation they would be well and wisely drawn. I am sure the hon. member for Cook realises that the regulations will be well and wisely drawn by the present Government.

The hon. member for Mirani has been keenly interested in this matter, I take it primarily because the Sarina factory is in his district and he is in close touch with the factory. The records show that he has spoken in this House previously on the lines we intend to adopt in this Bill.

I can assure hon. members that the Bill is framed in its present form for several reasons. Some of the clauses are drafted so that we shall not come into conflict with section 92 of the Federal Constitution; others are worded so that we can fix the amount of alcohol to be used without unduly handicapping the oil companies. The companies are to be regulated so that we can deal with them as may be necessary from time to time.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*) [3.34 p.m.]: The object of the Bill, which purports to encourage the production of fuel from our own resources rather than get it from outside, is eminently desirable, but there are other things to look at before we can say that we are in favour of its provisions or not.

If, as was suggested by the Minister to-day, the Bill is designed for the purpose of getting one company out of its difficulties with regard to a great deal of

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alcohol which it cannot sell and of subsidising it, it is quite unjust that the Government should pick out a section of the community, the motorists of Queensland, to pay that subsidy. Any subsidising should be done by the community; a section should not be compelled to pay a higher price in order that the shareholders in the company who have got themselves into this position should be able to secure dividends. The people who use petrol should not be expected to bolster up another industry with which they have nothing to do.

Anything that is done ought to be on a national basis, especially if it is desired to give all possible encouragement to the manufacture of alcohol not only as a fuel for internal combustion engines in times of peace, but also as a measure of defence, because in time of war it might be difficult to get the requisite amount of fuel from overseas. It should not be a question of singling out a section of the people and telling them they have to subsidise the industry. The State or Federal Government should place the matter on a community basis. If it is to be a national industry, then the community should provide the subsidy for the benefit it receives from its establishment, and the people who have motor cars or other internal combustion engines should not be singled out to raise the requisite amount of money.

The Minister admitted that price factors were of considerable moment under present conditions, but with first-grade petrol selling at 2s. 2d. a gallon the admixture of alcohol with petrol would be profitable. He recognises—and everybody else must recognise—that there will be considerable difficulty till the price of the fuel is raised, as has been forecast. He wants Parliament to sign a blank cheque and give the Government the power to prescribe the amount of alcohol that must be mixed with the petrol and the rate at which it must be sold, and urges that everything must be left entirely in the hands of the Minister. That indefiniteness runs all through the Bill, and the Minister says it is necessary under the conditions which prevail to-day.

The vendors of petrol will have to pay the license fees and it is perfectly obvious that this provision as to licenses is included for the purpose of keeping outside section 92 of the Federal Constitution. That is the only way in which the State Government can control the individual who sells petrol which he gets from outside the State.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You got that information when you yourself were Premier.

Mr. MOORE: We did not get to that stage because I endeavoured to get an agreement between the various companies. There is no doubt that clause has been included for that purpose. Whether it will hold good when tested is another thing; probably it will not. We do not know how long the present low price of petrol in Queensland will continue. Under the provisions of this Bill there will have to be an increase in Queensland in the price of motor spirit of roughly 1½d. to 2d. per gallon, for no doubt the oil companies will say, "We do not see why we should finance a national industry." This extra charge will have to be borne by Queensland and will not be distributed over the whole of Australia.

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In his introductory speech the Minister said that this Bill was not for the purpose of getting one particular company out of its difficulties, but for the purpose of utilising the by-products of the sugar industry. What sort of outcry would be raised in the South if people there were asked to pay a little more for fuel because of what they would designate as another subsidy?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Power alcohol can be made from other vegetable matters.

Mr. MOORE: That may sound all right, but no farmer is going to grow potatoes or vegetables to make alcohol out of them.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: If they get a surplus, they can.

Mr. MOORE: That is the only occasion on which it will be done, but if there is a surplus the price comes down. To suggest that the farmer is going to grow maize or potatoes to make alcohol is absurd in a country like Australia, where the costs of production are very high. It is unlikely that any individual will build a factory, which will rely on a surplus of production to keep it in operation. All such factors have to be taken into account.

I make a suggestion to the Minister which may get him out of a great deal of difficulty. Possibly he may not agree with me. In Queensland at the present time roughly about 1,000,000 gallons of alcohol have to be got rid of. Would it not be better for the Minister to proclaim a district in which this product is to be sold? It is quite easy to place in the Bill a provision which would enable the number of districts to be proclaimed. The district in which the alcohol is produced could be proclaimed as the district in which it was to be sold and the commodity could be used in that manner. For the purpose of selling the admixture throughout the State it would be necessary to have extra petrol pumps erected and the expense of doing that would be incurred for a comparatively small supply. The Minister has stated that alcohol to the extent of only 1½ per cent. to 2 per cent. of the consumption of petrol is available. "Shellkol" consists of second-grade petrol mixed with power alcohol, and extra pumps are now required for the sale of it. Extra pumps would increase the cost of distribution. The oil companies will not abandon the sales of those products which during a period of years have cost them a considerable amount of money to market. An area should be proclaimed and if there is then a surplus a further area could be proclaimed. This would obviate the disorganisation of practically the whole of the selling arrangements of the companies throughout the State. Operations would be centralised.

Mr. WIENHOLT: That would narrow the field of subsidy.

Mr. MOORE: The area in which it was sold should not be expected to bear the whole burden of subsidy. We are proceeding on the basis that this is a national industry. No one would dream of introducing a Bill to bolster up an industry that was not making a profit. The Government should not insist upon the motorists paying a higher price in order to bolster up an industry of national importance when the burden should be borne by the community as a whole. One company is to reap an advantage. I could deal with the suggestion about the alteration of

machinery, but I do not desire to do so. We should be thankful that the Millaquin refinery is a profitable undertaking, otherwise a Bill might be introduced to compel people to add rum to every drink. (Laughter.) We are proceeding on a very dangerous course in introducing a Bill to compel people to bolster up an industry by using its products. It is more than likely that other industries in difficulty will seek a similar advantage. The directors of another industry might point out that the shareholders of the company are receiving no dividends and that the industry would cease operations unless the Government were prepared to introduce a Bill to compel the people to use its products.

Mr. W. T. KING: That is Americanism.

Mr. MOORE: It may be, but we have gone beyond the stage of argument in this case. A Bill has been introduced. I am entirely in favour of the proposal to assist in the production locally of a proportion of motor fuel to be consumed in Queensland. To become independent of foreign supplies would be a national advantage.

Mr. O'KEEFE: We would want the fuel if war broke out.

Mr. MOORE: That is one reason why I support the proposal, but I would remind the hon. member that we would also require the motor vehicles that his Government are forcing off the roads. Anything which helps an industry in which he is interested is quite acceptable to the hon. member. The Bill can be justified only because it seeks to make this country independent of foreign supplies. I do not think that it will benefit the sugar industry to any great extent. Yesterday the Minister admitted that molasses, which at one time was a waste product, is now a valuable product for the manufacture of fertilizers and fuel. It is just as valuable for the manufacture of fertilizer as it is for the manufacture of power alcohol, unless the price of power alcohol is to be increased. The hon. gentleman could ascertain from the company the price that it pays to-day for molasses as compared with the price paid when it was regarded as a waste product. The question of using class B sugar juices for the manufacture of power alcohol has been investigated by the Government and by people associated with the sugar industry, but it was found to be unprofitable. It was considered to be more profitable to continue operations as at present. It may be profitable to grow a certain type of cane on unassigned land for the manufacture of power alcohol, but I am not prepared to make any comment on that proposal. The Bill should be passed with the object of assisting an industry which will be of national importance.

Mr. W. T. KING: That is being done.

Mr. MOORE: Then why single out the owner of the internal combustion engine and tell him that he must pay the subsidy?

Mr. W. T. KING: He is using the fuel in industry.

Mr. MOORE: Of course, he is; but why should he be singled out to bolster up another industry? If it is a national question, then the whole community should pay their share towards the subsidy. Motorists and other internal combustion engine users in Queensland are again being picked out for special taxation and the infliction of all sorts of regulations. They are to be placed

in a different position from similar persons over the border in New South Wales. We do not know whether the price of spirit is to be increased or not, but it is very likely that it will be. The whole basis of subsidising this industry by imposing taxation on a particular class is wrong. The tax should be imposed on the whole community. There is no question about the efficiency of the fuel. It has been tried up to a 75 per cent. proportion with mineral petrol.

Mr. W. T. KING: You used it yourself with good results.

Mr. MOORE: I did use it.

Mr. W. T. KING: And with good results.

Mr. MOORE: My results were satisfactory. I used power alcohol because it was a Queensland product. I did not get any better mileage from my car. I tried it out over specially measured courses; but in the ultimate result the mileage and other results were about the same. It had one or two advantages and one or two disadvantages. It was about equal in results to the imported spirit. It evidently was not quite so good as to create a demand for itself; if it were there would be no need for this Bill. Pumps for its sale were installed in several parts of Brisbane, but they have been removed. There is an old saying that "good wine needs no bush." Why did the Railway Department discontinue using it? It would be quite a simple matter if the Minister accepted my suggestion and made this Bill applicable to districts to be proclaimed as it was deemed necessary. What I do not like about this legislation is that it upsets the whole system of organisation of the distributors and retailers of motor spirit, necessitating extra costs. If each company is compelled to install extra pumps for the sale of this mixed spirit, the result will be an increase in the cost. The companies will certainly not sell this mixture out of the pumps now installed, because the spirits sold from them have created a demand for themselves. They must install new pumps in much the same way as the Shell Company installed pumps for the sale of "Shellkol." The companies will be compelled to take a certain proportion of power alcohol. They will require to have a mixing plant and methods of distribution. That cost will all depend on how that is done. The defect in this Bill is that it is made applicable to the whole of the State instead of a circumscribed area.

The PREMIER: You misunderstand the position. The company will be told how much power alcohol it must take in each area, and it can make whatever arrangements it likes for its mixture and distribution.

Mr. MOORE: I do not misunderstand the position. I quite understand what the Premier says. Not merely does the Bill apply to the whole of Queensland, but the whole system of bookkeeping carried on by the companies is capable of being altered by instruction to the Minister. The Minister can prescribe what quantities of power alcohol shall be taken, the price for which it can be sold, and the price for which it can be purchased. In fact, the companies will be under the control of the Minister. He will see that the companies do not overcharge in any way; but the company manufacturing power alcohol will have no supervision to determine whether there is efficiency

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in manufacture or whether its costs are satisfactory.

At 3.52 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES (Mr. Hanson, *Buranda*) relieved Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Mr. MOORE: There are a great many cumbersome clauses in the Bill and all sorts of restrictions and regulations which are quite unnecessary. These will have the inevitable effect of increasing prices. The Premier may shake his head, but his Government cannot compel the companies to take power alcohol which costs about 10d. more per gallon than petrol and expect the mixed spirit to be sold at the present price of motor spirit. The Bill contains provisions to meet all sorts of contingencies. I do not like the new methods adopted in this legislation to enable the Government to secure further taxation. Every vendor of the motor spirit will require to be licensed, and doubtless an annual fee will be imposed. That is merely another tax. Motor retailers are already taxed, an annual fee of £10 being imposed by the city council for the registration of petrol bowlers. Then power is taken by the Minister to confiscate the bond that the vendor has deposited, although no right of appeal is given to the vendor. The Bill is cluttered up with all sorts of provisions that interfere with business. There is no provision in the Bill that the Minister may restrict the sale of the product to a particular area and no other. The Bill is applicable to the whole of Queensland, and it is possible that it may be used as an excuse for raising the price of petrol throughout the length and breadth of Australia.

Mr. W. T. KING: Surely that could be dealt with?

Mr. MOORE: Of course it could, but in doing so we might accentuate the antagonism which exists in some of the Southern States in regard to a Queensland industry.

Mr. W. T. KING: That is a remote probability.

Mr. MOORE: Not at all. It looks to me that the whole of the country may be penalised in order that a subsidy may be given to one section.

A great portion of this Bill could have been completely avoided if it had been framed in a simpler fashion. Information as to the sales of petrol in Queensland can easily be obtained without the necessity of prescribing that records be kept and inspected. One need only consider the figures relating to importations and sales to know the position. Furthermore, it should be a matter for the companies to say in what proportion the power alcohol shall be mixed with their own petrols, and how and where it shall be sold. All this interference with an industry that has reached its present position by intensive organisation will simply create adverse criticism. In France all that the authorities say to the petrol companies is, "You sell so many gallons of petrol; you have to take so many gallons of power alcohol."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They must find out the amount of petrol that is sold in order to arrive at the amount of power alcohol to be taken.

Mr. MOORE: They do.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: And books must be kept for that purpose.

[*Mr. Moore.*

Mr. MOORE: The major petrol companies have that information available now, and most of the small importers, who had to procure their supplies in drums, have gone out of existence. There are one or two that are left and they import it from Sydney. The consumer does not pay for it. He gets an advantage out of it because the small importers were competing with the large companies. The consumer alone should not be made to pay a subsidy to establish this as a national industry. If it is going to be a national industry the whole, and not a section of the community, should pay for it.

I am in accord with the Bill from the point of view of endeavouring to secure the manufacture of alcohol here and making ourselves more independent than we are now; but from other points of view, especially with regard to unnecessary clauses, the Bill could be immensely simplified. I hope the Minister will not say that he wants the Bill and nothing but the Bill. The whole measure could be simplified and the same objective be attained without a disturbance of industry such as is contemplated by the Bill. This meddling in other people's business seems to be a passion with the Government who now seem to be obsessed with a desire to charge fees to every vendor of petrol.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*) [4.3 p.m.]: This Bill should be viewed from a national aspect. When I mention that Australia's bill for petrol and benzine amounts to £3,692,507, it will be recognised that it will be a great advantage if we can retain even 15 per cent. or possibly 20 per cent. of that large sum within our own boundaries.

We know that fuel for internal combustion engines has become a vital necessity. What would be the position of Australia if, for instance, there was a war in the Pacific and our supplies of petrol and other fuel supplies for internal combustion engines were cut off? We can easily realise what an advantage it would be if we were able to supply ourselves to some extent with this vital necessity. I would point out that in other countries which are not fortunate enough to possess natural supplies of petrol, something has been done to supplement them by local production of fuel by way of distillation from vegetable or mineral products.

Mr. MOORE: It is much cheaper in those countries.

Mr. SWAYNE: That reminds me of the matter of price. I do not think that it is a fair thing in an industry like this to bring in the question of price, so far as we have gone. We have one factory in operation at present, but it has not been able to work full time owing to the refusal of the companies to blend some with their spirit. The factory is only working at one-quarter of its capacity. The present price is no criterion of the price at which the company could produce if it was going full time. I put the question to the manager of the factory, and he said that there would undoubtedly be a very big reduction in price if the factory was kept going full time.

I do not think that the Shell Company has been put to any great inconvenience in handling the quantity it is dealing with at the present time. I am told that there is no great difficulty at its establishment at

Townsville, and that the blend is easily made.

It is not right to look upon this matter as affecting only the sugar industry. Any product that contains starch or sugar can be converted into alcohol. In France, I think, a wood spirit is produced from sawdust; potatoes are often used, and in Java and other tropical countries such crops as cassava are utilised with excellent results. We are aware of the vital necessity that the tropical belt of this continent should be kept populated.

Australia imports huge quantities of motor fuel and at the present time it is impossible to say what quantity of power alcohol will be available for the purpose of mixing with the imported mineral oil. If cassava were used—a tropical product—it would be a big factor in settling our Northern lands.

The mixture is perfectly satisfactory, but no matter how good a product it may be it has to face the competition of similar products already on the market. The oil companies have expended a large amount of money in promoting the distribution of their own particular brands of petrol, and there will be difficulties in the way of the mixture getting a foothold in the same markets. It has been found that the mixing of power alcohol with a second-grade mineral spirit produces a first-grade article. Consequently there is no question about the suitability of the product. If there is opposition—although I have heard of none—I think provision should be made for dealing with those companies which refuse to handle the new mixture and prohibiting them from selling only the imported article.

At 4.11 p.m.,

Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair.

Mr. SWAYNE: I think it will be only a matter of time before the product will universally prove its merits. It has long been thought that it would be profitable to convert the last of the sugar syrup into alcohol. The matter has been debated at a number of technical conferences, but opinions have not been unanimous. Considering the present low price realised for the sale of our surplus sugar on the markets of the world, often at a loss, it is apparent that the last word has not been said on this phase of the sugar industry. The authorities differ as to the profitability or otherwise of such a process.

I am prepared to hear argument on the suggestion that the supply of molasses is limited. It is used for many purposes and as a stock food it has many virtues. I look forward to the day when an admixture of power alcohol and petrol will become the popular motor spirit, because I feel confident that other industries will benefit apart from the sugar industry. It may be that when that stage is reached molasses will form a very small proportion of the raw material. I suppose I would be safe in saying that in those countries where the admixture is made compulsory and has proved to be satisfactory, such a product as molasses does not exist, and that the alcohol is manufactured from ordinary farm crops. At the present time the lack of population in the Northern Territory is a menace to this continent, but the universal adoption of industrial alcohol—perhaps prepared from cassava and other starchy crops—as a component part of motor spirit may be the means of

settling this empty space. Power alcohol manufactured from ordinary farm crops has proved satisfactory in other countries, and it may be of benefit to farmers in our own country to manufacture power alcohol from cereal and root crops in seasons of glut. We shall be able to remedy any defect in the Bill during the Committee stages.

Mr. O'KEEFE (*Cairns*): I move the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed.

Resumption of debate made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

DOCUMENTS LAID ON TABLE OF HOUSE UNDER STANDING ORDER No. 293.

STATEMENT BY PREMIER.

The PREMIER (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*) [4.17 p.m.], by leave, without notice, said: Prior to the delivery of the Budget yesterday debate ensued on grievance before Supply. During the speech of the hon. member for Cook I challenged certain statements read by him from a document. I then took the unusual course of applying Standing Order No. 293. When the hon. member was speaking I felt that if the case were as he represented it to be it was one that required investigation. Consequently, I took action that was necessary in order that the papers should be investigated. After a thorough investigation of the case in regard to taxation the Deputy Commissioner of Taxes informs me that the action taken was in Federal jurisdiction and that the State Government had nothing at all to do with the matter. Furthermore, the Deputy Commissioner informs me that the general statement of the hon. member for Cook, as reported in "Hansard," is grossly misleading.

Mr. KENNY: You have got the solicitor's letter there to prove it. What silly rot!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The House adjourned at 4.19 p.m.