

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 1939

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Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. E. J. Hanson, Buranda) took the chair at 10.30 a.m.

QUESTIONS.

CIVIL AND MILITARY PAY OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ON DEFENCE DUTIES.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba), for Mr. NIMMO (Oxley), asked the Premier—

“In the case of Government employees attending militia camps or called up for military duty, does the Government make up any loss of remuneration—that is, the difference between military and civil pay? If not, what is the ruling in regard to this matter?”

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

“This matter was discussed at the recent Premiers’ Conference in Canberra, with the view of adopting a uniform practice. The conference adopted the following proposals:

- (1) That officers who have accrued or accruing recreation leave due to them be granted such leave upon application;
- (2) That officers who are eligible for extended leave be granted such extended leave upon application;
- (3) The officers who do not desire recreation and/or extended leave be granted special leave of absence without pay;
- (4) That officers granted special leave of absence without pay be allowed the difference between their civil pay and their military pay for a period not exceeding one annual training period of sixteen days of their respective units;
- (5) That, in respect of any period beyond the period referred to in paragraph (4), in the case of officers who are granted special leave of absence without pay (and where the civil pay is not made good by Departments), the Government pay the Public Service Superannuation Fund contributions and the assurance premiums of such officers where such are compulsory.

Reservations to (5): Subject, in the case of New South Wales and South

Australia, who desire to consider their position on this aspect, to the provision that neither State will act on any other basis without first placing the matter before the Premiers' Conference.

- (6) That the services of officers with naval, military, or air force units be recognised for the purposes of—

- (a) Computing salary payable on return to duty;
- (b) Computing extended leave, sick leave, recreation leave, and retiring gratuities;
- (c) Seniority."

SUPPLIES OF POTASH.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

"1. Is there any likelihood of a shortage of potash in Queensland?"

"2. If so, will he take steps to ensure the best use of available supplies, having particular regard to the requirements of agriculture?"

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK (Hon. F. W. Bulcock, Barcoo) replied—

"1. The uncontrolled use of potash would undoubtedly lead to a shortage of this essential ingredient in fertilisers.

"2. In order to avoid this possibility, I have been in consultation with the various fertiliser firms, and an agreement designed to mitigate the effects of any shortage has been arrived at. The proper and judicious use of potash must be ensured in order to conserve supplies, and the Government is closely following the position with a view to taking any action deemed necessary."

MANUFACTURE OF MARGARINE.

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS (Port Curtis) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

"In view of the recent representations made by the dairying industry, in which it was urged that the manufacture and sale of margarine made from imported vegetable oils be controlled, and as the manufacture of margarine from cheap imported oils seriously threatens the dairyman's local market, has the Government yet given consideration to this matter, and if so, in what direction or directions?"

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK (Hon. F. W. Bulcock, Barcoo) replied—

"The Australian Agricultural Council recently gave consideration to the question of controlling the manufacture of margarine made from imported oils and fats, of which coconut oil is the principal. The decision of the council and the representations of the dairying industry are at present under consideration."

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

SALE OF EXPORT SUGAR TO BRITISH SUGAR CONTROL BOARD.

The PREMIER (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, Mackay) (10.33 a.m.), by leave: Mr. Speaker, I desire to inform the House of the agreement entered into between the Queensland Government and the British Sugar Control Board, as a result of our negotiations during the past week.

"1. The International Sugar Agreement having lapsed, it is agreed that the contract for Queensland sugar must revert to a seasonal arrangement.

"2. The quantity included in this first contract for Queensland sugar with the British Sugar Control Board is the estimated remaining exportable surplus for the present Queensland season, and is to be approximately 290,000 tons above the quantities which have already been sold at a fixed price to Canada, or for which prices have already been fixed in the contracts with British refiners. This quantity is spread approximately as follows:—

		Tons.
September	..	45,000
October	..	84,000
November	..	80,000
December	..	66,000
January	..	15,000

"3. The price is to be 7s. 6d. per cwt., c.i.f. without deduction, on a basis of 96 degrees polarisation, plus existing preference and based on a rate of freight of 35s. 6d. per ton, also based on pre-emergency normal insurance rates; any extra charges for freight or insurance above such normal rates to be for account of the buyers.

"4. It is understood as between sellers and buyers that the price is intended to represent the basis of 7s. 6d. according to the values at the time these negotiations took place, and that in the event of currency developments or other developments rendering 7s. 6d. inadequate to give the return to sellers which is represented by that price at present, sellers will be entitled to re-open the question of price with a view to revision.

"5. It is also understood that the acceptance by the Queensland Government of these conditions is subject to the provision that if better terms are granted to other Empire producers, those better terms will be extended to Queensland.

"6. It is agreed that, as long as chartering remains free, the British Sugar Control Board will do everything possible to support the sellers' chartering agents in their endeavours to secure tonnage to meet the approximate monthly requirements under the present contract and that, in the event of all tonnage being requisitioned by the British Government, the British Sugar Control Board will continue to assist in the same manner.

"7. It is further agreed that it is the intention of both parties to this contract

that the present arrangements shall be extended on similar lines for the following season.

"8. Although not a condition at the moment, it is hoped that arrangements will be made in accordance with the cables exchanged to remove the penalty at present payable on Empire sugars over 99 degrees polarisation at time of arrival."

The first thing that will be noted in that agreement is that by reason of the war and because certain of the signatory countries are involved in it, the International Sugar Agreement is now at an end. It became necessary, therefore, to make fresh arrangements. Two courses, of which I think Queensland could follow only one, were open to us. One was that which we adopted, and the other that of trusting to the exigencies of the situation to sell at varying higher prices later on. The case against this second course is obviously one of undetermined tonnage, and the difficulty of getting our sugars to market even if sales were made.

Another principle worthy of note is that, while the British Government are endeavouring to make these bulk purchases in order to feed their people and to enable them to carry on the war, there should be no question of profiteering prices as between the component parts of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: We cannot expect to prevent profiteering among individuals if Governments in their major contracts lend countenance to it. The British Government having appointed the Sugar Control Board that I have mentioned, the Queensland Government are enabled to enter into contracts of sale with it for the whole crop for the season. Difficulty in giving effect to the complete details of the contract, however, may be caused by circumstances over which no party has any control.

The next point to be noted is that clause 2 provides for the sale under the agreement of approximately 290,000 tons of sugar. It will be to that 290,000 tons of sugar only that this price applies. Two hundred and two thousand tons of sugar have already been sold to Great Britain and Canada under contracts of sale and those contracts still stand, but where the sugar has not been absorbed into the markets of either or both countries, the contracts with the refiners are taken over by the British Sugar Control Board. The new and increased price applies to the 290,000 tons, approximately, that has yet to be sold, and the sale of that sugar per month is at the figures I mentioned.

The price is 7s. 6d. per cwt. c.i.f. without deduction. That means that the charge of 2½d. formerly made by British refiners does not now apply. That charge was made because unevenness in arrivals involved them in storage costs. It is now eliminated. The British preferential duty of 3s. 9d. still stands and has to be added to the amount. Furthermore, any increase in freight costs, costs of insurance, above the normal rates, will be a charge

on the British Sugar Control Board. Shipping freights have already been increased by 25 per cent. Insurance costs have also increased. Both costs may fluctuate during the currency of the contract, but any amount above the rate mentioned in the contract will be a charge on the buyer and not the seller.

Mr. Brand: The freight rate is 35s. 6d.

The PREMIER: Yes, and anything above that will be paid by the British Sugar Control Board, as well as any increased costs of insurance, due to war-time risks. That is also a charge against the buyer and not the seller.

Clause 4 is an important one because it deals with fluctuations in the rate of exchange. The drafting of the clause required a good deal of thought, because it was expected that fluctuations that might take place between sterling and the Australian pound might also be affected by the dollar exchange rate. All things considered, it was better to lay down the broad principle that the value of the 7s. 6d. in relation to sterling to-day shall remain the net return to the grower here.

Mr. Brand: The exchange is approximately 25 per cent. to-day.

The PREMIER: We know that. We are dealing with future sales. If, during the progress of the war exchange alterations took place from week to week, or even from day to day, it could easily happen that the 7s. 6d. might not be worth anything. We are to be paid the sterling equivalent of the amount in this country at the time of entering into the contract.

Paragraph 5 deals with any alteration in price that may take place. The South African Government, Fiji, and most of the other Crown colonies had already agreed on the basis of purchase price when they entered the conference, but some smaller parcels had been sold by some of the Crown colonies at a higher price. Since then they have all been brought within the scope of the same price. If a higher price is given to any part of the British Empire in the future, the advance in price will be along the one line, and Queensland will share in that advance.

Paragraph 6 of the agreement deals with shipping arrangements. Naturally, there is a great deal of difficulty about shipping in the world to-day, and it will continue to be difficult until the navy is able to make the blockade of the belligerent powers effective. Already, some sugar has gone to the bottom of the sea. Under the agreement, the board undertakes to do everything possible to arrange for vessels to lift Queensland sugar, but, of course, the agreement means that additional storage will have to be provided in this country by the mills. We cannot expect shipping to run to an unalterable timetable during a war. The mills will have to provide additional storage. It is interesting to note in passing that although the mills have increased their crushing capacity over the past 10 years, very few, if any, have increased their storage capacity, because they thought it was unnecessary. However, in view of the fact that the war is likely to last

for a considerable time, the mills would be well advised to increase their storage as early as possible with the material at their disposal.

Paragraph 7 means that next year's crop will be sold in accordance with the basis laid down in the contract. However, one point is still unsettled, that is, in reference to the penalty for 99 degrees polarisation.

That is a penalty that is imposed by the refiners. It has been imposed for as many years as I can remember. Release from it is contingent on the British Budget. Its object is to provide as much employment as possible for the refineries in Great Britain. It also means that the refineries get the advantage of the syrup surplus and the goods those syrups can be made into. It represents £1 a ton on all sugar above 99 degrees polarisation. The removal of that condition would enable us to make drier sugars, a ton of which would occupy less space and could be more readily stored, kept, and more easily handled. If we can raise the sugar to approximately 99 degrees then it will save shipping, it will cost less for storage, and the sugar will be easier handled. That, of course, is a matter yet to be determined.

Mr. Brand: Are the chances of getting it lifted good?

The PREMIER: The chances of getting it lifted are very good. In fact, if we cannot get it lifted within a reasonable time, it will not be possible to lift anything. I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but we must not allow ourselves to be thrown into a spirit of dismay by the news that is published from time to time. We are bound to get a good deal of that; we got a good deal of it in the early part of the last war, and we shall get it again. But we must remain resolute on the course we have set, determined to win finally the cause of the principles we represent.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: The basis of the agreement, I think, is a very good one. It embodies the principle of bulk purchase of essential foodstuffs, clothing, metals, and other products required by the British Government, thereby eliminating unnecessary handling costs and charges and at the same time giving to the producer a fair price for his product and ensuring that the user is not overcharged. In this way Great Britain enters upon this war on a much better basis than she did the Great War. The general policy involved here of negotiation for bulk purchase of products is a good one, both for the producer and the British Government.

Mr. Maher: Has the agreement been finalised?

The PREMIER: The agreement has been finalised.

Mr. Maher: Has the surplus been sold?

The PREMIER: Yes, subject to the contract.

I should like to add that the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, through its general manager, participated and assisted in the

arrangements throughout and the board of the company signified its willingness to accept the additional responsibilities attached to the handling and sale of the extra quantity of sugar and to assist in every way to secure the smooth running of the new arrangements.

INCOME (STATE DEVELOPMENT) TAX ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

COMMITTEE.

(Mr. O'Keefe Cairns, in the chair.)

Clause 1—Short title and construction—as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—Rate of tax on income from employment earned on or after 7 August 1939—

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (10.49 a.m.): This Bill has been the subject of a great deal of debate already on both its introductory and second reading stages. Nevertheless, I feel impelled to deal with the matter further this morning on this the principal clause of the Bill. Every day since the outbreak of war, conditions have been rapidly changing. It becomes increasingly obvious that the people of this country have to submit themselves to very heavy taxation from Federal sources for the purposes of prosecution of the war.

I feel justified in saying that the increases in taxation already notified by the Federal Government represent only a small part of the burden of taxation that the people of this country will be called upon to endure before the war ends. It is evident to me that the Commonwealth Government are beginning expenditure for defence purposes within this country on a scale that is moderate enough, but the tempo of that expenditure will increase rapidly from month to month, and the effect will be to create a great deal of employment on military and allied works throughout Australia. The finding of enormous sums for equipment for our militia and the standing army that the Commonwealth Government are now committed to raise is going to increase the volume of employment in many very important secondary industries in Australia, and I have not the slightest doubt that Queensland will share very substantially in that big volume of Federal expenditure.

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: Its share is very small.

Mr. MAHER: The Minister may be in possession of information that is not available to me, but I feel certain that we are bound to feel the effects of the Commonwealth expenditure in this State, although it will be felt particularly in the States of Victoria and New South Wales. The injection of the Commonwealth expenditure into the economy of New South Wales and Victoria is bound to be reflected here, and there will be a buoyancy in secondary industry that is not to be found in times of peace. When conditions are good in thickly populated States such as Victoria and New South Wales, we necessarily feel the benefit in many ways. One thing is certain: the fact that the

Commonwealth Government are calling up 20,000 men to form a permanent force, of which number Queensland will be called upon to supply approximately 4,000, will create vacancies for a similar number of men in industry. According to the "Economic News" of August, there were only 7,740 unemployed in the State; therefore, it is obvious that the creation of this permanent force will very materially improve the employment position in Queensland. In effect, more than half of the total unemployed will be absorbed in the permanent forces alone.

Mr. Hilton: On what do you base that statement?

Mr. MAHER: The hon. member could not have been listening to my remarks. I was saying that the August issue of the "Economic News" shows that there are only 7,740 unemployed in the State. If 4,000 men leave industry to enter the permanent forces—that number being Queensland's quota—4,000 vacancies in industry must follow. That is the number of unemployed reported to be in the State at the present time. We have also to take into account the substantial number of reservists who have left their employment and are now serving the country in different parts of Australia, and who will be so engaged for the duration of the war.

Mr. Power: Do you know that employers are curtailing staffs?

Mr. MAHER: I see no ground at all for the curtailment of staffs. As a matter of fact, at present industry is particularly buoyant in Queensland and, taking the experience of the Great War as a guide, it is evident that there will be greatly increased expenditure in the equipment of men with arms, ammunition, food, and clothing. This expenditure, wherever it occurs, creates very large expenditure locally. Moreover, the increase in prices that is likely to be reached ultimately in the disposal of our primary products will contribute to very great prosperity for a time, always assuming that we retain the freedom of the seas to enable our exports to be moved to Great Britain. There should be no need of curtailment of staffs, and any employer who curtails staff under the present circumstances is taking an unduly pessimistic view of the situation and not acting wisely.

I am leading to the conclusion that the Government will not need the amount of money that is to be collected by this tax. In general the unemployment position will be much easier. The increase of expenditure on military requirements will create much employment and lessen the responsibility of the State Government. The note I wish to sound particularly this morning is a question as to the wisdom of continuing to collect the State development tax.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I am afraid the hon. gentleman is not connecting his remarks with the clause.

Mr. MAHER: I think I should be in order in saying that in all the circumstances the Government are not entitled to collect the

tax at all, because of their limited obligations.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. gentleman must realise that comment on the principle of imposing the tax under this Bill is restricted to the second reading stage.

Mr. MAHER: I realise that at that stage the House approved of the principle, but at the same time I raise the matter this morning and appeal for at least a reduction in the amount of the tax, so that there will be a reservoir that can be tapped to relieve the distress and the unemployment that inevitably comes after a war.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I think the hon. gentleman can do that only by moving an amendment. The hon. gentleman is dealing generally with the Bill.

Mr. MAHER: The clause deals with the rate of tax and what I am directing attention to is the important point that at least a reduction in the rate of the tax is justified, because of the special conditions that have arisen. This tax was imposed as an emergency measure. For some years past there has been no justification for its continuance, and in the altered circumstances of to-day and consequent improvement of the position of the Government we should consider the desirableness of on one hand abolishing the tax, or on the other, making an alteration in the incidence of the rate of tax.

I am prepared to leave out the first aspect of the matter and confine myself to the need for an alteration in the rate so as to leave available to the Government, when the war is over, a reservoir that they can tap to help in the repatriation of men who need employment and to deal with the very great volume of unemployment that is bound to exist then. Whilst the war is on the Government's troubles will be slight in comparison with what they will be when the war is over. Is it wise, therefore, to continue to collect from State development tax the sum that is estimated by the Minister—

The CHAIRMAN: There may be something in the hon. gentleman's argument, but I should like him to confine his remarks to the clause.

Mr. MAHER: The clause relates to the rate of tax, but I thought I was in order in showing the need for a reduction in the rate because of these special circumstances. It is rather difficult for me to move an amendment at this juncture because amendments were dealt with in a general way on the introductory stage of the Bill, but there are some points that are worthy of consideration this morning—

The CHAIRMAN: I point out to the hon. gentleman that the House on the second reading affirmed the principles contained in the Bill.

Mr. MAHER: I recognise that it is too late to advocate the abolition of the tax. This morning, however, I am really suggesting that the Government should, if not to-day, then at least during the next few months,

consider whether it would not be wiser to meet the conditions I have described and give some remission of the tax, so that when times are good, people can be relieved—

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. gentleman could discuss this matter on the Financial Statement.

Mr. Jesson: Do you suggest that development should cease because there is a war on?

Mr. MAHER: I have dealt with that already, and I have pointed out that if I felt that the whole of this money was being used for the purposes of State development a good many of my objections would disappear. That, however, has not been proved in the course of the debate, and that is where I am in conflict with the continuance of the tax in its entirety. This morning I was hopeful of being able to show the Minister the need for a reduction in the rate of tax because of the improved conditions that are about us on every hand, and because employment is likely to be very much more buoyant as a result of the expenditure by the Federal Government.

Mr. Power: Very little of it is being expended in Queensland.

Mr. MAHER: A great deal of it will be expended in the equipping of the forces and carrying out various protective measures, and also in the factories that will make the things that will be necessary for the Federal Government—

Mr. Collins: It will not help the unskilled labourer very much, will it?

Mr. MAHER: Vacancies will occur for the unskilled labourer because men will be absorbed in the permanent forces and in the militia. At any rate, all I can do this morning, in view of Mr. Chairman's ruling on the matter, is to draw attention to the urgent need for the Government to face the facts of the case and to take into account that for the next year or two, if the war continues, we are likely to pass through extremely buoyant times financially so far as the industries and employees in this country are concerned. Of course, a reaction will come when the war is over. If the tax is maintained in good times what will happen in bad times? How much extra taxation will the country be called upon to meet in that distressing and difficult period?

The Government would be wise to create a reserve fund to meet the conditions that will prevail when the war is over. They should reduce the rate of this tax during the present year so that some relief might be given to the taxpayer who already has to meet the additional demands of the Federal Government for defence purposes. If a reserve was created, the Government could use it to relieve unemployment at the conclusion of hostilities.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY (Hon. T. A. Foley, Normanby) (11.12 a.m.): I cannot understand the argument advanced by the Leader of the Opposition this morning, because the clause we are

discussing is really the crux of the Bill and has for its object the reduction of taxation by increasing the exemptions now provided. The clause will have the effect of reducing the incidence of the tax on a large section of the community. The basic wage was increased recently by £8 per annum, and under the schedule contained in the latter part of the Act and the principle of the Bill, those persons would be called upon to pay this tax, although previously they were exempt. With the increased basic wage, it would naturally follow that a large section of those workers would automatically be included in the group of taxpayers paying 3d. in the £1. This amendment is being introduced to prevent that state of affairs from occurring.

The increase in the basic wage would also have had the effect of putting many people who were previously paying 3d. in the £1 on incomes exceeding £211 in the next group, paying 6d. in the £1. This clause provides that those taxpayers shall remain in the group paying 3d. in the £1. It is perfectly clear that the object is not to impose increased taxation, but to increase the exemptions in such a way that the effect will be an actual reduction of taxation.

The advisability of continuing to impose this tax has been raised. For a period of years, from the inception of the Income (Unemployment Relief) Tax Act, no exemptions were provided. We have gradually given exemptions to relieve the impost on a large section of the community. That is our policy, and it is that policy that we are carrying out in this Bill.

I can only repeat that as the basic wage was increased by £8 per annum we should increase the exemption under this measure from £211 to £219 with corresponding increases in other grades to prevent taxpayers from being brought into a higher tax group than they should be in. Consequently, the Leader of the Opposition is not on sound ground. The revenue from this tax is used for many purposes.

The CHAIRMAN: I suggest that the Minister confine his remarks to the clause before the Committee.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: The main principle of the measure is a reduction in taxation by making an increase in the exemption. I cannot add to what I have already said on the matter.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba) (11.16 a.m.): I strongly support the appeal by the Leader of the Opposition to the Minister and the Government to reconsider their taxation programme in view of existing circumstances. The Leader of the Opposition has given reasons why there should not be the same need for this tax for creating employment in Queensland as there was in the past, consequently the Government should re-consider their tax proposals. For instance, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned that unemployment in Queensland had now reached the lowest ebb for very many years.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope that the hon. member is not going to repeat the arguments of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. NICKLIN: I was leading up to the point that unemployment in Queensland is lower now than it has been for a considerable time and that in view of the war situation—the calling up of men for service in the militia and the permanent forces—and the fact that the problem of unemployment will not now be so acute—

Mr. Walsh: We can deal with that phase of the matter later on.

Mr. NICKLIN: Consequently, this is an opportune time for the Minister to consider a reduction of this tax. There is no doubt that development work will have to be carried out regardless of whether there is a war or not, still many of the proposals that the Government have in mind may be held over until later when the problem of unemployment may become more severe. Perhaps the present rates of 3d., 6d., and 9d. in the £1 could be reduced to, say, 2d., 4d., and 7d. in the £1, according to the exigencies of the moment.

The CHAIRMAN: The clause before the Committee fixes the time when the new exemption will operate and the hon. member will be in order if he confines his remarks to that principle.

Mr. NICKLIN: I realise that I was treading on rather thin ice, but I should like to support the appeal by the Leader of the Opposition to the Minister and the Government to consider the possibility of reducing the existing rate of tax.

Clause 2, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 10, both inclusive, and Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment.

MINES REGULATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. D. A. Gledson, Ipswich) (11.22 a.m.): I move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

Full information as to the details of this Bill were given on the initiatory stage, in order to enable hon. members to get a grip of what was intended. The Bill merely provides that all work on the construction of sewers in this State shall be brought under the Mines Regulation Act. Work on the sewers in the city of Brisbane is already, by agreement, under the control of the department's inspectors. That provision has been made under the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Acts Amendment Act. Those inspections take place by agreement, but at the present time no provision is made in our laws for the inspection of such work undertaken outside Brisbane.

In the debate on the initiatory stage it was said that where this work was being undertaken by local authorities, the latter could undertake inspection and see that the work was carried out in the proper manner. That may be so, but we know that while a local authority may have a very competent engineer who is quite capable of planning and supervising the work, he may not be qualified to deal with conditions that arise underground with respect to timbering, gas, and other matters. That is a specialised job, and it should be under the supervision of men experienced in the work of providing for the safety of the workers. Therefore, there is provision in the Bill that such works can be brought under the Act by proclamation. It is not intended that every sewer under construction should automatically come within the Act, but it is intended to bring them under the Act by proclamation where it is necessary to do so. The Bill defines a main sewer and reticulation sewer and provision is contained for the appointment of foremen who are capable of carrying out inspection work.

As I gave a very full explanation of the Bill on the introductory stage I shall not take up any more of the House's time. It is a simple Bill that brings sewers under the Mines Regulation Acts.

Mr. WALKER (Cooroola) (11.27 a.m.): Although this is a small Bill it is a very important one because it deals with the safety of the lives of men engaged in sewerage work. It is regrettable that this amendment was not embodied in the original Act; if it had been, some accidents might have been avoided and men working in sewers have had greater security.

Although the men engaged in sewer work in Brisbane have had the protection of inspection, sewerage workers in other towns have not had that protection, and the Bill rightly enables the Government to extend it to them when necessary.

I do not think the Minister emphasised the importance of good ventilation during the course of his remarks on the second reading. Good ventilation is the most important thing as far as the miners' health is concerned. The effects of bad ventilation are insidious and often do not become apparent for many years. The presence of foul air in abandoned mines has caused the death of many prospectors, and bad ventilation in deep sewers has had a deleterious effect on the health of miners not only in Queensland but in every country in the world. Under the Bill the Governor in Council has power to bring under the Act any area in which sewers are being made. That will provide a safeguard against work in foul air, and there is no doubt the risk of accidents will be considerably reduced. It has been said that there have been few accidents and that these were due to carelessness.

Any person who has a knowledge of mining, however, knows that a serious accident can occur even though operations have been carried out under the most expert supervision. The best protection that can be given to miners is that only men with practical mining

experience are appointed inspectors, and that the work is thoroughly supervised and, if necessary, decisions made promptly. It may be very difficult to detect a creep in a mine. At times there is apparently not the slightest indication of it, but a man experienced in mining can sense it and have effective steps taken to cope with it.

The shafts put down in sewerage work are more or less mines. In the sewerage work in the metropolitan area over the past 10 years shafts have been put down at intervals and drives made between them, but I do not think that ventilation has ever been taken into account. The shafts have been sunk for convenience and economy, irrespective of foul-air conditions. The inspectors have not had the power to decide where the main shafts or drives shall be put in, and it is right that the Bill should apply not only to local authorities other than metropolitan local authorities, but to all authorities constructing sewerage work in Queensland. Some of the sewer shafts go to a depth of 80 feet, and although they may not pass through a coal seam at times stone that gives off inflammable gas or creates bad air may be encountered. Such air, of course, may affect the lungs of the miners. Although they may smell something, they may not think it injurious to them, but in my opinion, it is responsible for the stooping posture that many of the older workers adopt. It has a dreadful effect on their later physical condition.

In all the circumstances the inspectors should be men with considerable practical mining experience. I have no desire to cast a reflection on the younger men who may have studied at a school of mines, but I do contend that an inspector of sewerage workings should have at least five or 10 years' practical experience, so that he will be practically conversant with the many difficulties that are met with.

Those hon. members who have had experience of mining know that after an accident two of the men had to accompany the inspector when he visited the locality. It was always understood that as they were practical miners their opinion was valuable. Of course, it could hardly be expected that the opinion of a man who had never worked in a mine could be accepted with confidence, and I repeat that inspectors should have had such practical experience of mining as will cause the workmen to have complete confidence in them, so that they will be able to follow their calling with a feeling of safety.

There may be an impression that there is very little danger in working in a sewer shaft. My opinion is that there is greater safety when working at 1,000 feet than at 10 feet from the surface. At the greater depth solid rock is encountered, although, of course, it is only the practical miner who can see faults quickly and arrange that the shots shall be put in where they will be safe and effective. Nearer the surface the ground may consist of soft rock or a combination of earth and rock. Water seepages and surface faults are met with.

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There are cross heads and what are commonly called soapy faces even at that shallow depth, and these are even more dangerous than hard rock formations at greater depths, in that air acts upon them quicker than water does. One can readily understand that at a depth of 10 feet the risk is greater than it would be at a much greater depth.

An example of what I mean was to be found in the trench that was being excavated near the Belle Vue Hotel the other day. One could see how the ground was falling in there. Just imagine how much greater the risk would have been at a depth of 10 feet!

When speaking on the initiation of the Bill, the Minister stated that familiarity with risk breeds contempt, and that this was often the cause of accidents. A few years ago, when I was speaking in similar terms, the Minister ridiculed my suggestion, and asked if I thought that the men wanted to commit suicide. No doubt, men are careless in this work, and for that reason we want inspectors who not only know their jobs, but who also are big enough to put the miner in his place and to see that he does not take unnecessary risks. Those hon. members of this Assembly who have had experience of mining know that often after a fall of earth the miners rush back without allowing the atmosphere time to clear. They know that miners have often rushed into the smoke and dust after an explosion when they should have waited for a fairly long time. They are actually doing this to-day in the mines, and it is probable that it is happening in sewers, too. That should be prevented.

It is suggested that greater supervision of explosives will be given by this Bill. We should have had greater supervision long ago. We all know that every man handling explosives should use a pair of pliers for squeezing the cap on the fuse. We know, too, that the men say that the pliers are too slow, and that they squeeze the caps with their teeth. That practice should be prohibited, because there can be no doubt that it has led to many accidents. Explosives are very delicate things to handle, and it is essential to have the strictest supervision over their use. Only the other day we read that something like 1 ton of dynamite was taken out of an ordinary earth magazine in New South Wales. Such things as that should never happen. All magazines should be properly locked. It is not right that children, or, indeed, any persons other than miners, should be near these magazines, and strict measures should be taken to prevent any interference with explosives by unauthorised persons.

I have known a man to get enough charge for perhaps 8 or 10 of his mates. He has gone to the magazine without any convenient way of carrying these dangerous articles. We all know that it is not wise to carry dynamite in a container in which there are caps, and I can well remember seeing many men carrying it in their shirts. They might go 100 feet up or down a ladder with dynamite in their shirts, and this is dangerous. All such practices need stricter supervision.

Then, too, I believe that there should be proper accommodation for the miners underground, as well as on the surface. Blasting may be going on and the men go round a corner for protection, but nothing is provided on which they can sit down. The boy has often to take his tea cold because there is nothing to keep it hot. At any rate, I know of no provision for these things, but they are the little things that make for the comforts of life.

In well-regulated mines—in Gympie, at all events—electricity has replaced candle light and other methods of illumination because of the danger from fumes, but there are comforts that should be provided for the men on top, such as better sanitary arrangements and the provision of changing rooms. Many so-called changing rooms are only barns to-day, and a man is compelled to change in a corner. Sanitary arrangements are not private. They might be good enough for country districts where there are only a few people, but they are certainly not sufficient for cities in these modern times.

I think this is a Bill that should be made as up-to-date as possible. It should apply not only to Brisbane but to all towns. Why not make it apply to the whole State and cover all mining operations and sewer works, whether controlled by local authorities or any other persons? There should be one Bill to cover all phases of mining operations.

The next question is the provision of fences for protection. Fences have always been provided at mines to stop animals and people from falling down, but there should be a regulation fence, with a gate of a prescribed height. Any old two-railed fence will not do. In the early days of the Gympie gold-fields many people and cattle fell down mines, and when sewers are being dug in the cities, as in Queen street or George street, in Brisbane, greater protection should be given than a simple rail with a red flag. Some better facilities should be provided, not only to stop persons on top from falling down, but also to protect the unfortunate man underneath from falling objects.

Another important point is the timbering of those mines or sewers. Experienced miners are needed to do timbering in soft country. The timber has to be kept right to the level, without any drop in the roof, and I venture to say that not one man in 50 could do that work. Men who inspect such work should be 100 per cent. efficient. It is not a matter of timbering the roof only; the sides, also, must be timbered to prevent caving. Hon. members opposite with mining knowledge know that what I am saying is sound. A creep may develop overnight. Inspection by a practical mining man, who should be on the lookout for such faults, and prompt action to prevent trouble would add greatly to the safety of miners. Roof timbering, for example, must be kept to the right height and the props and the sill must be strong enough to hold twice the weight that is likely to fall on them.

The Bill is a good one, provided the Minister insists that the inspectors' qualifica-

tions shall be equal to those of a certificated mine manager, in order that he may give the fullest possible protection to the men.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. D. A. Gledson, Ipswich) (12.46 p.m.), in reply: The main object of this short measure is to bring sewer workings in any part of the State under the Mines Regulation Acts, so that the regulations that are applied to sewerage work in Brisbane to-day may be applied to sewerage work in any other part of the State. The Bill also makes provision for the appointment of competent persons to see that those regulations are observed.

Mr. Power: Who will decide the qualifications?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It will be the duty of the constructing authority to appoint a competent man for this purpose, and it will be the duty of the inspector to satisfy himself that the man so appointed is competent to carry out the work. Of course, if the inspector is satisfied that the man is not competent he will make appropriate representations to the constructing authority so that it may appoint a competent man.

The Bill also makes provision for the proper ventilation of sewer shafts and excavations. For instance, it sets out that windsails, pipes, brattices, fans, and other appliances shall be installed.

At present, there are 19 regulations dealing with the use of explosives and the method of fusing. For instance, no person under the age of 18 years shall be competent to use explosives, and it is an offence for any person to clinch a fuse between his teeth. The regulations provide that the detonation shall be fixed only by the use of pincers specially provided for the purpose. The hon. member for Cooroora knows as well as I do that in our early mining days, if the special pincers were not near at hand, we simply took the detonation and clinched it in an unauthorised way, and so may have developed a rather careless and dangerous habit. These dangerous practices must be stopped, but we must have regulations to prohibit them.

Mr. Moore: They often continue in spite of the regulations.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The men are not supposed to carry on a prohibited practice. (Laughter.) Neither the hon. member for Cooroora nor I would commit a breach of any regulation. That was done before the existence of the regulation on the subject, and it was necessary to issue the regulation to prevent it.

Provision is also made to deal with charges that missfire. This is the cause of the greatest number of accidents in our mines. If a round of shots is fired and one or two charges missfire some miners may risk going below again prematurely—like a former Secretary for Railways, who was called the Minister for Taking Risks. We know that men engaged in mining do take risks and go below before sufficient time elapses for all the

charges to explode. Regulations exist providing that men shall not return into a mine for a certain time after the charge has exploded.

Latterly regulations have been framed to meet the case of a charge that misfires. The man in charge of the shots fired before the end of a shift may hand over control to the man on the following shift. The latter bores a hole alongside the previous charge, and it has happened that the drill has come in contact with the unexploded charge and an explosion has resulted. It is intended to tighten up the regulations by providing that the man in charge of the hole that is first bored shall, if a charge misfires, continue on duty and bore the hole alongside the previous hole in order that the misfired charge shall be blasted out.

This Bill will enable the department to see that an adequate fence is erected, if necessary, where mining operations have been in progress for the protection of the public and the workmen also.

The hon. member for Cooroora referred to the timbering of mines. This is an important matter. The regulations provide that the mines shall be safely and effectively timbered by competent men. The inspector has power to inspect any timbering in mines and decide whether it is adequate for the protection of the miners. If not, he may demand its removal and require the erection of additional or heavier timber, or that the slabs be put closer.

This Bill will bring all sewerage work throughout Queensland under the control of the mining inspectors, who will see to it that the mines regulations are carried out. This will all add to the safety of the work and protect the miners.

Motion (Mr. Gledson) agreed to.

MINING ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The **SECRETARY FOR MINES** (Hon. D. A. Gledson, Ipswich) (11.49 a.m.): I move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

This Bill contains two principles. First, it seeks to amend the Coal Mining Acts, 1925 to 1938, to enable the miners to elect two check inspectors in the mine where they are working. They had this power previously. The amending Act passed last year provided that the miners of Queensland could elect two inspectors by ballot to inspect the coalmines throughout Queensland, thus repealing section 70 of the principal Act which provided that the men at any mine could elect two of their number to inspect that mine.

It has been found that last year's amendment is not practicable, because these inspectors cannot inspect all the mines throughout Queensland at regular intervals. Sometimes it is six months before it is possible to inspect a mine. Therefore, provision is made in the

Bill to enable the miners to have an inspection at much shorter periods when it is necessary.

The other principle in the Bill is an amendment of the Miners' Homestead Leases Act. The first provision gives power to a miner or persons working a lease to apply to the warden to determine the compensation that may be payable to the holder of the homestead lease. The old Act gave the right to the holder of the homestead lease to make such an application, but a similar right was not given to the miner or the company working the lease. This omission has been responsible for holding up operations in some parts of the State, and the Bill will remedy that evil.

The other provision enables the man who holds the homestead lease to apply for compensation for disturbance by any mining on the lease. In the past, compensation has been paid for actual damage to the property, but there is no provision for compensation for disturbance or interference with access to the improvements. This Bill will give the right to the person holding the homestead lease to apply to the warden to fix a rate of compensation to cover all disturbance to the right of access to his property or improvements.

Those are all the principles contained in the Bill.

Mr. WALKER (Cooroora) (11.59 a.m.): The provision in the Bill for the submission to the warden of a dispute between the owner of the homestead lease and the lessee is a good one, and should work satisfactorily.

It is remarkable that the impracticability of the section under which two practical miners were to be chosen to inspect mines throughout Queensland was not foreseen by the Government when the amending Bill was before the House last year.

The very fact that within 12 months the Government have altered their decision proves conclusively that pressure from outside must have been brought to bear on the Government. Within 12 months the Government have learned their lesson and are now showing common sense. Mr Speaker, you, as a practical man, can visualise an accident in a mine 80 or 90 miles away from the inspector's headquarters. It would be an absurdity to expect a man to reach there inside a few hours. It may even be that the call comes from Mount Mulligan and the men are at Maryborough. The journey between the two places must take a considerable time. Previously two practical men working in the mine were elected by the miners of that mine. These men knew the peculiarities of the area and within two hours of an accident could give an opinion as to its cause. This made, not only for the better future working of the mine, but also for the protection of the miners.

I congratulate the Minister upon doing the correct thing. It has always been the contention of those with a knowledge of mining that practical miners with local knowledge should be elected. There are a hundred and one different formations of rock to be met with, and the appointment of men fully conversant

with the peculiarities of a district is only reasonable. The amendment is a sound one, and I hope the Minister will hurry the passage of the Bill and have it proclaimed law as soon as possible, thus remedying the bad effect the Act has had in the past 12 months.

Motion (Mr. Gledson) agreed to.

ABORIGINALS PRESERVATION AND PROTECTION BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(Mr. O'Keefe, Cairns, in the chair.)

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS (Hon. E. M. Hanlon, Ithaca) (12.4 p.m.): I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to consolidate and amend the law relating to the preservation and protection of aboriginals, and for other purposes.”

The introduction of this Bill marks the formation of a concrete policy in dealing with aboriginals after many years of study, investigation, and trial. As most hon. members are aware, the aboriginals of this country have received a very bad deal indeed from the white people who took their territory. The conscience of Australians generally has been sufficiently aroused to make them want now to do what they can for the remnant of the race.

The previous aboriginal legislation referred to all our coloured people as aboriginals irrespective of whether they were Torres Strait islanders, mainlanders, or half-castes. We propose to deal with the Torres Strait islanders under an entirely separate Act because they have proved that they are capable of doing a great deal for themselves and do not need the strict control that is exercised over the mainland aboriginals.

By this Bill we aim at not only the protection from abuse of the mainland aboriginal but also the preservation of the remnant of the race. We have realised that it is no good whatever to treat the aboriginal as a kind of museum piece or, in the way that one writer referred to, as “easing the bumps along the road to the cemetery,” but to endeavour to make him earn his own livelihood and recover a little bit of pride of race and confidence.

By this Bill we propose to eliminate the half-caste from control unless a court places him under the control of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals. After taking over the whole of the half-castes in the country some years ago for purposes of investigation, we have found, after having received reports from local protectors, that it has been possible to exempt from control almost the whole of them who are not living with aboriginals. Those of them who were inclined to look at matters too loosely soon complied with conditions when they found that they were likely to be brought under the control of the Aboriginals Department and treated as aboriginals. We propose to allow half-castes complete exemption except where, because of their own misconduct or drunkenness or for the commission of any crime, a

police magistrate or judge decides that they are in need of the protection of a protector of aboriginals; otherwise, the half-castes will be free to earn their own living and live their own lives.

This does not mean that the department proposes to abandon the half-castes who have been living on settlements. There is a half-caste settlement at Purga, conducted by the Salvation Army, and it is doing very good work indeed. There are half-castes on aboriginal stations such as Weipa and Cherbourg, and quite a number are on Palm Island. Those of them who are not able immediately to get work outside may be kept on and paid wages in keeping with the work they are able to do for the settlement.

The Bill declares an aboriginal to be—

“(i.) Any aboriginal native of the mainland of Australia or of any islands in the territorial jurisdiction of Australia;

“(ii.) Any person who has a preponderance of the blood of aboriginals as defined in paragraph (i.) hereof;

“(iii.) Any half-blood declared by a judge or police magistrate or two or more justices, after trial, to be in need of the protection of this Act, and who is ordered to be so protected;

“(iv.) Any half-blood who lives as wife or husband with an aboriginal as hereinbefore defined, or who habitually associates with aboriginals as so defined.”

That is, if a half-caste lives as an aboriginal with full-blooded aboriginals he will have to be treated as an aboriginal.

The definition continues —

“(v.) Any resident on a reserve other than an official or person authorised by the protector.”

A half-blood is defined as—A person—

“(i.) One of whose parents was an aboriginal and whose other parent had no strain of the blood of an aboriginal or aboriginals; or

“(ii.) Both of whose parents have a strain of aboriginal blood, and who himself has a strain of more than 25 per cent. of aboriginal blood, but who has not a preponderance of such blood.

In this definition the term ‘aboriginal’ relates to an aboriginal native of the mainland of Australia or of any islands in the territorial jurisdiction of Australia, but such term does not include an islander.”

“Islanders” being natives of those islands in the Torres Strait lying between the mainland of Australia and New Guinea. As I have stated already, those islanders have proved themselves quite capable of doing quite a lot for themselves.

Furthermore, on each of my visits to the islands, I have been requested by the islanders to have them taken from the jurisdiction of the protectors under the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, as they object to being regarded as

aboriginals. There are social grades even there, the islander regarding himself as being superior to the mainland aboriginal. The question whether our mainland aboriginal would not have done as well as the islander if he had been given the same opportunity is a matter of opinion, but the islander has had greater advantages than the mainland aboriginal, inasmuch as his territory has been preserved to him. All of those islands are reserves upon which no white man can trespass without the permission of the protector of aboriginals, and, consequently, the islander has had his gardens and fishing left to him, while the mainlander has had his natural means of living taken from him. The mainlanders have not only declined in numbers, but have deteriorated in build and are of a much poorer type to-day than the islanders. Under a separate Act the islander will be given some small control of his own local affairs.

The title of Chief Protector of Aboriginals is being altered to that of the Director of Native Affairs. In addition to having the direction of the settlement associated with church missions on the east and west coast of Cape York Peninsula, he will have the direction of the aboriginal industry in the Torres Strait, which has reached large proportions. Until last year, when for some reason the price of shell collapsed, the islanders had been able to maintain themselves and to contribute something towards the destitute mainlanders. We had to go to the aid of the islanders owing to that collapse in prices last year, but it is expected that they will soon recover, and when they again receive a good price for their product they will be self-supporting. That was one of the most pleasing features of the administration. It is hoped that that position will soon be restored. On the other hand, the mainlander has to be helped and protected, and taught to live in competition with white people.

Mr. Moore: Are the islanders entirely dependent upon marine products?

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: For their income they are, but they grow fruit and vegetables on their islands. Many things grow in abundance, and they have poultry and pigs, although I am afraid the pigs would break the heart of the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock. They have gigantic heads, sloping off to hindquarters about the size of those of a fox terrier. We have sent quite a number of pigs from our institutions here to give them an opportunity of breeding animals that will be of some value and give a return for the food they eat. They are at an advantage there, on account of the prolific growth of root crops. When the same attention is given to the rearing of their pigs as is given to the collection and marketing of shell and *beche-de-mer*, a tremendous advance will have been made, and it will help the livelihood of those people. Animals of good quality have been sent from institutions here to the Presbyterian mission at Aurukun.

The gentleman in charge of that mission station told us that he was able to breed quite a number of pigs and send some of

them to the other mission stations round the Gulf coast, and, generally, he was doing excellent work. We also sent them a large number of common fruit trees with the idea of letting them plant them and having the fruit for themselves. Strangely enough, in the old days the missionaries and the protectors believed that it would be unwise to allow the natives to have this fruit, but we could not see any harm in their having it, and so we sent them mulberry trees, wild-goose plum trees, and pineapple suckers. Bananas they always grew to some extent, but as they require a more or less regular rainfall they were not a great success. We also sent them bush-lemon trees, common orange trees, and other trees that would survive hard climatic conditions. The quality of the fruit did not matter much so long as the native was able to get some kind of fruit. Despite the fact that most of the rain falls in that area in two or three months of the year they were able to grow a large number of the trees and it is now only a matter of their showing a little industry and being encouraged to grow enough to keep themselves healthy. A large number of them have also gone in for my department. We preferred to give them with such things as wire, windmills, and benches in preference to giving them money. The handing out of an increased annual grant to them did not commend itself to me or to my department. We preferred to give them something that would encourage them to work, to produce, and so we gave them fishing boats, nets, miles of barbed wire and plain wire, tools, pumps and windmills to encourage them to provide a water supply. Good water can be obtained all along the coast at a reasonable depth, and quite a number of wells have been sunk. We are teaching the native to provide for his needs of to-morrow.

The whole thing to be remembered in dealing with the aboriginal, the mainlander particularly, is that he is thousands and thousands of years behind the white race. We are all inclined to think that because we take an aboriginal kiddie away from school and teach him only the few things that he can glibly apprehend he should measure up in capacity to the white people. We have to realise that when this country was invaded by the white race the aboriginal was about a million years behind the European, and was still entirely in the food-gathering age. He had not reached the stage of human development where he provided for his food requirements ahead. He did not plant anything or plan anything either a day or a week ahead. He was thousands of years behind the development of the European, and the European will have to be a little patient and not expect to bridge the gap of a million years in one or two generations.

The old story that an aboriginal is lazy is not true. I have seen aboriginals working, and working well, when they received encouragement and, above all, food upon which they could work. I have seen aboriginals doing excellent work, working hard and working reliably.

Mr. Moore: For themselves?

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: Yes, but of course under direction. We cannot expect in a couple of generations to change the aboriginal from the food-gathering stage of human development to that of providing his own food according to plan, and so we must give him direction and encourage him to work hard and well.

The old story about the aboriginal's being a coward and a "squib," and that in the boxing game he would lie down as soon as he was hurt, is also untrue. Those who believed that story failed to understand that the aboriginals—even the best of them—were never fed in the same way as white men, and consequently had not the physical capacity to endure bodily punishment.

They had not the physical capacity to endure not only pain but also the hard energy of fighting. Boys from the aboriginal settlements have in recent years competed at the amateur boxing tournaments held in Queensland. We found that by putting them on good solid food as well as enabling them to undergo a certain amount of training for a month or two before the tournament we could put in the ring men who could give many of the local boys some "hurry-up"—so much so that at the last tournament the aboriginal boys won more trophies than the whites. They could not do that if they were not fed and looked after. Those boys could take a hiding, but they generally handed out more than they received. They could not do that unless they got the energy that comes from decent feeding.

One of the wrong views on the aboriginal question was that if he was thrown a bone occasionally he could go and look for the rest of his food. That view has been altered. It is realised now that the aboriginal can only work if he is well fed. Consequently, the chief task of the missions is to provide that food. If he gets that food then he works as well as anyone else.

This Bill is designed more for the preservation of the race than the mere protection of the aboriginal from abuse. The legislation of the past was designed merely to protect the aboriginal from the kindly spirit of those who thought it necessary to sell him opium and rum—that is, to prevent the white people from abusing or destroying his race. Now we have reached a stage when we can see an opportunity of preserving the remnant of the race in the Gulf and far northern districts by giving the necessary assistance and encouragement to those missions that are working so hard for the maintenance of the existence of the aboriginal.

Mr. Moore: Are there any aboriginals outside the mission stations

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: Only those who are in employment. Quite a large number of aboriginals are at work on contract employment on stations and other industries in the North. We have also aboriginals on our aboriginal settlements at Cherbourg, Woorabinda, and Palm Island and the Anglican mission at Yarrabah, near Cairns. The Yarrabah mission

is particularly valuable inasmuch as it has taken in the broken-down section of the aboriginal community, those who are incapable of looking after themselves—the aged and the sick. Yarrabah has a very small percentage of men of a good physical standard who can be relied upon to do work. That is one reason why it might appear on the face of it that this mission is more liberally treated in the matter of subsidy than other mission stations.

Mr. Morris: How do you protect aboriginals when they are in employment?

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: They work under the supervision of the Aboriginals Department. Their wages are paid to a representative of that department. If they have any complaints about their hours of employment or treatment the local protector must investigate them.

Mr. Morris: Does the local protector fix the scale of wages?

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: No, that is done by the Chief Protector of Aboriginals, subject to the approval of the Government. The local protector must see that the scale rate of wages is paid into the savings bank account of the aboriginal employee. The local protector must also protect the kindly white man from robbing the aboriginal of his wages. He might be inclined to sell him an old gramophone, a gold brick, or liquor. There are any number of white men who would do so. The local protector has a very unenviable task and meets with an immense amount of criticism, because he will not allow the aboriginal to be got at when he desires to draw a few shillings of his savings from the bank in order to pay for the ordinary necessities of life.

Whatever he wants the money for, the protector has the thankless task of finding out what he is going to do with it, and he then has to say to the storekeeper, the publican, or some other kindly person that the aboriginal cannot have that money. That is why numbers of letters often appear in the Press about the aboriginal's being robbed by a hungry department that seizes his savings. I think most hon. members will realise that the fact that an aboriginal has £300, £400, or £500 in a savings bank is an affront to many persons who think they could make better use of it; it is also a challenge to their skill. We know that white people, too, who go out with large sums of money are a challenge to the skill of a certain class, who wish to obtain it from them. The large amounts of criticism levelled at the Sub-Department of Aboriginals and the local protectors of the sub-department for hanging on to the savings of the aboriginals originated from the people who have had their fingers trampled on when trying to rob the aboriginal. That is why we frequently get outbursts in the Press. We find them buying motor cars that will not run and boats that will not go. The people who want to sell these things endeavour to talk the aboriginals into buying them.

During my last visit to Cairns, I was talking to the Reverend Owen House, a gentleman who conducts a mission among the aboriginals. He came and warned me that a proposal was before the department about a fishing boat that one of the boys wished to buy. He warned me that the boat was no good, that it was only plastered over with paint, and if the boy bought it he would lose his money. That is typical of the imposition that people endeavour to practise on the aboriginal. The people who desire that they should be given a decent deal make themselves very unpopular when they endeavour to prevent this friendly section from robbing them.

We hope, by means of the Bill, to relieve these people from the stigma of being aboriginals, and we propose to yield to the very pardonable pride of the islander in his superiority by giving him a separate title and a separate Act. That will make for the protection of neighbouring tribes and the encouragement of industry among the natives and the missionaries who are giving their lives to help them, instead of merely "easing the bumps on the road to the cemetery."

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba) (12.29 p.m.): No-one would think of raising any objection to legislation designed to improve the conditions and protect the interests of what remains of a great race. As residents of Australia, we have an obligation to the remnants of the aboriginals. After all, they were the original owners of the country that we have taken, and the obligation rests on us to see that they are protected and encouraged to improve their conditions and live a better life than they have been accustomed to live in the past.

I think there are approximately 18,000 aboriginals under the control of the department in this State. Instead of gradually diminishing till the race becomes extinct, it is hoped that with care this number will be maintained and perhaps increased.

After all, the problem of looking after the aboriginal is a very difficult one, but greater attention has been given to it in recent years. In 1936 the Australian Welfare Conference dealt with the problem of the aboriginal with a view to the evolution of a uniform policy of dealing with him. A year later the directors of the departments in charge of aboriginals met in conference. These men have devoted a lifetime to the study of the problem, and it is my hope that the recommendations of this conference will be incorporated in this legislation.

The aboriginal in his native state can be best termed a true Communist. A member of a tribe who kills a wallaby will not sit down and eat it himself, but bring it to the camp to be shared amongst all. In short, if one of the tribe has tucker all have tucker, if one is hungry all are hungry. As the Minister has said, left to himself the native follows a way of life considerably lower than our present standard, but with proper guidance can be induced to adopt a standard more in conformity with that of the white man.

The hon. gentleman also pointed out that different problems are associated with the mainland and island aboriginals. As one who has not had the opportunity of visiting their habitat in the North, but who is guided by the reports of the department, I understand that the intelligence of the island aboriginal is much higher than that of the mainland native, and consequently it should be less difficult to deal with his problems. This Bill deals principally with those on the mainland, and as legislation concerning the islanders will be brought down later, I confine my remarks to those on the mainland. As previously mentioned, we certainly owe these people protection, especially protection from evils that, unfortunately, have been introduced to them by unscrupulous whites—i.e., opium and liquor. Fortunately, in recent years, owing to the tightening up of the supervision of the department, the good work conducted by the mission stations has not been altogether in vain, and I hope that this legislation will put into force the recommendations contained in the last two reports of the Chief Protector, in which he said that it would be advisable to encourage civic life among the aboriginals. In his native state the aboriginal is a great wanderer, and even after being brought under the control of the various settlements and missions cannot resist the urge to go on a walkabout. If he is allowed to do this, much of the good work done for him is lost, and on his return has to be started all over again. The natives should be encouraged to become self-dependent, so far as food is concerned, and not rely on the "hand-outs" from settlements and mission stations.

The Minister has told us that the department encourages the rearing of pigs, the growing of fruit, vegetables, and other food.

After all, the aboriginal, if handled in a proper manner, can be made into a very valuable citizen. We all know how useful aboriginals are on cattle stations. Encouraging them to have their own herds and embark on pig breeding as well as grow their own vegetables will have a beneficial effect upon them as well as increasing the products of the State. In those settlements in which sawmills have been established we have seen how readily the boys adapt themselves to the work, and in those places in which trades are taught, what excellent tradesmen they have become.

I agree with the Minister that the aboriginal is by no means a coward. I had experience of aboriginals in the A.I.F., and quite good soldiers they made. When their stamina is built up with good food they become excellent soldiers.

At 12.38 p.m.,

Mr. KING, Marree, one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, relieved the Chairman in the chair.

Mr. NICKLIN: The Minister has stated that this Bill makes provision for the elimination of half-castes from the care of the department, provided that they behave themselves. That is indeed a wise provision,

because many of our half-castes are excellent citizens and will continue to be so if given some encouragement. I believe that it might be of great help in eliminating almost entirely the half-caste problem of this State if we adopted the principle that is in operation in the Dutch East Indies. There it is no social crime for the Dutch people to intermarry with the natives. In fact, many such marriages have been eminently successful, and the further intermarriage of the Dutch with the quadroons has had the effect of gradually eliminating the half-caste. No doubt, if the half-castes were allowed to assimilate with the white people here it would lead to a much better condition than we have at present.

The Minister stated, too, that it is proposed to change the title of Chief Protector of Aboriginals. Irrespective of his title, we must all admit that Mr. Bleakley has done excellent work for the aboriginals of Queensland. He is a highly efficient officer, and one of whom this State can feel exceedingly proud.

The proposal for consolidating all legislation dealing with aboriginals is a good one. At the present time we have too much legislation. We have the original Act and the innumerable amending measures that have been passed since its inception.

The practice of consolidating such legislation into one Bill will bring about better administration, and for that reason alone this Bill should also be of value to the State. I think that the measure will be valuable, and I hope it will attain the worthy objective it sets out to attain—better conditions for the aboriginal population of Queensland.

MR. T. L. WILLIAMS (Port Curtis) (12.41 p.m.): There may be a little I can add to what has been said by the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, when introducing the measure, and the hon. member for Murrumbidgee. My view is that this Bill will be acceptable to the House. The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs said that it was designed more for the preservation, rather than the protection, of the aboriginals on both the mainland and the island possessions off the coast. I see no harm in combining both preservation and protection.

As the Minister pointed out, the Australian aboriginal has been a much maligned man. When I was a Government official at Cherbourg, some 17 or 18 years ago, I had ample opportunity to judge the worth, and the worthlessness, in some cases, of 600 or 700 aboriginals there. Generally speaking, I found the blackfellow a very lovable fellow. He was willing to work if you gave him work to do and placed him under proper supervision. It has often been suggested that we should not worry about the black, but should let the race die out. I do not hold that view, and this Bill, to both preserve and protect the remnants of that once great race, is to be welcomed.

I think the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs is doing the correct thing in removing the half-caste from the control of the State,

except, of course, in particularly bad cases where they misbehave repeatedly. I am pleased to note that the half-caste settlements, particularly the one at Purga, will not be interfered with in any way.

Tribute was paid to the Chief Protector of Aboriginals by the hon. member for Murrumbidgee. I think he has done very good work, and has proved himself a capable head of a difficult sub-department. Whatever his new title—and I understand it will be Director of Native Affairs—I am sure that the years that remain to him in that position will be just as valuable to the State as those that have gone. Under his new title, I understand he will have control of the industries carried on by the aboriginals in Torres Strait and on the many scattered islands off the coast of Queensland generally. I think the Minister should feel pleased with the encomiums and letters of appreciation he has received about the department's work for aboriginals, particularly those in the islands. Help has been given by the department to men in the far North engaged in the shell industry—pearl and trochus—and that action is particularly commendable because it helped them over a particularly bad time when prices were low and the shell was scarce.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs also made pleasing reference to the desire of the Government, through his department, to assist the inland natives to produce more food and a better class of food, and to get the necessary funds to enable them to exist on the settlement. I maintain that all those settlements could be made self-supporting, because we have the right type of men in charge of them.

The soil is generally good and the settlements are situated on running streams. Indeed, I do not think that any settlement is at such a distance from a flowing stream that irrigation could not be used for the production of crops.

While the burden of the care of the aboriginal in the past has been somewhat heavy, I think that with better supervision and the promised help in the way of a better class of stud stock and better machinery for ploughing, for the raising of crops and providing the necessities of life for the aboriginals, many of the settlements could be made self-supporting. The idea of increasing the desire to grow fruits in the northern parts of the State is also a good one because it will help to check the diseases that become rampant there at times.

Reference has been made to the work of local protectors, such as sergeants of police or constables, who look after the affairs of the aboriginals and the half-castes employed or living in their areas. Generally speaking, they do very good work. Of course, it is necessary to be firm to be kind to aboriginals. I found in teaching some 280 children in an industrial training school that behind this veil of harshness and apparent severity the aboriginal was made aware that something kindly and to his benefit was intended. So that if the local protectors appear to be harsh they are really only carrying out the

work delegated to them of keeping away the go-getter and the unscrupulous who would take the unfortunate aboriginal down if the opportunity presented itself.

The Bill is to be commended and I am sure will be accepted by all hon. members. I congratulate the Minister on bringing forward a measure that will not only preserve but will also protect our aboriginals.

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (12.47 p.m.): I regret that I had to answer a telephone call when the Minister was making his speech and thus did not hear all that he said, but I understand that the object of the Bill is to preserve and protect the aboriginal race and to encourage them to accept a form of village life and thereby to depend upon their own efforts and their own resources so as to become self-reliant in their native habitat.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: That is right.

Mr. MAHER: The Chief Protector of Aboriginals has been doing splendid work in the care of the aboriginals of the State and his work has been nobly supplemented by the splendid efforts of the missionary stations in different parts of North Queensland. Indeed, I do not think that we can speak too highly of the work of the missionaries who go out to help them and protect them against the pitfalls and dangers that surround them, I suppose, in some respects, from our higher civilisation and in other respects from the dregs of that civilisation, which tend to pull them down instead of lifting them up. A very noble work is being done by these missionaries who go into the remote parts of the State, maintain contact with the aboriginals, guide them, and instruct them, in short help them. I feel that without the help of the missionaries the work of the Chief Protector and, indeed, the desire of the Government and this Parliament to see that the aboriginal is fairly dealt with, would fall short of our desires. All these phases taken together, the desire of Parliament, the sympathy of the Government and the Minister, the work of the missionaries, and the valuable work of the protectors, contribute greatly towards making the aboriginals really worthy citizens.

There is a great deal in what the Minister said on the subject of the difference between the aboriginal when he is well fed and the aboriginal when he has to depend upon his own efforts to get native food, which is often of rather doubtful nutritive value. Lack of good food often leads to an inferiority complex. At any rate, under such circumstances, the aboriginal has not the stamina necessary to enable him to stand up against the whites in competitive effort. We know the value of food to all kinds of animals. Perhaps, too, little attention has been paid to this important point by the white race, let alone the aboriginal. With instruction to the aboriginal along those lines to enable him to maintain villages, to take pride in the possession of cattle and pigs, in the planting of fruit trees, and in the growing of vegetables, an interesting future is before him. He realises the

importance of good food and learns to depend not on the State, but on himself. I understand that the Bill is directed along those lines—to encourage the aboriginal to have a higher value of citizenship in the community.

The aboriginal has been too much underrated in the scale of mankind. That is regretted. I have often heard it said that the aboriginal race is the lowest of any in the world. Many people who have travelled and seen other races have told me that the aboriginals stand very high when compared with some other coloured races. We know that in his native haunts he has a very good code of conduct, and that our vaunted social system is not very much superior to his.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: He has an old-age pension system 1,000 years old.

Mr. MAHER: He is not by any means of the low type that many people think. If he was left to his own devices and customs and his old, time-honoured method of living, it would be discovered that he had a very high social system. It is only since he came in contact with the white race and has been overawed, beaten, cowed, and in the early days of settlement shot down in thousands, and poisoned off many runs, to support the impression that he was of a low type and no good, that he has deteriorated. In my experience the race are a happy, good-natured people, and under proper direction and control will be of very great assistance in the future, as they have been in the past, to many land-owners, particularly on station properties in the western districts of New South Wales, as well as in Queensland, and the Northern Territory. Without the assistance of native stockmen it would be difficult to carry on pastoral work in the remote parts of the Northern Territory and this State.

The aboriginal readily adapts himself to stock work, and there is no reason why we should not make greater use of his good qualities in the expansion and development of our country.

As the Minister said, the main thing to do is to help him to overcome the great gap between his stage in human evolution and the stage that the white race have reached. It is essential that we understand the aboriginal and do everything possible to help him in his upward climb. I think the Bill is a move in the right direction. It will have the good will and sympathetic support and encouragement of all those who have some appreciation of the native race, and some understanding of the duty that we, who have deprived them of their country and seen them diminish in numbers until that diminution amounted to a national crime, owe to them.

The early records of Australian settlement show that the aboriginal was a great assistance to the early settlers of New South Wales. According to one record I read, I think it was Governor Phillip, who paid a special tribute to a highly intelligent aboriginal of great fidelity who had served on his staff for a number of years. When he died he was buried

with full military honours in appreciation of his manly virtues and high intelligence.

The aboriginals have shown themselves to be kindhearted, intelligent, and eager to be helpful. They have rendered great service to people who have been lost in various parts of Australia. A recent example of that service was afforded when the German aviators were forced down in the Northern Territory. Aboriginals ran many miles to the nearest mission station with news of the missing men. There are innumerable instances on record of their good nature and their great help that stand out in contrast with the few instances in our history where they have been associated with massacre and murder—crimes that were usually committed because the aboriginals were goaded to the point of desperation by the overbearing attitude of those who had dispossessed them.

One phase of the Bill that will require careful consideration is the provision to give a greater measure of freedom to the half-castes, the extent of which I do not quite know. It is certainly a very great problem to know how to handle the half-caste. He is a sort of Ishmael who is not appreciated amongst either the whites or the blacks. It seems rather a pity that if he has aspirations to a better life he should be forced down to the level of the aboriginal.

I understand in the Dutch East Indies and some of the South Sea Islands there are no social barriers to the intermarriage between white and coloured people, but I think there would be a very strong conventional feeling against any such alliance in this country.

At 2.15 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. MAHER: There is not much more to be said at this stage. Of course, there is the problem of the half-caste, but I must first study the Bill to ascertain its provisions. I understand it is a consolidation of all past legislation concerning the preservation, protection, and control of aboriginals, and is part of the work undertaken by the Minister to consolidate all the legislation administered by his department, and thus present it in a more convenient form.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: I have not many more to do. I have consolidated almost all.

Mr. MAHER: That is a great advantage. It is certainly very helpful to the Opposition. It obviates our having to do a large amount of research work among the principal Acts and various amendments, some of which go back over a long period. If this Bill is a consolidation of all the legislation affecting aboriginals in Queensland, it is a good move, and I look forward to getting the Bill and studying it.

Mr. DART (Wynnum) (2.17 p.m.): I rise to support the Bill. We should take every step it is humanly possible to take in bettering the conditions of the coloured people. I understand there will be another Bill dealing with the natives on the Torres Strait Islands,

who, the Minister has pointed out, are industrious and, with help from the Government, would develop into good citizens and be self-supporting. Man should be at work. The white man is better when at work. How much better off would the dark people be when in employment than sitting about doing nothing?

It is proposed to assist the natives on the islands and supply them with ways and means of getting a livelihood for themselves. The hon. gentleman did not say that agricultural tractors would be sent along, but it would be very wise to give them the necessary plant for ploughing and tilling the land.

At one time in the history of Australia, the native races lived on the fertile banks of the rivers and creeks, but the whites came and took possession of that land, and it is, therefore, only right that we should now give them some help. Had the white people not removed the scrubs the natives could obtain their food much easier.

My concern is the half-caste. I understand that, under this Bill, if a half-caste so desires, he may live with the full-blooded aboriginals. If he adopts this attitude, of course, he will not in any way hinder the progress of the white race.

On the other hand, we may be giving the half-caste too much liberty by this Bill. We can be too generous as well as perhaps too strict. It may not be wise to give the half-caste the same privileges as those enjoyed by the white man. One of the speakers told us that the blackfellow—and I think he meant the black gin, too—was very lovable. We must be careful to see that the half-caste is not given the same liberties as are enjoyed by the white man. We do not want any further mixing of the population. We want to keep the white race white.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: Very few mixed-blood children are born to-day, except from half-caste parents.

Mr. DART: That is why I thought I would raise this point. The half-caste is a danger to the population. He has already had a leg in (laughter) and we want to see that the position does not get any worse. All jokes aside, I am of the opinion that the half-caste should be restricted in such a way as to prevent any further mixing with whites. We want our race kept white.

The Minister said that the half-caste can live with the aboriginals if he so desires. I hope that too much liberty is not given to the half-caste who wishes to live among the white people. We do not desire to see any more half-blooded people born into this world.

Mr. JESSON (Kennedy) (2.23 p.m.): The Bill introduced by the Minister has much to commend it. Certainly, it is a step in the right direction. The aboriginals of Australia have given the various Governments of the Commonwealth cause for very grave thought in the past, and various allegations as to the way in which the aboriginals have been treated have been bandied about in the Press from time to time, but one thing of which Queensland can be proud is the fact that this

Government have always looked after the interests of what I might term our black brothers.

The proposed Bill provides for the giving of a measure of self-government to the Torres Strait islanders. The object is to give them a better understanding of themselves and their own problems and of our feeling towards them.

The Minister has at times mentioned the various health services of the State, and has stated that this Government, acting in co-operation with the Commonwealth Government, spent a considerable sum of money during the past year or so in investigating leprosy, tuberculosis, and other diseases that have been spread amongst the blacks by Asiatic races and, unfortunately, in some cases by whites. That investigation has been illuminating so far as the intensity of the disease in certain parts of the State is concerned. This Government have carried out this work without any blare of trumpets, and in a very commendable manner. Fantome Island, one of the islands of the Palm Group, has been turned into a station for the treatment of leprosy and tuberculosis. I suppose I should hardly call it a "health" station. I will call it a—

An Opposition Member: A health resort.

Mr. JESSON: It is a health resort and is one of the most delightful on any part of the coast of Australia. It has beautiful bays with sandy beaches, and is really a health resort for the unfortunates who are there.

The people in charge of that station have devoted their lives to the welfare of the blacks. Cleanliness is apparent everywhere. The blacks live in little huts in a community, set out with streets, and the serious cases of illness are treated in the hospital. The superintendent, a white man, has three or four nurses assisting him. I am quite certain that considerations of money do not concern those white people, who are there ministering to the health needs of the suffering aboriginals.

The hon. member for Wynnum dealt with the serious problem of the half-caste and quarter-caste races. It makes one sad to see children who are almost, but not quite, white. The aboriginal strain can be detected. Some months ago I visited Palm Island, where I investigated many matters concerning the welfare of the aboriginals. I found that the place had been well cared for. Credit is to be given to the people carrying on that work. On visiting the school, I was struck by the number of children who could almost pass as whites. As a matter of fact, I have seen many Northern children browned by the sun who could easily have been sitting alongside some of these children without showing any marked difference. However, the children there have to go into the blacks' camps, while the white children on the island have a separate teacher and study in a separate part of the school building. Quite a number of half-caste and quarter-caste boys and girls, of 10 and 12 years of age, were present at the school, and you could see a look of bewilderment in their eyes. They could not

understand why they should be separated from the white children and placed among the blacks when the other children were but a little whiter than themselves. I found that Palm Island children were particularly intelligent, and they exhibited a lot of their native works. They have been taught saddlery and carpentry and other manual trades. I also saw exhibits of sewing and ornaments that had been made by the girls. I was entertained with a mouth-organ band, and generally I spent a very delightful afternoon amongst the little aboriginal children at the settlement. The greatest tragedy of all, I repeat, is to see almost white aboriginal children sitting amongst others totally black. Some, when they leave school, return almost to life in the gunyah. It all arises from an accident of birth, and I think that the Government might go even a little further in their humane treatment of the aboriginals and see if it is not possible to remove these near-whites from their parents and have them adopted by white people. I agree with the hon. member for Wynnum that the quarter-castes, or the near-whites, could be readily absorbed into our white population. I remember seeing a very pretty fair-haired child about 10 years of age amongst the blacks, and I ascertained the conditions under which she lived. Her brothers and sisters were totally black.

Only the other day I read in the paper that a delegation from the Northern Territory had pointed out that exploiters in that part of Australia were giving the blacks methylated spirits in return for work that they had done for them. That is to be deplored.

Let me mention another case. A half-caste girl is cook at the hospital on Fantome Island. When I went to the island I was astounded to see what I thought was a little curly-haired white kiddy running about the beach playing with piccaninnies. When I asked who she was I was told that she was the child of the half-caste cook at the hospital. Of course, I knew that there was no law that would permit of the child's being taken from the mother, and that so long as the mother treated it well she continued to be its lawful guardian. I think that perhaps we could persuade these mothers to lease their children to others to be educated, and to go out to work amongst the white population. Then these girls would probably marry, and no-one would be any wiser about their parentage. They could be readily absorbed into the white population instead of having to return to the gunyah life as they virtually have to do to-day. Naturally, I speak with assurance about things that I have seen with my own eyes, and I know that the problem is a very grave one.

I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that it is a sound principle to consolidate as many Acts of Parliament as possible, in the interests of anyone who has occasion to study them. This measure will help to place the aboriginal on a better footing. Some of the aboriginal settlements throughout the State have been self-supporting to some extent, in that the natives have grown their

own vegetables and produced their own cattle, but the greatest difficulty in the way of giving greater help is the lack of funds. Naturally, I can speak only of the places that I know from my own observation. I believe that, if money was available, the settlement at Palm Island could be made self-supporting. In fact, the natives could produce enough poultry, vegetables, and other products for their own use, and some for sale on the mainland, but, of course, if the Government encouraged that idea they would be accused of exploiting the blacks by entering into competition with the white farmers on the mainland.

Legislating for the welfare of the aboriginal casts a very serious responsibility on the Government. We might not care to call upon the Commonwealth Government for financial aid, particularly at this time, but the thought struck me that the Federal Government might well supplement the expenditure of the State Government in this direction by means of a subsidy on the basis of £1 for £1, to be expended on machinery for the establishment of industries on these settlements. Sawmills and other industries are carried on at Palm Island by the blacks. They work a specified number of hours, cut all the timber that is required on the settlement, and build their own houses. The improvement in living conditions at this settlement over the last few years has been remarkable. In fact, when I visited Palm Island a few months ago I was astounded at the progress that had been made. The old gunyah, thatched grass roofs and grass mats, with the open fireplace, where the damper and other food were cooked, has been replaced by little houses with concrete floors and community kitchens. There is also a police force at Palm Island. I saw them drilling and marching. They were very efficient indeed. There was a guard of honour—I do not know whether it was for the protector or myself—of members of the police force, sea scouts, and boy scouts. They looked very effective in their uniforms as they were lined up on the beach.

Before I conclude, I desire to pay a tribute to the officials who have been ministering to the welfare of the aboriginals. They have nothing to regret, and the blacks have a great deal to be thankful for in the way they have cared for their needs. The Commonwealth Government should supplement the State's expenditure on this good work.

Mr. EDWARDS (Nanango) (2.38 p.m.): The responsibility of ascertaining what is best for our aboriginals and of administering the various settlements is a very heavy one. I have always argued that the aboriginal mission settlements should be self-supporting as far as possible. That policy would encourage the aboriginals to be industrious and engage in useful work. For instance, there is much land in and around the Cherbourg settlement that is idle except for the grazing of a few head of cattle. A good deal more could be done with it. Some new industry could be embarked upon; something could be grown, manufactured, and distributed that would not enter into competition with an established

industry. I realise the good work that is being done to instruct the aboriginals in trades, but in many of the callings they follow, such as saddlery, they come into competition with the local tradespeople. That should be avoided as much as possible. While I agree with the Minister and the last speaker that much has been done, particularly in the way of improvement in their dwelling-places, much more can be done.

I think the consensus of opinion amongst students of the half-caste problem is that the solution lies in allowing them to mix with and be absorbed in the ordinary population. Some of these half-castes are of exceptionally fine types, and when they go out on their own they quickly develop into efficient workers and good settlers. I have known some of them who have married and reared families, and they are highly respected in the communities in which they live. I greatly admire the wonderful horsemanship of the average aboriginal. His prowess is availed of by the station people, who very often find it difficult to obtain the services of competent white stockmen. Everything should be done to encourage them to be industrious and self-supporting and to resolve to live on a scale approaching that of the white man.

The hon. member for Kennedy mentioned the number of white children at the Palm Island settlement. I remember on one occasion at Cherbourg I drew the attention of the former Home Secretary, the late Hon. J. Stopford, to a child that was so white one could not tell that it was not the child of white parents. On one occasion Lady Goodwin visited one of the mission stations and she was shocked to see white children in the class of black and half-caste children, who sang for her.

I trust the Minister will continue with the good work he is doing. I think every Minister who has had control of this department has done his best—under very difficult conditions at times—to help these people in every way he possibly could.

In conclusion, I emphasise the need to do everything possible to make these people self-supporting.

Mr. COLLINS (Cook) (2.44 p.m.): I desire to support the Bill. Its object, of giving a measure of self-government to a section of the aboriginals in Queensland who are inherently capable of governing themselves, is to be commended.

I wish to commend the Minister for the keen interest he has taken in our aboriginals. The Chief Protector, Mr. Bleakley, has also taken a very keen interest in their welfare. He is by nature kindly disposed towards everybody in general and to the aboriginal in particular. He has devoted much time, thought, and trouble to the welfare of the natives who come under his care, and I am sure that those natives who know what he has done for them feel very grateful and look on him as what, in fact, he is, a true friend.

I have come in contact with aboriginals, and know that as a type they are much better

than most people think. They have, in the first place, a kindly nature. They have their own customs and forms of government and their own code of morality, and these are very much higher than is generally recognised. Unfortunately, all of them have not yet reached that stage at which they could be given full citizenship rights, but the Minister is very wise in picking out at least a section who have so developed that they have sufficient intelligence to think and act for themselves and become citizens of the State. In this Bill he is giving encouragement to that fine trait displayed by some of the native population. Possibly, in time—it may be a long time—all the aboriginals will be able to attain to full citizenship rights. That is not possible at present, because I know from experience that they have not developed to the point at which they could accept such responsibility.

I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. members for Kennedy and Nanango as to the problem of the half-caste. It is a very serious one, and must continue to receive sympathetic consideration. I have come in contact with half-caste and quarter-caste natives who were scarcely distinguishable from the average white, and I think they should be entirely segregated from aboriginals, reared as whites, and thus eventually be absorbed in the white population. That would be a move in the right direction. Certainly, for a time there will be a certain amount of heartburning, but the end justifies the means, and consequently these people should be segregated entirely from the aboriginals. Some very grave assertions concerning the exploitation of our native race have been made by missionaries interested in the wellbeing of the Australian natives. Unfortunately, many of these assertions are true, but it is to the credit of the Queensland Government and Ministers in charge of the Department of Health and Home Affairs that this State has done better for the aboriginals than any other. And in saying that I am not stating that the standard is necessarily very high. Unfortunately, the other States have done virtually nothing for the native, except to exterminate him. We have tried to give him the measure of relief, protection, and assistance that is his due. After all, we must not forget that we have taken his country and hunting grounds from him. We have robbed him of the wherewithal to live his natural life, and having done that, we should, as sensible and responsible people, give something in return.

I believe that it is not too late to set aside a big part of the Cape York Peninsula as an aboriginal reserve. At the present time considerable areas up there are reserved for that purpose. Mornington Island, near Normanston, is an example. There the natives have preserved to them their own customs, with virtually no intrusion at all by the white population, and this is to the advantage of the aboriginal. I believe that this system could be extended so that the greater part of the peninsula could be devoted to this purpose. Then the whole of the aboriginal population of the State could be put into that area gradually. The Government

could then take steps to ensure that they were not maltreated or interfered with in any way by the white population. Having done that we could encourage amongst those natives the development of the best of their customs and do our utmost to eliminate the least desirable. We can encourage them to be self-supporting, and we should stand by them to see that no sickness or pestilence of any kind interferes with their health or comfort. That, to my mind, is the best that we could possibly do for these very kindly people—the natives of this country.

Upon looking round to see what has been done for the natives in other parts of the world, one sees a system similar to the one I suggest in operation in New Zealand. Of course, the Maoris in New Zealand are an entirely different race mentally from our aboriginals. They are intelligent and capable of governing themselves, and upon discovering this the New Zealand Government allowed them a system of self-government, and they have been given citizenship in that they have direct representatives in Parliament. Large areas of land were given to them, and as time went on this reservation became very valuable. The land is rented to Europeans, and the rent has been used to create a fund that is devoted to the welfare, the education, in particular, of the Maori race.

In the United States of America and Canada large reservations have been set aside for the preservation of the remnants of their Indians, who are somewhat similar to our aboriginal population. I believe that we Australians would be well-advised to take special notice of what has been done in New Zealand, the United States of America, and Canada, and see just how successful they have been in their system of providing big reservations for the native populations.

It is tragic to read from time to time of the ravages of disease, particularly leprosy, in parts of the Northern Territory, where the aboriginals are very scattered, and have been continually coming in contact with whites. As soon as they become infected with disease, their tribes hide them because of the fear that they will be taken away. The result is that disease has spread among the population there—unfortunately, to a large extent. In Queensland, we have given them greater care and protection and it behoves us to pay every attention to their wellbeing.

I should like to see the aboriginal race preserved in its purity, as far as we can do so. Those quarter-castes and half-castes who are inclined to live like white men should be taken away entirely from the influence of the aboriginal, and eventually we should absorb them into our white population. I believe it can be done successfully without much trouble. I commend many of the mission stations, which have good intentions, and have done much useful work for the aboriginals, but at the same time I am inclined to the belief that it will be better for the State to take complete control over the remnants of the aboriginal race and to keep them together in some big reserve where there is good fishing and hunting, and where they can live their

own lives. The reserve should be situated in country that is not of very great value to the white population, because then the whites would not be very much inclined to go there. Such country exists in Cape York Peninsula. A large area could be set aside as an aboriginal reserve without causing any harm to the white people, and it would be of great service to the aboriginal.

The Oaklands Mission Station is situated in my own electorate, but it is too close to white settlement. The result is that it is hard to keep the blacks entirely separated. I know that the mission authorities desire to shift their grounds, but in shifting, I should not like to see it established in an area similarly surrounded by a fairly thick white population. If we have to shift them, let them be entirely on their own, where they can develop their native customs, and, as far as possible, be self-supporting. I think no harm whatever is caused by encouraging the aboriginal to work and more or less making him self-supporting, because we are all the better for being industrious and independent.

I again commend the Minister for the keen interest he has always taken in the native population and for the initiative he showed approximately two years ago when he visited the whole of the mission stations in Northern Queensland and the Gulf Country. He saw for himself all that was being done by his department and the missions. He saw the people who came under his control, and in collaboration with the heads of his department, Mr. Bleakley in particular, he has been able to devise a plan for the wellbeing of our native population, to whom we owe a great deal of consideration and sympathy. I feel sure that under the guidance of the Minister and the Chief Protector, they are receiving every consideration it is possible to give them.

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS (Hon. E. M. Hanlon, Lithaca) (3 p.m.): The Bill provides that half-castes who are capable of looking after their own affairs may be removed from the control of the department, but that those who live with aboriginals or generally associate with them shall remain under its control. Since the Act has been in operation 2,400 half-castes have been granted exemption from the operations of the Act by ministerial authority. A few years ago we brought all the aboriginals under the Act for the purpose of making a check, issuing exemption orders where they were living in a satisfactory manner. We found that there were not a great number who should be treated as aboriginals. Of course, quite a number who are light in colour are living in the settlements, but, as some hon. members have pointed out, many of the children are as white as any European child could be. It would be extremely difficult to distinguish between many a light-coloured aboriginal child and a European child in a school, but it must be remembered that in taking an aboriginal child from a settlement and placing it in a school we are taking it from its mother, and there is no justification for that. The fact

that a woman is a half-caste does not justify the State in stealing her kiddie, to which she is just as much attached as any white woman is to hers. She would not hear of her baby's being taken from her. So that, no matter how we look at the problem, it is a very difficult one.

Frequently, we encourage the half-castes to go away and seek work outside the settlement where they will not associate with aboriginals. Only about 5 per cent. of the half-caste children born to-day are the children of white parents; 95 per cent.—and more—are the children of half-castes who are married amongst themselves or half-castes married to aboriginals. There is very little interference with the native population in Queensland to-day. Very frequently when the Chief Protector's annual report is published the Press expresses alarm at the increase in the number of half-caste people and suggests that it is due to the abuse of the female aboriginals by white men, but nothing could be further from the truth. The half-castes who marry and have children generally have big families, and, as I have said, 95 per cent. of the children come from the union of half-caste and half-caste, or of half-caste and full-blooded aboriginal.

The health of the aboriginals in the North has been a very serious problem, but, of course, there has never been until recently a systematic check on it. Some years ago a venereal diseases hospital was established on Fantome Island. We had a survey made as far as we could of the aboriginals in North Queensland, and quite a number of them were found to be affected. Many of the natives have the same fear of a doctor as some of our white population have, and the hon. member for Gregory knows that when a doctor is coming the natives generally take to the bush. They fear that they may be taken away from their home district, which is very dear to the aboriginal. They recall that the last time the doctor visited the settlement someone was taken away to Fantome Island or Palm Island. Consequently, they will evade the doctor if they can. We carried out as careful an investigation as we could and we isolated on Fantome Island all the sufferers from venereal disease that we could find. There were several hundreds of them. The Government found it necessary to take these steps because the disease threatened to become a menace to the aboriginals unless it was checked.

We also had a survey made with the object of discovering the aboriginals who were suffering from leprosy. We had been rather alarmed at the amount of leprosy discovered among the aboriginals. At one mission station, Monamona, 13 lepers had been taken away, and since the department has begun the check another 20 have been under observation. That station has been placed under isolation to prevent white people from entering or leaving it.

Mr. Nimmo: That is proof that it is necessary to segregate them.

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: Yes, something must be

done about it. We cannot allow leprosy to spread throughout the land. Whilst there has been remarkably little leprosy among our white population there has been a big proportion of patients amongst the aboriginals of Australia. It would give the people of Australia a shock if a proper survey was taken for leprosy in the Northern Territory and north-west of West Australia, where the aboriginals have more contact with Asiatics than the aboriginals in Queensland. The Queensland Government in the past have paid a good deal more attention to the health of aboriginals by isolating and protecting them than other Governments. When we get such alarming figures in Queensland we can visualise what would result from a proper survey in other parts of Australia.

The tuberculosis scourge among aboriginals is due to two things, lack of proper food, and, most dangerous of all, the craze—the one serious mistake missionaries have made—for clothing these people, particularly the youths. With the best intentions in the world the missionaries concentrate their attention on getting the young aboriginals—not the old buck; they do not seem to have the same desire to feed him in his declining years as to make him a Christian. We can just picture what happens. The children are taken and placed in dormitories, with the consent of the parents. The nomadic tribes of the Gulf—and this is a testimonial to their trust in the missionaries—will give their children to the missionaries. They will leave their children in the mission dormitories, visit them periodically, have a pow-wow with the children, stay at the mission for a few days, and then go away again. The children are cared for under a roof, properly clothed and fed, sleep regular hours, and go to school until they reach the age of 18 years, when, unless there is work for them on the mission station they are allowed to go bush and hunt in native fashion for their food. The aboriginal who has been reared from childhood under a roof and is used to sleeping under blankets, as well as wearing clothes, cannot carry a wardrobe with him when he leaves the mission station. The consequence is that he sleeps in wet clothes and never changes. What is going to happen is obvious. The Reverend Mr. McKenzie, of the Presbyterian Mission at Aurukun, has now prohibited any aboriginal from wearing clothing above the waist. That has led to an improvement in the health of the mission inmates. The children at that mission are the most beautiful one could wish to see. The boys are allowed to wear only a small lava lava and the girls a little pair of V's until they grow up. Then the girls wear a little skirt reaching halfway down their thighs. These children are looking remarkably better than they were on my last visit. I found that there was a general improvement in their health.

The wearing of clothes on the chest and getting used to sleeping indoors and then going bush and sleeping under the skies has levied its toll. The missionaries are just realising now what grievous harm they were doing in making them wear clothes. They are all realising now what was realised by some

many years ago, that the first care should be that of the body. It is pleasing to know of the change. It is indeed pleasing to note that there has been an improvement in the health of the people there.

Taking it by and large, the Bill is simple.

As the Leader of the Opposition said, it is irritating for hon. members to have to search among unlimited amendments in other Acts to ascertain the law; the time of officers of the department and the people who interpret the law is also wasted. This will be a simple Act, and much smaller than the old one. The Torres Strait Islanders are dealt with in a separate Bill. That will make it easy to read, easy to understand, and much more efficient in administration.

Motion (Mr. Hanlon) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

Bill presented and, on motion of Mr. Hanlon, read a first time.

TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(Mr. O'Keefe, Cairns, in the chair.)

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS (Hon. E. M. Hanlon, Ithaca) (3.15 p.m.): I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to make provision for the government of the native inhabitants of the islands of Torres Strait and their descendants, and for other purposes.”

This Bill is the complement of the one that has already come before the Committee, inasmuch as it deals with another section of the native population for which we provide. For a number of years, the islands in Torres Strait have been reserved for the use of the natives thereon. White people are allowed to visit the islands only by permission of the protector of aboriginals at Thursday Island. In the early days, the people on these islands were not so fortunate, and the result of the visits of whites is seen in the fair proportion of half-castes that now live there. These islands are distinct from the mainland in that each has its own tribe. Throughout the ages, each tribe has had its own system of government, tribal laws, and customs. Although the natives from the different islands visit each other, and work together on the pearling fleets, being shareholders in the co-operative trading organisation conducted by them, they do not intermingle very much. As a rule, they preserve their distinct identities. They are noticeable for their rather high moral code. For many years it was a complaint against the department that it would not allow girls from the Torres Strait Islands to go to domestic service on Thursday Island and in the coast towns of Queensland. A number of people who would not take aboriginal women from the mainland as domestic servants wanted these girls as such. The old men of the different tribes from the

Torres Strait islanders have been the governors of the tribes. They objected strongly to the practice of allowing their women to leave the islands. They held that it was not desirable that they should be hired out as domestic servants, and that the demand for them was not so much for their services as domestic servants as for an immoral purpose. They objected to their leaving the islands. The department concurred, and for that reason these women are not hired out as are the native women of the mainland. As hon. members know, in the back country aboriginal women freely engaged in domestic work. They do good work, and are reasonably well treated for it.

The Bill confers legally a right of self-government in their domestic affairs on these islanders. When I visited the islands two or three years ago, a conference of the chiefs of the different islands was held at Badu. It was a very difficult, though very interesting, day. They made very strong representations against a continuance of the protector's treating them in the same way as were mainland aboriginals. They put forward all the requests they could think of. They had been told that I was coming to hear what they had to say about an improvement in their conditions. On my previous visit, six years before, I found that these people very rarely made a request unless they had good reasons for so doing. At times it is very difficult to understand what they really want. Although many speak fair English, they, nevertheless, speak in the aboriginal way, and are somewhat backward in putting their thoughts into words easily understood. We had a very difficult day there, searching all the time for what they really wanted. Very often, we found out that what they were really after had no relation at all to the request they seemed to have made originally.

But they did have one complaint that I thought was justified. On these islands there were native police who were appointed by the protector and controlled by the island teacher. On each of the islands there is a teacher who conducts the school and retail store that is there for the use of the natives. That store is a co-operative enterprise owned by the natives. The teacher, as the administrator appointed by the department, had control of the police. While the native police were satisfactory as a general rule, disputes arose at times. Several chiefs complained that the island teacher had on some occasions arrested and locked up members of their tribe himself. After a tremendous amount of time, we discovered that this was a very sore point. They said that the white teacher should not touch their people at all, that if they were going to be locked up, then only members of their own tribe should arrest them. At first it seemed that they were finding fault with the teacher as manager of the island, but after an enormous amount of questioning we found that they looked upon it as a very serious thing for a white teacher to man-handle their people at all.

After long discussion with them, we decided to give them a trial at a form of local

government of their own. The scheme was that each island should elect a small council to govern the island in domestic matters. Some years before, a council was appointed by the Chief Protector to help the teacher in managing the island. We decided to allow them to elect their own councils and make their own local regulations as well as undertake the work of improving the island. On some islands quite good work will be found because the teacher happened to be a man who could get the natives interested in improving conditions. There are good roads and quite good bridges. On one island I visited I found that the water from a spring on the hill had been dammed and a pipe-line run down to tanks on the beach so that they could have fresh-water showers on the beach. Quite good work has been done where encouragement has been given. One bridge that I saw was constructed just as well as any bridge that may be seen on any council road in any part of Queensland. It was a timber bridge, the timber was well squared, and the whole structure was strong and would last for many years.

We decided to give them the opportunity of governing themselves, and they were delighted to hear that they were going to get some local control. Under this Bill the natives on an island will be given the right to appoint a council of three to five members, who will be elected by all adults, both male and female, over 18 years of age. They look upon a person who is over the age of 18 years as being an adult.

Whilst I do not think that women suffrage was enthusiastically received by the old men, I think it was a very desirable safeguard, because, after all, the influence of the women will be very strong in deciding who is to govern the island. As the women—and this is true of all communities—suffer if not enough work is done or if not enough money is earned, we thought that they should have some voice in the government of the island. As I say, that is one part of the constitution that was not enthusiastically received by the old chiefs. However, if they want any of the benefits of civilisation, I suppose they will have to take some of the pains of civilisation with them.

Incidentally, they are going to make the acquaintance of another of our blessings of civilisation—the payment of rates and taxes.

Mr. Maher: That is a step backward.

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: That is progress. They are being introduced to the tax-gatherer because the council will be given power to strike a tax on the community for the doing of local works, such as the making of roads, the cleaning of villages, and the provision of water. Their by-laws, of course, will have to be approved by the Director of Native Affairs and the Governor in Council before they become law. They will then select the police, and will be responsible for seeing that the police do their duty.

Mr. Maher: Does that apply to all islands of the Torres Strait?

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: Yes.

Mr. Maher: Each island will have its own?

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: Yes, it will be a local authority in itself.

Mr. Maher: It will not be a federal system?

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: No, each island will be just a small local authority. They have enjoyed that privilege now for a couple of years, and I must say we have had no trouble or complaint from those islands since that system has been introduced. They seem to have thoroughly enjoyed it. There is the prestige and added dignity attached to electing their own councils. The method of election caused a little trouble on the first occasion, but the local protector, displaying his usual ingenuity, decided to place a bucket in the room with the name of the candidate on it. As each elector came in, he was given a bean which he placed in the bucket denoting the candidate he wished to vote for. The beans were then counted, and the three highest were the winners. There was no preferential voting. (Laughter.)

Mr. Maher: Who was the returning officer?

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: The teacher was the returning officer, but they were given the privilege of having scrutineers to watch that everything went fairly. There were no complaints, everybody accepting the election as being valid and right, and they have carried on happily ever since.

That is an outline of the main principles of the measure.

Their industries will still be conducted for them by the Aboriginal Industries Board. Those islanders have their fishing industry, in which about 30 luggers and cutters are engaged. They fish for pearl and trochus shell and beche-de-mer. The Aboriginal Industries Board fits them out with stores, finances them, and markets their crop when the harvest comes in. The crops are brought to Thursday Island, where the board disposes of them to the best advantage. As I mentioned before, those people have successfully maintained themselves and helped to maintain their more poverty-stricken brothers on the mainland for many years. Last year there was a complete collapse in the prices of shell, and the department had to go to their assistance in the same way as it goes to the assistance of other primary producers, by forming a pool and giving a guaranteed price. That meant that some of the shell, which deteriorates rapidly if not treated, had to be sold at the depressed price. The trochus shell will stand keeping, and they are now waiting for a rise in the market price. Had that not been done, the whole fleet would probably have been laid up, and the cost to the Government for relief would have been as

great as what we had to provide to finance the seasonal operations, if not greater.

The retail section of their store, in the same way, is conducted by the Aboriginal Industries Board. The headquarters of the board is on Badu Island, where the wholesale stores distribute to the retail stores on the island. The natives are thus protected from exploitation by the white traders, who cheerfully over-charge these people if they are not prevented.

Mr. Maher: Are they increasing in numbers?

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: Yes, they are doing very well in the Torres Strait Islands. The population has increased remarkably, but there are some small islands where there are just a few settlers. Previously, the population was kept in check by the head-hunters of New Guinea, who made souvenir-hunting visits, but the population is now safe from that.

The natives have a very fine boat-building industry on Badu Island and are very skilled in building dinghies. Of course, they are not yet building big luggers, but they do build good big dinghies quite suitable for the open sea, and they compare well with any dinghy built in the shipyards of the white man. They paint and repair their own luggers, and on the occasion of my visit I saw luggers being altered, redecked, recaulked, and so on. They do remarkably good work. Incidentally, they are wonderful seamen, and I thought that on the outbreak of a war this would be a very fine field from which the Commonwealth authorities could recruit their sea scouts. There are sea scouts there. One officer that we sent to Badu Island was a very enthusiastic scout, and I have never seen a better performance by a troop of scouts in any part of Queensland than the one I saw by the Torres Strait islanders on the occasion of my visit. In order to encourage them we arrange for a competitive jamboree every year on one of the islands in turn, and on the occasion of my visit they competed for trophies. The men are remarkable seamen and would be a valuable addition to the observation service that may be necessary on our coast. They are anxious and willing to place themselves at the service of the Defence authorities if they are required.

The Bill will give these islanders the little increase in racial prestige that is important for the preservation of the race. Furthermore, it will relieve the Director of the difficulty of having sometimes to do unpleasant things. These councillors will constitute the court and punish offending natives and the police they will appoint will have a definite job to do. In the old days one of the greatest difficulties, and one that gave a great deal of trouble, was the shooting of unnecessary dogs on the islands. An aboriginal does not like to have a dog destroyed, but the dogs increase in numbers and become a nuisance. Therefore it is necessary at times to have a shooting of the old dogs, and that has caused a good deal of ill-feeling. Now the island council will have to accept that responsibility.

The director may still be a benevolent friend and sympathise with the fellow who has lost a dog, but the council must take the responsibility for it. In our life as parliamentarians we find many people who are prepared to sympathise with citizens and blame the Government and members of Parliament for all their troubles.

The Bill will make the administration more simple and should be a step in the direction of improving the prestige, the confidence, and the morale of these islanders. They are a very fine race, and we should give them all the encouragement we can.

Mr. RUSSELL (Hamilton) (3.33 p.m.): It was very interesting to listen to the Minister's outline of the constitution to be granted to the inhabitants of the islands in Torres Strait, and it was quite refreshing to see that a serious attempt is being made to give these people virtually local government to test out the claim that they have been making for years for some sort of representation in Australia.

We know that there is an organisation in Australia to-day that maintains that the full-blooded aboriginals should have a voice in the politics of this country, but on that matter opinions certainly differ. It would appear that the Torres Strait islanders no doubt are a superior race to the mainlanders, and probably it will be found that the experiment will give them some interest in their local affairs and will satisfy their aspirations to some extent.

These islanders seem to be superior in physique and intelligence to the mainlanders. Of course, the mainlanders, to my way of thinking, are simply a remnant of the stone age and despite all our attempts to preserve them I am afraid that before many years are over they will have passed out of existence. Sad to say, that is the fate of a good many other races. We have seen the same process at work with the Red Indian in the United States of America. The full-blooded Red Indian is gradually going out of existence. We have also witnessed a similar happening among the Polynesians in the Pacific Islands, who are declining in numbers. We also have the spectacle of the Maori race gradually becoming extinct. In New Zealand there is a large proportion of half-castes, the white man's legacy to us.

Mr. Collins: Are the Maoris not increasing now?

Mr. RUSSELL: I do not think so. Half-castes are more prone to the white man's diseases than the white man himself. Eventually half-castes in Australia and New Zealand will be non-existent. Full-blooded aboriginals in Australia are a doomed race, but it is our duty, as contemplated by this Bill, to mete out to them some measure of the justice which has long been denied them. In the Torres Strait Islands we certainly meet a race that is probably a mixture of the aboriginals of Australia, the Malays, and many other races. It is possessed of greater stamina and greater intelligence. These people engage in industries such as fishing

and boatmaking. Most of them have banking accounts and the Queensland Government are justified in endeavouring to preserve their identity and give them some say in their local affairs.

It is refreshing to learn of the ideal existence of those people when we white people are quarrelling among ourselves. It is certainly desirable to maintain that civilisation by whatever means possible. The main trouble is to warn off intruders. The Minister stated that white people are not allowed to visit these islands. I wonder what precautions will be taken to prevent foreigners, notably Chinese and Japanese, from having access to these islands. We know there has been considerable trouble in the Northern Territory because luggers were beached there and the men went ashore and interfered with the aboriginal women. If we could prevent that sort of thing from occurring on these islands, there is no reason why these people should not care for their own destiny and work out their own salvation in order to derive some of the benefits of civilisation. With the extension of educational facilities it is quite possible that this community might become a very prosperous one. Consequently, there should be little objection to our agreeing to the motion, which proposes to confer on these people some measure of local autonomy under the protection of the Queensland Government.

The Minister has enumerated the various industries these people are engaging in. He mentioned fishing. It is well known that in these waters many species of fish abound. In fact, some years ago business people in Australia were prepared to engage in the canning of fish in those waters. It shows, at any rate, that there are vast quantities of edible fish in those waters that could yield a very large reserve stock of provisions for the islanders, as well as provide the raw material for conversion into saleable commodities to be disposed of elsewhere.

As the Minister stated, an attempt is made under the Bill to preserve the racial prestige of these people so that they will not be likely to think they are inferior to their white neighbours. By doing this we shall certainly extend to them a modicum of common justice. It will be an interesting experiment to see how these people will settle down to self-government. I was amused at the manner in which the delegates will be appointed. That reminds me that the Athenians balloted for their representatives by throwing oyster shells into urns. This is in fact a survival of a custom of many centuries ago.

I should like the Minister to give us information at a later stage as to the extent to which these natives will be allowed to govern themselves? Will the legislation framed by them be confined to purely domestic matters, such as the building of roads and bridges, the policing of natives, and the collection of the necessary tax for the upkeep of the police and other officials, or will he extend to them greater privileges than that? I take it that the experiment will have to be carried on very warily, that the local council will not

be given too many duties until the councillors become accustomed to their work and prove to be efficient. I think it will be probably the most interesting experiment in the treatment of native races that has been undertaken, because we have a complete unit consisting of a race that will not be interfered with from outside. I do not think we could find in any other part of the world a community such as that which inhabits the islands of Torres Strait.

I can only add that as Australians we should do all we possibly can to remove the stigma that rests on us in regard to our treatment of the native races. I know very well this question has agitated the public mind over a long period, but the urgency of other matters that have claimed our attention caused us to relegate it to the background. We must admit that in the past the aboriginals have not received a fair deal at our hands, and the least we can do is to try to preserve the remnants of the race that are here to-day. It is our duty to preserve the identity of groups such as the Torres Strait Islanders and see that they are not interfered with from the outside.

We are heartily in support of the measure. We trust it will prove highly successful, that it will make these people happy and contented, that they will take full control of their own affairs, that the health of the community will be well cared for, and that they will become prosperous.

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (3.45 p.m.): The Bill seems to be one that will confer some advantage on the Torres Strait Islanders. It is a good thing to enable the Islanders to become self-reliant and establish their own governing bodies in those matters that concern their every-day life.

The inhabitants of these islands appear to have some advantages over the mainland natives. They were not interfered with when the first settlement of Australia was taking place, and I presume many of the natives to be found there to-day are full-blooded descendants of those who inhabited the islands at that time. The officers of the vessels of the British Admiralty who visited the Queensland coast and the islands of Australia in the early years have reported favourably on the men to be found on the islands in the Torres Strait, whatever their origin may have been. Some of the chiefs who dealt with the British officers in those days were men of exceptional calibre, and it would appear that it is for Islanders of this type that the Minister is embarking on this very interesting experiment. Perhaps the Minister will indicate at a later stage the extent of the local government that is to be granted, the amount of taxation to be levied, and the class of work to be done.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: The Islands are not very large and I doubt whether the taxation will be high.

Mr. MAHER: We shall not have to worry about currency and credit. I only hope the experiment will be thoroughly successful. I

understand it has been in operation, to some extent, for several years.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: We have been allowing them to do it for about two years.

Mr. MAHER: Apparently, it has worked well enough to justify legislative sanction of the scheme.

It seems a pity that, with such good material working in the fishing industry, the export trade could not be increased, and thus perhaps create employment for white men. Perhaps, a great number of white men could obtain employment in and about these islands if pilchard fishing could be expanded. There is a world-wide market.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: An attempt was made to establish the pilchard industry, but it failed because of want of capital. The water is particularly thick with pilchards.

Mr. MAHER: No doubt the day will come when that industry can be expanded. Australia pays a very handsome sum for imported fish, salmon from Canada, herrings and other fish from Great Britain, and crabs from Japan. If the necessary capital could be attracted to exploit these waters, there is no reason why we should not be able to develop a new industry. At any rate, there is scope there for development, and I have no doubt that as our Australian population expands, and the demand for fish becomes greater, capital will be found for the expansion of the fishing industry there, and the Islanders of the strait will, no doubt, wish to co-operate with us in developing that industry.

I shall reserve my comments upon any other aspects of the Bill until I have an opportunity of seeing it. At this stage, however, it seems a very desirable measure to introduce, and one that I hope will help in working out the Minister's desire to increase the racial prestige of the inhabitants of the islands, to give them a sense of equality, and to bring out the best that is in them in governing their island so as to ensure peace, security, and development.

Motion (Mr. Hanlon) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

Bill presented and, on motion of Mr. Hanlon, read a first time.

MEDICAL BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(Mr. O'Keefe, Cairns, in the chair.)

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS (Hon. E. M. Hanlon, Ithaca) (2.55 p.m.): I move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to consolidate and amend the law relating to medical practitioners and the control of the practice of medicine, and for other purposes."

Like the previous measure on the business sheet, this is a consolidating Bill, and it wipes out all previous Medical Acts with the exception of that Act which applies to medical and other professions, and makes provision for a common office and common registrar for all the professional boards, each contributing a share to the cost of the registrar's office. That is the only Act affecting the medical profession that is not repealed by this Act, and that Act applies not only to the medical profession, but to all professions for which we have set up professional boards. Hon. members will remember that at one time each professional board had its own office, its own registrar, and its own staff. We appointed one registrar for all professional boards, with one office and one staff, and allowed them to contribute according to the amount of work that was done for them and the cost of conducting the office. That Act will still stand for other professions as well as the medical profession. All other Acts applying to the medical profession are repealed by this measure.

The principle of registration is firstly applied to the control of medical practice. It is based on the registration of medical practitioners and a declaration of the rights and privileges of medical practitioners, but, like everything else that carries a privilege, it has disciplinary attributes, also.

One new feature of the Bill is a provision for the review of medical charges. There is also one that requires an applicant for registration to have served for at least 12 months in a hospital before taking up private practice. That applies to the registration of all medical practitioners. Of course, all men in practice are registered automatically; but if applicants come from outside Queensland or from any other part of the British Empire they must still carry out 12 months' hospital practice here if they have not been three years in practice wherever they come from, or if they have not had 12 months' hospital practice, wherever they come from. That means that any new doctor coming here from any other State or from England has to conform to the requirement we are making of our own medical students in Queensland. A student graduating here will be required to serve in any Queensland hospital nominated by the Department of Health and Home Affairs at a nominal salary for 12 months. Naturally, we desire to put the same obligation on practitioners coming from other medical schools.

Mr. Maher: Will there be any difficulty in carrying that out? Would you be able to attach them to the hospitals?

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: We are taking power to compel the hospitals to accept them. We have to have that power, although the position so far has been that it is generally difficult to get enough resident medical officers in hospitals. In case the reverse position should arise—and it might arise—we have to be prepared, and we have to take power to appoint those new practitioners to hospitals and to compel the hospitals to take them.

This Bill also makes a new departure in that it makes provision for the registration of specialists. To-day any medical practitioner can set himself up as a specialist. The Bill makes provision for the registration of specialists, and the Medical Board will have the duty of setting out what will be specialties, and will have the right to register specialists.

The Medical Board will be charged with the discipline of the profession, as it is to-day. The Director-General of Health and Medical Services will be the president of the board. I think hon. members will agree that year by year the association between the Director-General and the Department of Public Health and the medical profession grows closer and closer, and they are more and more interdependent. Consequently, it is thought advisable that the Director-General of Health and Medical Services, who is the chief administrative officer of the medical services of the State, should also be the administrative officer of the Medical Board. That makes the alliance between the profession and the department much closer than it has been in the past. Every year sees more responsibility for medical service thrown upon the Government, and we have to recognise that modern trend, and make provision to meet it.

The board will consist of six members, in addition to the president, as at the present time. Three of those members will be appointed by the Governor in Council, but they need not be medical practitioners. That also is the law at present. Hon. members will remember that two or three years ago we amended the law to provide that the various professional boards may be constituted by the appointment of a person, not necessarily a member of the relevant profession, as the Government representative on the board. That allowed for the appointment of one layman as the Government representative on the board. Our policy was to select a prominent friendly society officer for each professional board, one who had a long experience in medical, dental, pharmaceutical, or other professions, in dealing with the working people and the poor of the community. That plan, I am happy to say, has worked excellently. It has worked to the satisfaction of the department and to the satisfaction of the various professions. It has given the friendly societies an opportunity of knowing more of the reasons behind many of the decisions of the professional boards, and of knowing some of the difficulties that the boards have had to face in their administration. At the same time, it has allowed the friendly societies to have at court an advocate who was thoroughly conversant with the requirements of their members. I know that the department would not like to change that system, and I do not think that any profession would like to depart from it either.

The officers of the board will hold office for five years, but, of course, power is taken by the Governor in Council to remove any member of the board at any time for stated reasons. The profession itself will appoint the other three members of the board. The

general qualifications are that the member shall hold a degree in medicine or surgery at any University in the Commonwealth or the Dominion of New Zealand or be registered or possess a qualification entitling him to registration under the Medical Act of the Parliament of Great Britain or Northern Ireland. There is the added qualification of 12 months' practice in a hospital or three years in private practice.

Mr. Maher: Are the hospitals mentioned or will they be restricted to a certain number?

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: Naturally, only the larger hospitals can make provision for resident medical officers. Brisbane will be the most important centre, because it caters for one-third of the population of the State. The Brisbane General Hospital needs 20 resident officers. Then there will be resident medical officers in the hospitals at Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Townsville, Mackay, and Cairns. This system will serve the dual purpose of offering opportunities for practical experience to young practitioners, and at the same time securing for the hospitals the services that they now find it difficult to get in the way of resident medical officers.

Provision is also made for the registration of practitioners who may be brought to Queensland for teaching purposes. For instance, the University may appoint a lecturer who may not be entitled to registration under our laws. Provision is made whereby members of the Commonwealth medical staff appointed to Brisbane will be automatically registered. They may be medical officers registered in other States, or may be brought to the Commonwealth for a specific purpose and may not be eligible for registration, but if they are in the Commonwealth or State service for any particular purpose, provision is made for their registration whilst serving in that capacity in this State. For instance, we may appoint someone with a special knowledge of fevers to endeavour to deal with "Q" fever.

The clauses as to registration of specialists lay down that existing specialists are to be automatically registered as a matter of course. That is the custom that has been followed in all other professions in which the Government have exercised control. In the future, members of the profession desirous of setting up as specialists must have special training in the specialty they propose to set up in. The medical profession itself is very keen on establishing this protection. At present, any medical man without possessing the particular qualification can, if a certain disease is fashionable for the moment, set himself up as a specialist and charge big fees for its treatment. The conditions of registration set down are five years' practice in the specialty under an approved specialist or three years' practice in the particular specialty in a hospital. Originally the provision specified five years in a hospital or five years in private practice, but members of the profession pointed out that three years' practice in a specialty in a recognised hospital would be the equivalent of five years'

practice under a private specialist. We met them in that respect and provided that the period of training in the specialty must be three years in a hospital, five years in private practice, or four years partly in private practice and partly in hospital. That training will entitle a medical man to be registered as a specialist and to call himself a specialist, and to put on his plate the specialties that he practises in. No-one else will be allowed to do so.

The establishment of a Medical Assessment Tribunal is an addition to the present law. Any disciplinary cases, or causes of action by a member of the profession against another member, or by any person against a member of the profession, will, in the first place, come before the Medical Board. If the board thinks a case has been made out for hearing before the tribunal it will act accordingly. The tribunal will consist of a judge of the Supreme Court alone. The judge will make the decision, but he will be assisted by two medical assessors, one of whom will be appointed by the Department of Health and Home Affairs and one by the medical profession. Therefore, the judge will have the advice of two medical men to aid him in coming to decisions on any matter of medical practice or medical ethics. Matters may be brought before this tribunal either by the board, if it is satisfied that a medical man should be proceeded against, or private persons may make complaints to the tribunal. The tribunal also is empowered to hear any matter referred to it by another tribunal. Any matter having a bearing on medicine or the medical profession can be referred to the Medical Assessment Tribunal by another court.

For instance, in a large number of cases, such as workers' compensation cases and civil claims for damages incurred in an accident, a large amount of medical evidence is called. Each side will keep on calling another doctor to swear the reverse of what the previous doctor has sworn. In a recent case in Australia a judge, after hearing the medical evidence for and against, declared that the only thing he could do was to disregard all the medical evidence offered because it was so conflicting. Under this Bill, in cases such as that, the court will be able to refer to the tribunal for advice on any such contentious medical matter. The judge, in arriving at his decision, will have the assistance of two medical men, one representing public medicine—that is, the Department of Health and Home Affairs—and the other representing private medicine, and appointed by the medical profession.

Furthermore, the Governor in Council may refer any matter having a medical aspect to the Medical Assessment Tribunal for investigation. Very often matters crop up in the course of administration on which the Government have to have medical advice. You ask an officer for his opinion and you get it, but that opinion will be reversed by somebody else. In order to get something authoritative we shall be able to make use of the tribunal presided over by a judge who has the advice of two medical men, one

representing private practice and the other representing public medicine.

Mr. Maher: In matters of medicine the judge would not be very helpful.

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: The advantage of having a judge in deciding these matters is that he is highly trained in determining the value of evidence. That is the advantage that a judge of the Supreme Court would have. There is no reason to believe that a judge or any other person would be unfair in arriving at a decision. I believe a judge of the Supreme Court would give a fair and honest decision. All judges are trained particularly in that job and they are experienced in assessing the value of evidence and the credibility of witnesses who appear before them. The judge of the tribunal will have the advice of two medical men to assist him on medical matters.

There is another important aspect to consider in the creation of such a tribunal. All this work is of no value if we do not maintain public confidence in the medical profession. I have stated repeatedly that the reason there is so much quackery in the community is that there is a definite suspicion of the profession, that the people regard it as having too many privileges and not enough responsibilities. Probably they do not see what responsibilities the profession has. But if we are going to maintain the prestige and standing of the medical profession in the community we must give to the people an assurance that anything associated with the profession that has to be investigated will be investigated by an impartial tribunal. The people do not believe that the Medical Board, consisting of all medical men, is a thoroughly impartial tribunal. For that reason, I think the Medical Assessment Tribunal will be for the benefit of the profession. Members of the British Medical Association also think so. They have no objection to the creation of this tribunal. I have talked the matter over with them. They have no objection whatever to offer. They themselves believe that it will go a long way to increase the public confidence in the medical profession that should exist.

The Medical Assessment Tribunal will have the power to assess fees. A private patient who thinks he has been overcharged will have the right to submit his account and particulars to the Medical Board in the first place. If that board thinks the patient has been overcharged it can make a decision as to what it thinks is a fair and reasonable fee. If the patient or the doctor is not satisfied with that decision, he can bring the matter before the tribunal. Here, again, the judge will be assisted by a representative of the profession and a medical representative of the Government, who should be able to put the case from the point of view of the patient. The tribunal would be of no value whatever if legal costs were associated therewith. It is quite obvious that no person could afford to approach the tribunal for protection in the matter of a medical fee if he was to be

handed over to the tender mercies of members of the legal profession, whose fees are much higher. It would be really passing the unfortunate patient or doctor from one torture to another.

Mr. Maher: You are not kindly disposed to the profession of the hon. member for Maree.

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: The hon. member for Maree knows the suffering attached to incurring the aid of the legal profession, as do I. There are numerous cases of people claiming to have been overcharged. The British Medical Association admits that. Several years ago that organisation set up a body to deal with complaints of overcharging. Of course, that being an unknown body of doctors, dealing with disputes between patients and doctors, it did not get the confidence of the public, and, consequently, did not accomplish much. There are several instances in which the body set up by the British Medical Association made a heavy reduction in the fees that had been charged to a private patient. We give the public the right to approach a tribunal that can be regarded as strictly impartial. We have no wish to place a doctor at the mercy of a man who knows nothing of the difficulties of the profession, and, consequently, we are providing the court with two medical assessors, one appointed by the Crown and the second by medical men in private practice.

Mr. Daniel: Why not set up a registrar of medical fees?

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: This is the way in which we are doing it. We are giving people some protection against overcharging by this profession.

Mr. Daniel: It would be more direct.

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: It would mean that every patient would have to submit himself to the registrar of fees to have his fees assessed. Under this Bill, the aid of the tribunal will be invoked only where a patient thinks he has been overcharged. We do not want to set up a tribunal to deal with every patient who gets a bottle of cough remedy prescribed by a doctor. Every patient does not complain of the fees charged. The great number are quite satisfied.

Mr. Maher: Some doctors are worth more than others.

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: Absolutely, and that is what we have to see to. The only thing about it is that no doctor accepts any responsibility for his patients—the patient has to take all the responsibilities and the risks—but in general we find that the great majority of people are quite satisfied with the services they get and the fees they are charged. We also know that the great majority of doctors give a fair deal to their patients, but there are instances to which that remark does not apply, and the tribunal to be set up is for the purpose of dealing with these cases.

We have also to protect the doctor from the person who is merely vexatious and brings up a trivial matter for the purpose only of annoying the doctor. There are a number of persons who in a vexatious spirit bring trivial matters before the courts. There is the fellow who issued a writ against me for £100,000,000. That was clearly vexatious. These things happen in all professions. There are certain persons who will be a nuisance to anyone, if they can. We have provided that where the tribunal believes that any application made to it is trivial or vexatious it can award costs of attendance against the person lodging the complaint.

Dr. Watson Brown: This is after they have been before the Medical Board

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: The Medical Board deals with the complaint first, and if it is satisfied that the fee should be reduced it says so; if it thinks that the fee is equitable it says so. Either party may appeal to the medical assessment tribunal against the board's decision. No agents are allowed to appear, consequently there can be no legal costs. The protection against frivolous complaints is that the tribunal can award costs of attendance against the person who makes a frivolous or vexatious application to it.

This Bill has been under consideration for a long time. Similar Bills are under consideration in other States, too. We have gone on with it after long periods of discussion and consideration. I have discussed it with the medical men in practice. The medical men in my department have been over it time and again, and taking it by and large, the Bill meets with the approval of the profession.

I come now to a clause that is not in the Bill and which I think hon. members expected would be in it. I refer to the clause dealing with conditional registration. As hon. members know, we were faced with a shortage of doctors for outside hospitals and we had proposed to make conditional registration for certain of the mid-European refugees who were in the State on condition that they would serve outside for a certain period.

One of our main difficulties was that most of their qualifications were unknown in Australia. Many of them had qualified in universities that were not very well known, and a tremendous number of them had done only special work. Some of them had been working all their lives since graduation in such work as infant welfare clinics. Others had been working in one specialty or another. Therefore, very few would be eligible for the work we wanted them to do—the general practice of medicine in the outback where a doctor had to face up to any job that came his way. A condition laid down in order to find out what qualifications a man had was that he should go into the Brisbane Hospital for a period and be reported on by the medical profession practising there.

After the Bill was ready for introduction war broke out, and we found that the great

bulk of the refugee medical men who are available are now enemy aliens, coming from either Germany or Austria. It is obvious that we cannot trust enemy aliens in posts in which the lives of so many people would be at their mercy. I do not want to say that I regard these men as being merely a gang of ferocious brutes who would do such things, but any nation that is at war does take the safeguard of seeing that subjects of countries that are at war with it are not entrusted with positions in which they can do damage to the country. For that reason it is obvious that we could not justify the inclusion in this Bill of the conditional registration clause. There may be a few—and they are very few—who would be classed as neutrals. It must be remembered that the whole of Austria is now in the German nation, and the whole of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that was at war with us previously may be part of Germany at any time. We never know what is taking place there.

Mr. Maher: Are these applicants already in Queensland?

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: The majority of them are in the South. There are a few here, but not many.

Mr. Maher: You would not argue that an Austrian refugee, who was a medical man, would necessarily be an enemy?

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: Not necessarily, but he would be most likely. Do not forget the Austrian people gave more cheers than kicks when the German occupation took place. They are of German extraction. There are quite a number who object to their country's losing its independence, but there are also a number who do not. It must be remembered that the occupation by Germany took place without any resistance from the Austrian people and I think I should be safe in saying that there are at least as many Austrians who are loyal supporters of the Nazi regime as there are others who oppose it. As a matter of fact, it was the continued growth of Nazi-ism before the occupation that made such a step possible.

Mr. Maher: If a doctor finds it necessary to seek another country of refuge, it does not look as if he is a subscriber to that form of government.

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: That is the one thing on which we have no power of check in Australia. We do not know why they left Germany or Austria.

Mr. Nimmo: We could not take the risk.

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: No. We have no knowledge of that. It might be a most fruitful method of getting somebody into the country under the guise of a refugee. However, there are many of those people who are genuine refugees. Many of them have lost their all and are to be pitied, but the risk is too great.

In my own department, we had a lady refugee working on cultures from fevers and other things. She was born in Berlin and had been only a couple of years away from Berlin. I think it would have been completely unwarranted to leave her there, although I have heard from medical men—I have never spoken to her—and believe that she was a thoroughly honest, decent woman and was very sick when she was stood down. However, I believe the department would be failing in its duty to the public if it left an enemy subject in a place where so much harm could be done. You cannot take risks with these things. Nobody is sorrier than I for anybody who may be away from home or in a foreign country, but we had no alternative than to put that lady off. Hon. members can see the position we could get into.

Quite a number of refugees are making application for all sorts of posts. There have been applications for registration under the Pharmacy Act and other Acts. The bulk of those people are of military age. The only medical men who applied for registration under this Act were also of military age and I honestly think that even if they have the best intentions in the world they should not be given any privilege, any sheltered calling in the community, or any position where harm could be done. If they are genuinely perturbed by the invasion of their country by Nazi Germany, they should at least stand side by side with our own Australians whom they are asking to go and fight for their country. I do not think we should give them any privileges while our own people go overseas to fight in defence of their country. They should not be allowed to seize the callings and occupations of our own Australian people.

The main reason why you cannot take the risk of employing these people is that there is no means of checking the stories they tell as to why they come here. They may be genuine refugees from other countries for all we know, but I think it would be a very risky thing for the Government, much as I should like to see additional medical men placed in the service of the community, to allow those people to take up positions where so much harm could be done. I think it would be tempting Providence to place them in those positions in the present difficult situation in which we find ourselves.

I think I have covered the provisions of the Bill very extensively. I have explained to the Committee all the provisions contained in it, and copies will be available to hon. members before it goes further. I wanted particularly to explain the reason why the Government had decided to leave out the clause which had caused some controversy. If there were no war in Europe, then I should say that the clause would be worth its place in the Bill, but under the altered conditions I think the Government are doing the right and proper thing in refusing to take any risk with the safety of the people.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 4.32 p.m.