

Queensland



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[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 1944

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Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. S. J. Brassington, Fortitude Valley) took the chair at 11 a.m.

ELECTIONS TRIBUNAL.

JUDGE FOR 1945.

Mr. SPEAKER announced the receipt from His Honour the Acting Chief Justice, Mr. Justice Macrossan, of a letter intimating that he would be the judge to preside at the sittings of the Elections Tribunal for the year 1945.

QUESTIONS.

FERTILISER ON SUGAR-CANE LANDS.

Mr. L. J. BARNES (Cairns) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

“Seeing the area of sugar lands fertilised in 1943 increased from 107,100 to 155,500 acres, and the amount of fertiliser per acre treated rose slightly, but compared with pre-war years production per acre was down 27 per cent., and as unfavourable weather does not appear to have been the sole cause,—

1. Has he, through his department, investigated the effects of artificial fertiliser where used on sugar crops?

2. If so, what was the result of such investigations?

3. If not, will he make investigations and let this House know the result of same?”

Hon. T. L. WILLIAMS (Port Curtis) replied—

“1. The premise of the hon. member is not quite correct. He is apparently confusing the quantity of fertiliser purchased and used in a given year with the amount which produces the crop in that year. These may be entirely different quantities—for example, the fertiliser purchased and used this year produces next year’s crop. Thus, whilst the amount of fertiliser sold to canegrowers for 1943 was greater than that for 1942, the fertiliser per acre which produced the 1943 crop was the lowest for years past, as is shown in the following list:—

		Cwt.		Tons
		Fertiliser.		of Sugar.
1936	..	3.67	..	3.04
1937	..	4.00	..	3.06
1938	..	4.46	..	3.10
1939	..	4.67	..	3.41
1940	..	4.44	..	2.86
1941	..	4.37	..	2.82
1942	..	2.94	..	2.54
1943	..	1.31	..	2.12

Clearly, from these figures the yield of sugar per acre is dependent largely on the quantity of fertiliser used. (For further details the hon. member may consult the 43rd annual report of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations.)

“2 and 3. Yes. Fertiliser trials have been conducted annually by the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations for the past 15 years, and based on the results of these, fertiliser recommendations are made to farmers. The results of these trials have been published in the annual reports of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations for the past 15 years.”

MRS. E. C. BRIERTY, PATIENT AT BRISBANE GENERAL HOSPITAL.

Mr. PIE (Windsor) asked the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs—

“1. Was Mrs. Edith Catherine Brierty, of Brisbane road, Wynnum West, an out-patient of the Brisbane General Hospital on and off for eighteen months during the years 1939-1940?

“2. Was her case diagnosed as chronic indigestion, and was she supplied with medicine with a bismuth foundation?

“3. Was an X-ray taken at the Brisbane General Hospital in or about January, 1940, disclosing her condition as:—(a) Moderate cardiac spasm; (b) stomach normal; (c) duodenal cap large; (d) meal expanding rapidly?

“4. Is he aware of the fact that, owing to her rapidly declining state of health a private doctor was consulted on 6 April, 1940, who in five minutes diagnosed her case as cancer; that she was admitted to the Brisbane General Hospital on the same date, 6 April, 1940; and that she died on 14 April, 1940, from cancer of the gullet, after receiving treatment at the Brisbane General Hospital for eighteen months for chronic indigestion?

“5. Will he thoroughly investigate the letter I forwarded to him on 27 November substantiating these allegations?”

Hon. T. A. FOLEY (Normanby) replied—

“1. The out-patient cards of patients who have not attended for three years are destroyed. As Mrs. Brierty’s case occurred four or five years ago, her out-patient card is not available. Records of any special investigations are kept, and from these it appears that Mrs. Brierty was a medical out-patient who had—(1) a blood examination; and (2) a fractional test-meal, done on 16 February, 1940; and (3) an X-ray examination of the upper part of the digestive tract done on 22 February, 1940.

“2. No out-patient card showing the diagnosis or treatment is available. The examinations done indicate that something more than indigestion was looked for. The blood examination, the fractional test-meal, and the X-ray of the upper part of the digestive tract were obviously careful investigations made to determine whether there was any condition there which might be detectable by those tests.

“3. The hon. member’s information is somewhat garbled. He apparently refers to the X-ray mentioned above, which was

taken on 22 February, 1940, and the report is as follows:—'Moderate cardio spasm (dysfunction of the muscles of the gullet interfering with the emptying of it) stomach normal—duodenal cap large—meal escaping rapidly.'

"4. Dr. Geaney, on 6 April, 1940, sent Mrs. Brierty to hospital with a request for investigation. His request was as follows:—'Please admit Mrs. Brierty into one of my beds for investigation. X-ray in February showed moderate cardio spasm. Since then she has had pain, constant vomiting, and loss of weight. She is very ill.' It is unhappily characteristic of cancer of the gullet that it may show no signs other than chronic indigestion and some difficulty with regard to the taking of food at the end when the case has reached a stage immediately prior to death. This was Mrs. Brierty's condition, and, as stated, she died on 14 April.

"5. I have investigated the letter on 27 November sent to me by the hon. member, and I find that his allegations are based on a misinterpretation of the facts. Cancer of the gullet is always fatal. The only thing that can be done when it does occur is to prolong life in some cases for a short time by passing a tube so that food can enter the stomach. This does not affect the fate of the case. Cancer of the gullet occurs in two forms, one of which projects into the gullet and stops food at an early date and is visible consequently by X-ray examination. The other forms a collar round the gullet and is not visible by any means until almost the end point of the disease. This latter was the condition that existed in Mrs. Brierty's case. Her treatment was standard treatment, and no alteration of treatment would have affected the cancer from which she died."

PRIORITIES FOR TYRES AND TUBES.

Mr. PIE (Windsor) asked the Premier—

"Can he explain the fact that in South Australia re-tread tyres are available up to priority 8 without permit, and that owners in priorities 9, 10 and 11 doing any essential work at all could apply for permits with good hopes of success, and that in special circumstances motorists in priority 12 may obtain permission to have tyres re-treaded whereas in Queensland holders of priorities 1 to 6 only can receive retreads without permit?"

Hon. F. A. COOPER (Bremer) replied—

"The Directorate of Emergency Road Transport informs me that the hon. member's assertion that in Queensland holders in priorities 1 to 6 only can receive re-treads without permit is incorrect. The directorate states that tyre repair shops throughout Queensland are authorised to undertake re-capping, re-treading, and repairing of tyres for motor vehicle owners holding liquid fuel licences on priorities 7 or 8, in addition to those holding priorities 1 to 6, without prior approval of applications for such

work by the Directorate of Emergency Road Transport. Repairers may also accept applications in respect of those vehicles coming within the priorities 9 to 11, inclusive, but these applications must first be submitted to the Directorate of Emergency Road Transport for consideration and decision prior to any work being performed by the repairers. Repairers are obliged to give priority of service for any work held by them for applicants on priorities 1 to 6 before commencing work for those holders of liquid fuel licences bearing any other priority unless specially authorised by the directorate. A statement to the above effect appeared in the Brisbane Press on 11 November, 1944. Tyre repair shops throughout Queensland had previously been circularised in this regard on 9 November, 1944. In addition, applications from holders of licences endorsed with priority No. 12 receive consideration in cases where vehicles are used partly for essential purposes. These conditions are similar to those operating in South Australia."

SUPPLIES OF MOTOR TYRES AT ALICE SPRINGS.

Mr. J. F. BARNES (Bundaberg): I desire to be afforded the privilege of the House to give the Premier the answer he asked for the other day.

Mr. Cooper: Is that when I said that I was making some inquiries?

Mr. J. F. BARNES: You asked me to furnish you with information. You asked me for information.

Mr. COLLINS: I wish to give notice of a question for Thursday, 30 November.

Mr. J. F. BARNES: I rise to a point of order.

Mr. COLLINS proceeding to give notice of his question—

Mr. J. F. BARNES: I rise to a point of order. I made a request and I asked the privilege of the House to give the Premier the information he sought.

Mr. Cooper: Concerning what?

Mr. J. F. BARNES: The 40,000 tons of tyres going to waste at Alice Springs.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is it the desire of the House that the hon. member for Bundaberg be granted the privilege to give the Premier certain information?

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Cooper: No, it is not a proper use of the procedure of the House.

Mr. J. F. BARNES: I rise to a point of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! The House is against the hon. member. It declined to give him the permission he asked for.

Later,—

Mr. J. F. BARNES (Bundaberg) (11.15 a.m.): Mr. Speaker, I desire to give notice of a question for tomorrow to the Hon. the Premier—

“In my previous question I said that there were 40,000 tyres in a 6-acre paddock perishing—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not asking a question. He is making a speech.

Mr. J. F. BARNES: In order to make my point I must recite this part of the question and then I propose to ask the Premier if he will make further inquiries into the matter.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I suggest that the hon. member give the information to the Premier.

Mr. J. F. BARNES: Through the House?

Mr. Hanlon: No, why should you take up the time of the House in this way?

PAPER.

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

Report of the Public Service Commissioner for the year 1943-1944.

PETROL CONSUMPTION OF MINISTERIAL CARS.

RETURN TO ORDER.

The following paper was laid on the table—

Return to an Order made by the House on 3 August last, on the motion of Mr. Macdonald, showing details of the petrol consumption by ministerial cars in 1943-44.

WAR GRATUITY TO RETURNED MEN AND WOMEN.

Hon. F. A. COOPER (Bremer—Premier) (11.16 a.m.): Mr. Speaker, on the 24th of this month the hon. member for Cairns asked me the following question—

“In view of the public statement that the Tasmanian Government propose a gratuity for their returned men and women, will he give favourable consideration to the granting of a gratuity to Queensland returned men and women?”

To that question I replied—

“The payment of a gratuity for returned members of the defence services is a constitutional function of the Commonwealth Parliament. I am, however, making inquiry as to any proposals of the Tasmanian Government in the matter.”

I am in receipt of a telegram from the Premier of Tasmania in which he says that no such proposal has been made nor is it likely to be made by the Tasmanian Government.

Mr. L. J. Barnes: There was a statement to that effect.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS.

Mr. L. J. BARNES (Cairns) (11.17 a.m.), by leave: I wish to make a personal explanation. This morning the hon. the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock was replying to a question of mine and he said that my figures were incorrect. I should like to convey to him the fact that those figures were copied from the figures of the Government Statistician in the last issue of “Economic News.”

Mr. CHANDLER (Hamilton) (11.18 a.m.), by leave: I wish to make a personal explanation. Yesterday, when asking a question, the hon. member for Baroona made a statement that, by plain and direct implication, reflects on my personal integrity, as well as on that of every member of the Queensland People's Party.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Is the hon. member making a personal explanation concerning himself?

Mr. CHANDLER: Concerning myself. The hon. member for Baroona suggested that the decision not to accept the salary increase was made only after an undertaking had been received that members would be reimbursed from a special fund. That statement has no foundation in fact whatever. No fund has been or will be created, nor has such a suggestion been made. The only reason why members have refused the increase—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CHANDLER: Speaking for myself, the only reason why I feel that I have no right to accept it—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! That is outside the scope of a personal explanation.

Mr. CHANDLER: I have given instructions that it shall not be paid. The hon. member's statement was malicious and unjustified.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

Bill, on motion of Mr. Hanlon, read a third time.

COMMONWEALTH AND STATES FINANCIAL AGREEMENT FURTHER VARIATION BILL.

THIRD READING.

Bill, on motion of Mr. Hanlon, read a third time.

SUPREME COURT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

Bill, on motion of Mr. Gledson, read a third time.

FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACTS
AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Mann, Brisbane, in the chair.)

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane—Secretary for Labour and Employment) (11.24 a.m.): I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Factories and Shops Acts, 1900 to 1922, in certain particulars, and for other purposes.”

I feel confident that hon. members will gladly receive this amending legislation, which has for its purposes the modernisation of working conditions in factories and shops and the improvement generally of amenities for workers. The introduction of this measure is but another step in the implementation of the promises made by the Premier in his policy speech prior to the last State election.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. GAIR: It is merely keeping faith with the people, who in a very decided manner elected this Government at the last election. I believe the legislative programme of this session clearly indicates that Labour is desirous of implementing the promises it made to the people on that occasion.

I think it would not be out of place at this stage to give a brief history of the legislation dealing with factories and shops. William Lane, many years ago, published a story dealing with the hardships of industrial life in Brisbane and the urgent need for legislation. This book and Lane's other writings had considerable effect on the public mind and were the principal factor in inducing the Government of the time to appoint a commission of inquiry into the conditions in workshops and factories in Queensland. The Commission made its investigations in 1890 but it was not until 1896 that a Factories and Shops Act was passed. The first Bill was brought down under the Morehead regime but it did not become law. In 1894 a Factories and Shops Bill was introduced but that also failed to become law. In 1895 a Bill passed the Legislative Assembly and was sent to the Legislative Council but it failed to obtain the assent of the Council. There was a good deal of opposition to the Bill at that time by the storekeepers, the main objection being that it exempted what were termed one-man shops. This was held to be an injustice to the larger establishments which it was said would suffer from the competition of small shops manned by one man assisted by members of his family. However, the storekeepers appear to have had a change of mind shortly afterwards, as the Bill introduced in 1896 had the support not only of shop assistants but also the Brisbane Traders' Association and the Grocers' Association. In consequence a Factories and Shops Bill passed both the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council and became law. So the first Factories and Shops Act appeared on the statute book of this State in 1896.

On the whole this Act worked very well. The Postmaster-General, in moving the second reading of the Factories and Shops Bill in the Legislative Council on 12 September 1900, had this to say—

“But there is just a feeling that it is capable of improvement, and the subject of factory legislation has been receiving a great deal of attention, not only abroad but in all the leading colonies of Australasia, and it seems the time has come when a measure should be introduced improving considerably upon our present Act and also adding some provisions which up to the present time have been omitted from our legislation.”

In 1900 the Bill became law and repealed the 1896 Act. The 1900 Act is the basis of our present Acts, which have been amended on several occasions.

It may interest members to know that during the debate on the Bill of 1900, the late Frank McDonnell was responsible for the insertion of a clause prohibiting the employment of young persons in a factory unless a weekly wage of at least 2s. 6d was paid, and a further clause making it illegal for employers to accept premiums from young persons employed in the clothing or boot factory.

I think that the following quotation is of great value from the point of view of the industrial history of this State. Mr. McDonnell said—

“The object of the first part of the amendment was to provide that young persons who were employed in factories should receive some small wage for the work they perform. It had been pointed out in the reports of the Chief Inspector of Factories that a large number of young persons were employed in factories who received no wages for their labour. It was a practice in Brisbane, not in all factories, but in some, to take on a large number of persons for six or 12 months and after that to discharge them and engage other young persons in their place; and this went on year after year. In all the Colonies where they had Factory Acts in operation this provision was embodied. New Zealand was not satisfied in fixing the minimum payment at 2s. 6d. a week, and provided that no male young person should be paid less than 5s. and no female less than 4s. a week. He did not go so far as that. He was satisfied with fixing the minimum at 2s. 6d. a week, and that was not a very large sum for employers to pay those young persons who were engaged in their work. This provision had been in operation in Victoria for some years. The latter portion of his amendment dealt with the question of premiums. In Victoria it was found that the provision was evaded by persons engaged in dress making, who paid the 2s. 6d. a week but had it returned on the Monday morning by way of premium. This was pointed out, and a clause corresponding to the second part of his amendment was introduced to prevent that sort of thing occurring. He did not think any fair-minded

employer would be opposed to this provision. He knew several cases where as much as 4s. a week was paid to beginners, while other factories doing similar work and equally well able to pay worked their young persons without paying them anything at all. He thought the clause was a very necessary one, and he did not think any fair-minded person could oppose it.'"

That quotation, taken from a speech by the late Frank McDonnell, indicates very clearly that we, the people of Queensland and for that matter the people of Australia, have made great advances in the industrial conditions and the economic standards of our people since 1900. It also goes to show the extent to which employers were willing to exploit the workers, particularly young workers, of this State, even as recently as 1900.

It would not be out of place at this stage to pay tribute to the late Frank McDonnell for his incessant and consistent endeavour to improve the standard of the workers of Queensland, not only in factories but in shops, and for that matter generally. He contributed much to the improvement of the lot of the workers in that respect, and we owe a very great deal to men like him, who at times and in the face of much opposition were prepared to make that advocacy and to give consideration to the just and well-merited requirements of the common people.

I am confident that this Bill will be well received by members of this Parliament, because in these days of advanced thinking employers generally are willing to do the right thing by the workers, but I know from my experience, and union officials know from theirs, that at times we meet with an adamant and stubborn employer, whose only purpose in industry is the making of the maximum of profit at the least possible cost and inconvenience. There are some employers—fortunately they are in the minority—who will work their employees under conditions that we believe are years out of date and which should be adjusted.

This Bill has for its purpose a general improvement in the working conditions of the men and women in industry and the provision of extra essential amenities in factories and shops. I do not think any fair-minded person can cavil at the introduction of a Bill that aims at these things. Today there is ample room for improvement in these conditions despite the activities of the inspectors of factories and shops. When the war is over and that development for which we hope takes place in industry there will be an urgent need for a Bill such as this which will set down a standard of conditions under which workers should be employed in factories and shops and which will make provision for essential amenities.

The Bill will provide for improved sanitation, adequate ventilation, and the eradication as far as possible of such things as fumes, dust and other hazards that contribute to industrial diseases. It will provide for suitable temperatures and air movement in factories and shops. It will provide for dining rooms, dressing rooms, seating

accommodation, proper drinking water, ambulance and first-aid equipment, fire escapes and all those things that we believe go to make for the improvement of working conditions. A fact that must be admitted by all fair-minded employers is that better results are derived from workers if their conditions are congenial. The representatives of employers have told me that they welcome the Bill because it will have the effect of putting all employers on an even footing. It will mean that the good employer, who is willing to provide these things without any pressure because he recognises their justice and merit, will not be at a disadvantage compared with the bad employer who fails to recognise his obligations to his employees.

In addition to providing for these improvements the Bill will provide for greater co-ordination between the Department of Labour and Employment and the Department of Public Health. The nature of the work in many factories and shops calls for precautionary measures which can be devised only by medical men, who are qualified to give advice on those points.

Therefore, it is important that co-ordination between the Department of Labour and Employment and the Department of Public Health should be as complete as possible. Provision to that end is made in the Bill and I am sure that when it is implemented it will work with good results.

The Bill provides also for the establishment of a Welfare Board consisting of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Shops, a representative of the workers, and a representative of the employers. The board will investigate and make recommendations to the Minister on special measures necessary to secure the safety and health of employees, improvements relating to their welfare, the prevention of accidents in factories, facilities for medical or first-aid attention, rest and recreation rooms and change rooms. The board will also collaborate with organisations of employers and employees and authorities engaged in technical research in relation to the matters to which I have referred. It will also be required to investigate and report on any matter referred to it by the Minister in relation to the safety and health of workers and amenities provided for workers generally.

These provisions will apply to the whole State. Under the present Act, provision is made for factories and shops districts which were determined and set up and the Act applied to those districts only. It did not apply to the whole State. If it was thought necessary to establish new districts or extend districts, we did so. Under the proposed Bill it is intended to bring the whole State of Queensland under the Act and, if necessary, to make any excisions or exemptions in relation to certain districts if local requirements or necessity demands such a course of action.

Those are the main principles in the proposed measure and I believe that when the Bill is implemented it will prove of great value to the industrial life of this State. Not only will it improve conditions for workers, but it will mean an extension of

amenities to every employee. I believe it will have the effect of improving production. It will create a better feeling between employer and employee, thereby fostering harmony in industry, with a resultant reduction of industrial disputes and grievances. In short, I believe the provisions of this proposed Bill will prove to be of great importance to the general working of industry in the factories and shops of this State.

Mr. Edwards: If it does all those things you say, it is needed very badly.

Mr. Gair: No-one can dispute the fact that this advanced legislation dealing with this important matter is certainly necessary. No-one can dispute that the time is opportune for its introduction. While we are prepared to say that good work has been done in our factories and shops districts in an endeavour to police the Act and to bring about conditions that could be considered anything like a proper standard, conditions in many factories and shops leave a great deal to be desired. This measure will give the necessary powers and authority for the department and its officers to bring about that very desirable improvement.

Most hon. members, I am sure, know that the conditions under which some people have to work even in this city are anything but satisfactory. Of course, we must make due allowance for the abnormal times and for the extensive development of business to meet war requirements, nevertheless large numbers of women are employed in clothing factories in this city, and I suppose in other cities of the Commonwealth, too, where there are inadequate washing facilities, inadequate dining rooms, insufficient dressing rooms and poor lavatory accommodation. That state of affairs would not be approved by any fair-minded person, and believing that most hon. members of all parties are desirous of doing the right thing by the workers in this connection I feel that there will be very little opposition to the introduction of the Bill.

Mr. Nicklin (Murrumba)—Leader of the Opposition (11.46 a.m.): As this legislation is going to be further considered in the adjourned session of Parliament to be held next year, I shall reserve any comment on the Bill until that time.

Mr. Marriott (Bulimba) (11.47 a.m.): I did not quite catch what the Leader of the Opposition said, but I think he said that as we should have an opportunity of discussing the Bill later on he did not propose to make any comment on it now. But we may not get the opportunity of discussing the Bill on another occasion. I want particularly to impress upon the Minister that it is important that the Bill should provide for the appointment of women inspectors of factories and shops. I congratulate him on the introduction of the Bill, but as one who has had more than 20 years' experience with trade unions and labour organisations, I want him to understand that if the Bill is to be effectively administered female inspectors will be necessary. It is to our discredit that for a number of years we have not had one female

inspector in Queensland. I congratulate him on the introduction of the Bill, especially as it provides for the establishment of adequate rest rooms, dining rooms and sanitary accommodation. That is very necessary right here in the heart of the city, even in Queen-street shops the most disgusting conditions exist. I hope that he will bear in mind the importance of appointing female inspectors.

Hon. V. C. Gair (South Brisbane—Secretary for Labour and Employment) (11.49 a.m.): I should like to say in reply to the hon. member for Bulimba that there is nothing in the Bill that would prevent the appointment of female inspectors. That matter will receive consideration when the Bill is passed.

Mr. Pie: It will be a good idea, too.

Motion (Mr. Gair) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

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

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACTS (WAR SERVICE PREFERENCE IN EMPLOYMENT) BILL.

SECOND READING.

Hon. V. C. Gair (South Brisbane—Secretary for Labour and Employment) (11.53 a.m.): I move—

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

There is very little need for me to add very much to what I said last week when introducing this Bill. I am confident that the Bill will receive the approbation of the people of Queensland. It provides for general preference for members of our fighting forces, both male and female. That means that the members of our Navy, Army, and Air Force on their discharge, whether now or at the conclusion of hostilities, will be covered by the provisions of this Bill.

The Bill does not apply only to the Crown, but embraces all employers of the State. It does not apply only to men and women who have seen service in the various theatres of war, but applies to those who have given service within the Commonwealth of Australia. No discrimination is made in the Bill between members of the A.I.F. and Militia forces, for the reasons I stated when introducing this Bill, that it would be beyond the capacity of any Government to discriminate against the Militia having regard to the service they have rendered when they have been required to participate in front-line action. I am sure that members of the A.I.F., in their usual spirit of comradeship, recognise the work that the Militia have done when the occasion has arisen and they have been called upon. They, like members of the A.I.F., are Australians, and, like members of the A.I.F., they hold dearly the principles for which we are fighting. They are as

desirous as the A.I.F. of bringing about a successful and early conclusion of these hostilities.

If it was necessary for the Government of this country to call them up to give the service they have rendered, I do not think they should be discriminated against. Returned soldiers' leagues have found it necessary to admit to their membership members of the Militia. In the early stages of the war they discriminated against this section of our fighting forces, but they have recognised in many cases that members of this section of our Army are and will be required to give equal service with their brothers who are in the A.I.F. I believe this Bill will give that measure of preference that we believe is due to members of the fighting forces.

It was stated during the debate on the introduction of this Bill that this legislation would have the effect of dividing the workers. I do not believe that that will be the result of this legislation, because I believe that the workers—and I think I know the workers of this State and understand their attitude to a measure of this kind—will appreciate what has been done by members of the fighting forces in this war. They value to the full what it has meant to them as industrialists of this State. They know that the keeping out of the potential invader of this country alone has meant the preservation of all the industrial standards and conditions that the workers of Queensland and Australia enjoy at the present time. Had that potential invader of this country been successful nothing would have mattered; industrial conditions, 40-hour week and overtime rates would not have been the concern of any one of us; they would have been things of the forgotten past. Therefore, I believe the industrialists of this State who are not members of the fighting forces will not deny to members of the fighting forces the measure of preference in employment for which this Bill provides.

The suggestion has been made that the Bill will operate unjustly against men and women who have been engaged in essential industry. I do not underestimate the value of the work done by people in essential industries of this country. As I said the other day, they have contributed a very essential and indispensable part to the prosecution of this war, but although railwaymen for example were required during the war period to make a super-effort and men in our timber industry were called on for additional effort, and employees of munition factories were working long hours and were unable to enlist if they wanted to, nevertheless we cannot lose sight of the fact that whilst all these employees have contributed an excellent part to our war effort they have not been asked to make the sacrifices, to suffer the vicissitudes and the adversities of men and women in the Army, the Air Force and the Navy.

In almost every case they have had the comforts of their homes and their periods of leisure. They have had regular meals and the foodstuffs they desired. They have

received adequate payment for the additional efforts they were required to put into this war effort and although they were not permitted to enlist or become members of the fighting forces—I repeat that they have done a good job—it would be unfair of them to claim equal preference with the boys who played their part on the Kokoda Trail, over the Owen Stanley Ranges and in the swamps of New Guinea, those who put up with the adverse conditions of the Middle East, and those who went through Greece and Crete; nor with the men of the Air Force who took their lives in their hands on every occasion when they ascended into the skies or with the men of our navy. Men and women who worked in the essential services to which I have referred were not required to submit to such dangers, adversities and disabilities and therefore I do not think they have any claim to a preference equal to that which is proposed to be given to members of the fighting forces.

In the course of the discussion it was stated it was wrong to apply this preference to members of the fighting forces who had never been out of Brisbane or out of Queensland. I repeat that it would be very difficult for the Government to determine that question and, whilst I agree that a soldier or a member of the Army who has been employed continuously in the Pay Office in Ann Street, Brisbane, or in Victoria Barracks has very little claim to a preference under this Bill and I should be surprised if many of them had the audacity to make it, nevertheless I admit the difficulty of eliminating that section of our fighting forces from its provisions, and therefore the responsibility of determining the matter is placed on the shoulders of the employer. If two soldiers apply for a job and one had been working in the Pay Office in Brisbane, enjoying the comforts of his home daily, and another had participated in warfare in any or several of the battlefields, if the second lad had anything like equal skill to that of the first naturally the employer would engage him or would be required to do so under this Bill.

Mr. Decker: There is nothing in the Bill to determine it.

Mr. GAIR: I am very sorry the hon. member has not the capacity to understand the Bill. He has had all the week-end to study it. If he reads Clause 4 of the Bill he will find these words—

“In determining whether reasonable and substantial cause exists for not appointing a member of a fighting force, the employer shall consider—

The length, locality and nature of the service of the member of a fighting force;

Any other relevant circumstances.”

Mr. Decker: It is left to the employer.

Mr. GAIR: Whom would the hon. member suggest to determine it?

Mr. Decker: There should be an appeal.

Mr. GAIR: There is provision for appeal very clearly set out in the Bill. If a soldier who fails to get a job has any grievance he has the right of appeal to an industrial magistrate and from that authority to the Industrial Court. It is nonsense for the hon. member to sit there and endeavour to tell us that there is no provision in the Bill for an appeal. I am satisfied after hearing his two interjections that he does not want to understand or is not capable of understanding. He has had this Bill, as have all hon. members, over the week-end, but he states there is no provision in the Bill for appeal. He complains that the task of determining the preference is placed on the shoulders of the employer. Who else but the man who is seeking and engaging labour can decide the issue? As most of them have talked so much about the need for this preference, I feel confident that they will not complain about the provision in the Bill that calls upon them to exercise it justly.

I feel that I have covered the main principles of the Bill, which I am sure will receive the support of hon. members. I know that the legislation will not give complete satisfaction to all sections, but as I pointed out when introducing it, the Government have no easy task in legislating to give satisfaction to all sections. It is much harder today than it was after the 1914-18 war to provide for the men and women of our fighting forces, because we have two sections of our Army, and there are other aspects of the matter that do not lighten the burden of a Government in bringing down this kind of legislation. I am confident, however, that the Bill meets the desires of members of the fighting forces and their recognised organisations, and that the public in general will receive it with acclamation.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) (12.7 p.m.): I support the Bill that has been introduced by the Minister because it establishes the principle of preference to discharged members of the forces. I believe, however, that it is deficient in some respects and that it is not as effective as the legislation that has been introduced in Victoria to deal with this important question. The points in which it is defective are these—

1. There is no definite provision that length or nature of service must be taken into consideration. The power of the court to make rulings in that regard has no basis in the Bill itself. There is no direction to the court that it must make such ruling or as to the considerations it must observe.

2. There is no right of appeal against the decision of an employer who may discriminate against a discharged member with service and qualifications superior to those of another discharged member.

3. There is no provision for reinstatement in former employment.

4. The Bill does not provide for preference in promotions.

5. A very vital defect is that it does not provide against dismissal from employment, without reasonable cause, of a discharged member of the forces.

6. There will be no board comprised mainly of returned soldiers, as in Victoria, to give positive assistance towards the reinstatement of discharged members into civil life.

Before dealing with those points individually I wish to speak on the general question of preference to returned members of the fighting services. When we consider what they will have to face when they are endeavouring to re-establish themselves in civil life, when we realise the disrupting influence of a number of years in the Army, the preference that this legislation provides for them gives the absolute minimum that we can offer.

We, as individual citizens, as members of this Assembly, as a State and as a nation, have obligations to members of the fighting services. We have to help them as much as we possibly can during the readjustment period, which is the most difficult part of their return to civil life. As I stated at the introductory stage of this Bill, and as all returned soldiers will agree, it is particularly difficult after a lengthy period of service in the Army to readjust oneself to civilian conditions. During that period we owe those soldiers as individual citizens more than the mere passing of preference legislation. We owe them sympathy and consideration, which they undoubtedly require to help them over that period. As employers, we have a greater obligation than the mere giving of plain preference. We have to give them sympathy and help.

Mr Devries: Tolerance.

Mr. NICKLIN: And tolerance, when they are endeavouring to readjust themselves in civil life. The measure of preference they are being given under this legislation before the House today will fail if the employers do not realise the difficulties those men will face, and do not give them the tolerance, consideration, and help they will require.

This legislation provides simply for the granting of preference. No provision is made for reinstatement nor for helping returned soldiers to return to civil life.

Mr. Devries: Was not that promised by all employers?

Mr. Gair: Is it not already covered by the National Security Regulations?

Mr. NICKLIN: I am not arguing that it is not provided for by other Parliaments.

Mr. Gair: Well, there is no need for it to be included in this measure.

Mr. NICKLIN: Nor am I denying that it was promised by the employers.

Mr. Gair: It would be redundant if we included it here.

Mr. NICKLIN: I was just stating a fact. If the Government think that the present measure is sufficient for a start, then I appeal to them to give further consideration to the question how they can help soldiers in regard to reinstatement in their former positions. I admit that the greatest obligation is on the

Commonwealth Government, but State Governments and the individuals of the States also have some obligations. I just mention in passing that the Minister should give consideration to this question and see whether he and his department cannot perhaps give greater help towards the reinstatement of soldiers in civil life than is actually provided for by this measure.

Let us look at a few of the directions in which the members of the fighting services require help. They require medical aid, pensions, sustenance, and allowances during the time of readjustment. They require clothing, housing, occupational training and provision for employment. The majority of those things are the concern of the national Government, and I trust that they will be dealt with adequately by that Government. However, the State Government can enter into the picture and help the Commonwealth by providing occupational training and employment. The measure gives some assistance in that respect in providing for preference, but as I said at the outset it gives only the very least that we should give to the members of the fighting services, and that is preference in employment. I trust that at the Committee stage the Minister will consider favourably the amendments we have circulated, which we think will tend to strengthen the Bill.

However, let me now turn to the first point where I think there is a deficiency. There is no specific provision that length, locality and nature of service must be taken into consideration as between members of the services. It is not an easy matter to decide the question of priority as between the service men and women, but it is laid down in the Bill that in considering the respective claims of a member of the fighting forces and a non-member the employer must take into consideration locality, length and nature of service.

Mr. Hilton: You said a moment ago that that was not in the Bill.

Mr. NICKLIN: I did not say that it was not in the Bill. I said that there was no specific provision to the effect that length of service must be taken into consideration. There is a provision as regards the returned soldier and the non-returned soldier, but no such provision as between returned soldier and returned soldier. Where there are applications by two returned soldiers and another by a civilian the Bill provides that a returned soldier is to be given preference over the civilian. That eliminates the civilian. Then there are the two returned soldiers to be considered by the employer, and there should be a specific provision in the Bill that the determination of preference as between two members of the fighting services shall be in accordance with the principles laid down for the determination of such a question as between a member of the fighting services and a civilian, that is, that length, locality and nature of service shall be taken into account. On the introductory stage of the Bill it was pointed out that there might be some difficulty in establishing claims as to length,

nature and locality of service, but during the week-end I had the opportunity of seeing an A.M.F. discharge form, and I noticed that it contained these particulars—"Reason for discharge," "Length of service (a) on home front, (b) on active service." So that we have the information set out on the discharge form of the returned-soldier applicants concerned to enable the employer to make a decision as to length, locality and nature of service.

The Bill provides that all members of the fighting forces, irrespective of service, shall have preference over civilians.

When it comes to preference as between soldiers we come to the question as to what service has been given. No hon. member would deny that a member of the fighting services who had active service should have preference over a man who had only home service. After all, the man with active service has submitted himself to the risks of battle and the risks of contracting disease, and he has had many more hardships than the man whose entire service was on the home front. The R.S.S.A.I.L.A. in the model Bill it submitted for the consideration of hon. members defined "active service" as service in a locality which was subject to aggressive action by the enemy. Such service has a detrimental effect upon most individuals, even if they escape wounds or war diseases. The League recognised that the soldier with active service had a greater claim on any measure of preference the nation can give than the soldier who served only at home. Therefore it is particularly important that there should be some definite provision in this Bill to make discrimination as to the locality and length of service as between soldier applicants for any position for which they might apply. The principles on which the Industrial Court acts should be adopted. The Minister said that court will have power to make rulings but there is in the Bill no basis for them.

Mr. Gair: The Bill itself is the basis.

Mr. NICKLIN: The court can consider only the principles the Bill specifies. That is the weakness in the Bill that we should endeavour to remedy.

Then there is the right of appeal against the decision of an employer. We give a right of appeal against the decision of an employer who may discriminate in favour of a civilian against a discharged member of the forces. If we do that, so also should we give that right of appeal to a member of the services who considers that he is discriminated against in favour of another member of the services.

Then I come to the third point I made in connection with this Bill, that there is no provision for reinstatement in former employment.

Mr. Cooper: That is fully covered by the National Security Regulations and where State and Commonwealth laws conflict the Commonwealth law prevails.

Mr. NICKLIN: Yes, but as the Premier knows the National Security Regulations have a limited application as to time.

Mr. Gair: On the expiration of the National Security Regulations we can if necessary include that by way of amendment but it is so much waste of time to put it into our Bill when the Federal law is paramount.

Mr. NICKLIN: I do not altogether agree with that view. Even if our law may not be operative at the moment on account of the superior law, the National Security Regulations, nevertheless it would be sound to include it in this Bill instead of amending this Bill when the National Security Regulations expire. For example, these National Security Regulations may be wiped out at the end of this week.

Mr. Gair: Oh, no.

Mr. NICKLIN: I am using this as an example to show the weakness that may be revealed through not having this in the Bill. Assume that on Saturday the National Security Regulations are wiped out, and the House has adjourned until some time next year; that being so, there is a period of some three months during which this provision does not operate. Would it not be much sounder to have included in this Bill this very necessary provision for re-instatement in former employment, even if it is not operative at the moment, so that it may become operative immediately National Security Regulations concerning this matter are withdrawn? After all, this question of reinstatement in employment is a particularly important one, and one that is causing members of the fighting forces even more concern than preference. They want to know that when they are discharged they are going to get their jobs back again. I believe that in the big majority of cases if those jobs are still available the employer will give them back their jobs; but in some instances of course, through change of circumstances, the job may have vanished.

Mr. Cooper: What was the length of time between the end of hostilities and the proclamation of peace after the last war?

Mr. NICKLIN: It was about 1922 or thereabouts.

Mr. Cooper: Four years plus six months?

Mr. NICKLIN: Surely the Premier does not want to introduce that argument into the picture! I remember that during the referendum campaign the Premier referred to the argument that he is using now as bad law.

Mr. Cooper, Oh no, I did not.

Mr. NICKLIN: The hon. gentleman said it did not altogether apply. I entirely agree with his contention that the National Security Regulations will be operating until six months after the declaration of peace. The point I am making is that it would have been far preferable to

include this provision of reinstatement in this Bill and make it a complete Act while we are about it instead of having to amend it later. In this regard both the Victorian Act and the model Bill submitted by the League on which the Premier said he would base his legislation—

Mr. Cooper: Oh no, I did not.

Mr. NICKLIN: I am sorry if I misinterpreted what the hon. gentleman said on that occasion. I thought he said he would base it on the lines suggested by the R.S.S.A.I.L.A. I thought those were the words he used in his policy speech.

Mr. Cooper: I never read their proof, to tell you the truth.

Mr. NICKLIN: It would not have been a bad idea if it had been read because it had good points in it. Both the model Bill and the Victorian Act provide for reinstatement in former positions where practicable.

Mr. Power: They are compelled by National Security Regulations to reinstate them.

Mr. NICKLIN: I admitted all that. I repeat for the benefit of the hon. member for Baroona that we should endeavour to make this Bill as near perfect as possible, instead of having to bring it up for amendment after the National Security Regulations are withdrawn.

Finally on this point, in the Victorian Act and the model Bill the onus of proof is wholly on the applicant who is a discharged member of the forces to prove that he is entitled to reinstatement in the job that he contends he occupied prior to the war.

The Bill does not provide for preference in promotion. That is a marked weakness. We provide for preference in employment, and as the Premier and the Minister have said, the National Security Regulations at the moment take care of the question of reinstatement in the former position. We then have the man back in his job. We also have the man who has been in the job all the time the former has been away. A question of promotion arises. At the moment it is entirely at the discretion of the employer to give no preference whatever to the soldier. I very emphatically say that a soldier who has the qualifications, by reason of the sacrifices of a considerable amount of his life in service in the forces, is entitled when it comes to promotion to a measure of preference as against those who have not gone. If we carry this principle of preference to the full we must take into account preference in promotion. That point was stressed very strongly by the R.S.S.A.I.L.A. and by the Victorian Act. They made equal provision for preference in promotions as well as in first appointments, and I emphasise that a man's military service certainly entitles him to a measure of preference when promotions are going after he has returned to his civilian occupation.

Mr. Cooper: The State guarantees that the man shall be reinstated in the position that he would have occupied had he not gone.

Mr. NICKLIN: I admit the State has taken the right and correct attitude, but when considering this Bill we should see to it that all other sections of employers in the State also take this matter into consideration. Unfortunately, the onus is left entirely on them, and although the very large majority of employers in the community are good employers who will take this point into consideration if they are not unduly harassed by various legislative measures and regulations dealing with employment conditions, I feel that some definite provision could with advantage have been included in this Bill to guard the rights of returned soldiers in promotion in addition to employment. The very fact that the State Government have made that provision in their own service emphasises the point that it should have been included in this Bill.

There is one very vital omission from the Bill, as I feel certain the Minister will agree. There is no provision against dismissal from employment without reasonable cause of a discharged member of the forces. We provide for preference to employment to members of the forces. Such a man could be employed, but after a week could be sacked by his employer, and no protection is given to him against the action of an unscrupulous employer who may do that. There is also no right of appeal against any unscrupulous employer who may take that action. That is a very vital defect. If we provide for a preference we should provide also for protection for these men after they have got back into their positions. We should close this loophole through which unscrupulous employers might crawl in order to get rid of a soldier and place in his position a man who has not been in the services. The Bill should be made watertight so that that measure of preference we should give to these members of the services is guaranteed to them.

At the present time the administration of the Bill is left entirely in the hands of the Minister, and reference may be made to the Industrial Court. I do not object to that, but I believe that it would be advantageous if we had a board similar to the Victorian body, which is comprised mainly of returned soldiers who can give positive help to the Minister and the Government, not only in reinstating discharged members of the services into civil life, but also in ensuring to them the measure of preference to which they are entitled. There is a very definite and wide provision in the Victorian Act in connection with this matter.

Mr. Cooper: Do you know where the Victorian Act got that from?

Mr. NICKLIN: I should say possibly from the model Bill of the R.S.S.A.I.L.A.

Mr. Cooper: And that possibly came from Queensland's industrial legislation.

Mr. NICKLIN: I am not concerned so much about where these things came from. What I am concerned about is making this measure as near perfect as we can, about making it do the job we want it to do. There is no difference of opinion on either side of the House about the merit or justice of giving preference to returned members of our fighting services. I am raising these points purely with a view to improving the measure of preference that this Bill seeks to give. I am not speaking in any way derogatorily of the Bill; I seek only to improve it. The six points that I have raised are definite defects. It should be our objective in considering legislation such as this to do all we can for these members of the services. At some time or other we have all said that we would do these things. Let us now do them as effectively as possible.

Even though many of us think that this Bill should have been introduced at an earlier date than this—

Mr. Gair: Why was it not introduced between 1929 and 1932 if you are so keen about it?

Mr. NICKLIN: I do not know why, in the name of goodness, good old 1929 to 1932 should come into this debate. I do not know that there was a war on just about that time.

Mr. Gair: The matter of preference is always on, according to you.

Mr. NICKLIN: If the Minister is going to introduce politics into this discussion—I do not wish to introduce politics—may I remind him that on two or three occasions in this House he has voted against preference to soldiers, which would have been accorded by motions moved by hon. members on this side of the House? Let him forget 1929-1932. Even though this Bill is defective in some particulars, we are willing to accept it wholeheartedly as the first instalment, and as evidence of a welcome change, an indication that we as a Parliament are prepared to give to the members of the fighting services the minimum they should expect, that is, a measure of preference in regard to employment when they endeavour to enter civil life again.

I hope that this legislation will prove helpful to the members of the fighting services. I feel it would be more helpful if the Minister gave favourable consideration to the amendments we have circulated. We on this side of the House support the measure, and we will do everything in our power to wholeheartedly put into effect the measure of preference the Bill provides.

Mr. CHANDLER (Hamilton) (12.42 p.m.): Speaking for the Queensland People's Party, I say we welcome the Bill. We recognise that there is a very large obligation upon members of the civilian community of this State to the members of the fighting services who have fought to keep this country free, who have carried on the war to enable us during that period to live in comfort,

security and a reasonable degree of happiness. Consequently, I feel that we must see to it, when the members of our fighting forces are demobilised and returned to their homes, that everything possible is done to ensure that they are given not only employment but the very best advantages it is possible for this State to bestow upon them. Primarily comes the question of preference of employment.

It is, I think, sincerely to be hoped by every member of this House, whatever party or creed he belongs to, that after this war is over we shall not have any serious period of unemployment in this State. I believe we have learnt sufficient, as the result of past periods of unemployment, to know that we have to do everything in our power to prevent them from recurring, but I doubt whether it is within the bounds of human possibility to completely iron out every curve, every seasonal decline, or every variation that may take place in the employment fields in this State. Consequently, it behoves us to see, firstly, that as far as is humanly possible everybody is employed, and, secondly, that if there should be any unemployed then these soldiers or members of the fighting forces shall have preference in employment.

Mr. Power: Then why did you appoint Dr. Langer in preference to a soldier?

Mr. CHANDLER: Under the provisions of this Bill Dr. Langer would have been appointed in just the same way as he was appointed then. This Bill specifically provides that where a man has special qualifications he is entitled to receive the position. In view of the canards that have been published in this House in regard to that matter, may I point out that the report of the Commissioner appointed by this Government, who thoroughly investigated every circumstance surrounding the appointment of Dr. Langer, fully justified the Brisbane City Council in the action it took?

At 12.45 p.m.,

Mr. DEVRIES (Gregory) relieved Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Mr. CHANDLER: Moreover, I would point out that Dr. Langer is now employed by the Queensland Government and has been for some years. If hon. members opposite are going to criticise me, why did they themselves employ Dr. Langer years before I had even heard of him?

Mr. Power: No returned soldier was available.

Mr. CHANDLER: Rubbish! I am prepared to say that had the State Government honestly tried they could have found six returned soldiers who could have taken the place of Dr. Langer in that particular appointment. What is more, they were available to the Railway Department several returned-soldier architects who could take the place of Dr. Langer and were just as capable of doing the work that Dr. Langer is now doing and has been doing for months. I will go further and offer a challenge to the Minister

for Transport now. Tomorrow morning if he likes I will give him a returned soldier from the staff of the Brisbane City Council who is quite able to do all the work that Dr. Langer is now doing.

Mr. Walsh: Is that one of the refugees that you appointed?

Mr. CHANDLER: In view of the fact that this point has again been very maliciously raised may I point out that Dr. Langer's services were being denied to the Brisbane City Council in the preparation of city plans—a most important work on which any architect of this city could be engaged? He was employed by the Railway Department doing what—designing a milk bar for a railway station—and while doing that his services were denied by the Government to the Brisbane City Council in a very important capacity. I do not have to defend Dr. Langer. If the Government, the Brisbane City Council, the people of the State, or any body of people in Australia are going deliberately to deprive themselves of the use of the most highly specialised brains available to them, then this country is not going to make the progress that it should make and deserves. Nothing is more calculated to keep this country back and nothing is more calculated to destroy the schemes of immigration of which we have heard so much and seen so little than the attitude of Government members towards a highly-qualified specialist in our midst—Dr. Langer.

Mr. Cooper: We are employing him.

Mr. CHANDLER: I know that the Government are, but the Labour Government, the Socialist Government, the Government in this State, never have been consistent except in their inconsistency. They know that the Commissioner who was appointed to report on the action of the Brisbane City Council in appointing Dr. Langer reported that the action of the council was perfectly in order. He reported that consideration had been given to returned soldiers. If this matter is raised again I shall give more facts concerning it.

Mr. Walsh: Why not give them now?

Mr. CHANDLER: I am not going to give them now because if I gave the full information in the possession of the council regarding returned-soldier applicants it would most seriously reflect upon the character of one applicant whose case members of the Government Party are espousing. They would then know that that man would not have been appointed to the council's service under any conditions or in any capacity.

Mr. Cooper: That man's case was not espoused by the Government.

At 12.51 p.m.,

Mr. SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. CHANDLER: I said by members of the Government. Time and time again during the last few months in this House I have had it hurled at me across the Chamber, why did we employ Dr. Langer in preference

to a returned soldier. The hon. member for Baroona, with his genius for making half-truths, referred to this matter only a few days ago in this House and said the Brisbane City Council—

Mr. POWER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The hon. member for Hamilton said I was a genius in making half-truths. That is offensive to me and I ask for its withdrawal.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. member for Hamilton to withdraw the remark.

Mr. CHANDLER: I withdraw; perhaps he is not a genius. However, he did make the statement that the council gave preference to Dr. Langer against the claims of a returned soldier.

My friends on the other side, to judge by their comments, seem to think that this Bill is a party matter. I think members of the forces will not only be very glad to see this Bill but they will be very thankful to members of the Opposition that this Bill has been introduced because I make the statement without fear of contradiction that this Bill would never have seen the light of day but for the two Opposition parties which in and out of the House have advocated preference to members of the fighting services. I know that the Minister in his reply will tell me that it was put forward in the Premier's policy speech. I agree that it was but there is one very significant fact about that speech. I have read the report of the Premier's policy speech in a number of papers and in particular one paper called "The Worker," regarded as a fairly authoritative organ for the publication of Government views and Government policy. In the ordinary report in that paper of the Premier's policy speech not one word is said about preference to returned soldiers, nor is there any mention of it in the report of the speech published in the "Courier-Mail," or "Telegraph" or in several country papers I have read. In each the news item referring to preference to returned soldiers was put in a special paragraph in a separate part of the page. I suggest that is not entirely by accident. The only reason for that was that when the policy speech was prepared it was never intended to include this provision in it. I suggest that provision was only included in the Premier's policy speech as a last-minute thought.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I suggest that the hon. member should get back to the principles of the Bill.

Mr. CHANDLER: The circumstances surrounding the introduction of this Bill are appropriate to the discussion before us. I only want to say that this was a cardinal point of the policy speech I delivered in the City Hall one night before the Premier delivered his policy speech.

Mr. Cooper: My policy speech was distributed a week before yours.

Mr. CHANDLER: My policy speech received an enthusiastic reception from the

public of Brisbane and I suggest that in consequence the Government made a last-minute rush to cover. That is the reason why we are considering the Bill today.

Mr. Cooper: My speech was distributed a week before I delivered it.

Mr. CHANDLER: At least we know that for years the policy of the Labour Party was utterly opposed to the granting of preference to returned soldiers.

Mr. Walsh: That is not true.

Mr. CHANDLER: I have in this House—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the principles of the Bill.

Mr. CHANDLER: Getting back to the Bill, I do not quite know why the Minister in charge of the Bill made such a big point of the inclusion in the Bill of that body of service people known as the Militia.

Mr. Devries: You called them Daffodils at one time.

Mr. CHANDLER: I never did anything of the kind.

Mr. Cooper: Nonsense! Of course you did.

Mr. CHANDLER: That is another canard.

Mr. Walsh interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CHANDLER: I never saw the publication of it. I am not aware that it was published except in "Hansard" when the Premier quite maliciously brought it up in a speech that had no more connection with soldiers than a duck has with a piece of Sunday. But, Mr. Speaker, seeing that the point has been raised, may I say that the only thing I was ever guilty of in that respect was to pass over to another member of the council a piece of paper that had been given to me which contained a silly story?

Mr. Walsh: Ah! You cannot explain it away like that.

Mr. CHANDLER: I will go very much further and I will say that no one would ever have known anything about it but in answer to some questions I told a Labour member of the committee in a confidential committee room, exactly what was on the piece of paper. He said nothing about it but waited for some convenient time to spring a canard which the Premier was very happy to repeat. As to the tactics of my opponents I do not have to worry much; my reputation as far as soldiers are concerned will bear comparison with that of any member on the Government side of the House and I am content to stand on that record.

Opposition Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I make an appeal to hon. members to remember there are

certain principles in this Bill. I ask the hon. member to give us a few.

Mr. CHANDLER: I was dealing with the Militia when I was so rudely interrupted. No-one on this side of the House, so far as I am aware, suggests that the Militia should not be included, and I cannot conceive that anyone on this side of the House would dream of introducing a Bill that did not include that body of men. I say quite openly that I believe in the principle of compulsory military service whether for local or overseas service. That is one reason why I would never condemn any body of men who were compulsorily called up for the service of the State. Any hon. member on the Government side ought to know that quite well.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CHANDLER: The proper way to defend our country is to call our men up in accordance with the way their services can best be used, and to use them for that purpose at any time, and in any place where they may be required. I remind hon. members on the Government side that up to very recently every boy of the age of 18 was automatically called up, and he had not even got a chance to volunteer. It is of course only right that men so treated should receive full cover under the provisions of this Bill. I think all members of the House are satisfied on that particular score.

May I say that I think it is reasonable to suppose that the employers of Queensland generally will welcome this Bill? If they do not, they should, because I know of no-one who has stood to benefit more by the protection he has received from members of the fighting forces than those employers who run businesses or other undertakings in this State. Consequently, I feel sure that they will welcome the Bill. Speaking generally, the Bill is necessary to protect the members of the fighting forces not from the good employers, but from that small number who otherwise would not give effect to the provisions that the Bill makes.

Mr. Power: The Brisbane City Council.

Mr. CHANDLER: Seeing that the Brisbane City Council has again been mentioned, I think I am entitled to say that the Brisbane City Council has on all occasions honoured its undertakings to the soldiers, but during the initiation of this Bill a great deal was said and in some detail about the actions of the Brisbane City Council in relation to some appointments made. I presume on this debate I should not be in order in dealing with that matter.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the hon. member's remarks have a bearing on the question of preference to returned soldiers he will be in order.

Mr. CHANDLER: The Brisbane City Council has, during the past several years, declined to make permanent appointments. Always and wherever possible every appointment made by the council has been in a tem-

porary capacity in order to give the returned soldiers the opportunity of applying for these positions when the war is over. Every one of these positions will be vacated, and I may say that there are not just a few but hundreds of them. I venture the opinion that if every business organisation and similar institution, even the Government, have done as much to protect the interests of the returned soldiers as the council has, then I should be quite happy. The Brisbane City Council has nothing whatever to be ashamed of, and I invite hon. members who believe that there is something wrong with the appointments there to ask for a commission of inquiry. No-one would welcome such a commission more than I. It has been stated by an hon. member of this House that certain appointments have been made in which the interests of returned soldiers have been overlooked. That is definitely not correct and I am prepared to submit proof—I cannot do it in this debate—to any hon. member of this House who is sufficiently interested to make the inquiry. But may I point out, so far as the Tramways Department of the Brisbane City Council is concerned, that the honouring of an agreement that was entered into not by this council but its predecessor, the Jones council, deprived the manager of the Tramways Department of the right of making appointments? That was not done by this council but by the previous council, of which I believe the hon. member for Baroona was a member.

I have no reason to believe that the manager of the Tramways Department has not fulfilled his obligations as laid down by council policy. On the contrary, I have every reason to believe that he has done so, and I remind hon. members that only a few days ago the hon. member for Baroona recommended that that man should be appointed a Royal Commissioner to investigate promotions in the Railway Department. If, as it is now suggested, that employee of the Brisbane City Council is such a monster of iniquity—and he must be if he does not obey the instructions given to him clearly in writing by the council as to the employment of returned soldiers—why does the hon. member espouse his cause?

Mr. Bruce: The lady doth protest too much.

Mr. CHANDLER: That most feeble interjection is scarcely worthy of a Minister of the Crown.

Speaking generally, the Bill will give satisfaction. It may be that one or two amendments could be made profitably, and in that connection I regret that the Government have waited until the dying hours of the session before introducing it and without giving hon. members an opportunity of studying it. They have not had time to prepare any amendments that may be found to be required in the light of all possible advice. I know it will be suggested that we had the Bill over the week-end. That is true, but the week-end is not a suitable time for obtaining either legal opinion or advice from those who are most experienced in the

administration of these matters. The Bill has been hurried on. During the present week we have had to consider several measures other than this, and I regret that this Bill should have been left until so late in the session. The Government did this last session, and I hope that in future they will refrain from doing this sort of thing.

I agree with the Minister that it is very unlikely that this Bill will give complete satisfaction. It is such an extremely difficult and complicated matter that it would be impossible for any set of men no matter how able or how honest, to devise a Bill that would take care of all the possibilities inherent in a measure such as this. I agree with the Minister also that we should do our utmost to give legislation of this type the maximum of simplicity to ensure that its provisions are easily understood and interpreted, to see to it that we clothe it with as few legalities and formalities as possible.

I cannot quite follow the reasoning of the Leader of the Opposition in connection with the reinstatement of returned soldiers to their former positions. As I see it, that is a Commonwealth matter and it is extremely unlikely that the Commonwealth Government will have relinquished their powers before the returned soldiers have been settled. That being so, I see no reason for the suggestion.

I agree with the Leader of the Opposition, at least in part, in connection with the right to promotion. I believe that the returned soldier should have the right to preference in promotion, but that right should be limited to the service in which he is already employed.

I think it would be extremely difficult and in many cases extremely unfair if employees who had been working for years in a particular institution and who perhaps had been specially trained or had specially trained themselves in order to accept such a position were denied that right, and they were placed in competition with those soldiers who came from outside the service entirely. I would take this opportunity to point out that notwithstanding the admirable intentions of those people who framed this Bill and who have framed other Bills dealing with the right of appeal in various services, I am quite sure there is no responsible member of the Government who will not agree that it is extremely difficult sometimes to define adequately the abilities of a person who may appear before an industrial tribunal. You and I may know that one person is better fitted for a particular job than another person, but there is something in that little word "ability" or "efficiency"—call it what you will—that is practically indefinable. Although we may know quite well in our own hearts and from our own knowledge and experience that one man is better suited for the position than the other, it is very hard to put a case before the magistrate that will convince him especially if there are other factors to be taken into consideration. Consequently I believe that if provision is made in this Bill to include preference in promotion it should be limited to the service in which a person is or was employed.

I agree also that it would be reasonable for the Government to accept some provision to ensure that an employer should not dismiss or terminate the employment of a returned soldier unless there is adequate cause and a very good reason for doing so. The omission of such a clause might, as I see it, go a considerable distance towards defeating the purpose of the Bill.

Speaking generally, I should say this Bill is an honest attempt to solve an extremely difficult problem. There is none of us who has had experience in these matters who is not forced to admit that this is one of the most difficult problems a Government are likely to be called upon to solve, so in that respect I commend the Minister. I assure him that in general principle the Bill will receive our support. We hope that he will help us by making some small amendments when the Committee stage is reached. I hope the result of this experiment will be extremely successful and that it will be a milestone in the history of this State.

Hon. F. A. COOPER (Bremer—Premier) (2.29 p.m.): I had no desire to speak at this stage or at any stage of this Bill because the Secretary for Labour and Employment has handled the subject so well. However, I think I am called upon to correct a misrepresentation made by the hon. member for Hamilton. In his speech he said that the policy speech delivered by me did not contain any reference to preference to soldiers and that there was a paragraph stated in a paper set out by itself, as if it were an afterthought.

Mr. CHANDLER: I rise to a point of order. I did not say that the policy speech delivered by the Premier contained no reference to preference to soldiers. I ask that that statement be withdrawn. I deny the statement, and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CHANDLER: Must not the Premier accept my denial?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must obey my call to order. I followed the discussion very closely and I rule that there is no point of order.

Mr. CHANDLER: Shall I be permitted to ask that the Premier be directed to accept my explanation?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. COOPER: I gained the impression from what the hon. member said that anything that I had written in my policy speech in connection with preference to returned soldiers was an afterthought. I want to let the House know exactly what happened. The preparation of a policy speech is not a matter of a few days or a few weeks, but possibly months, and to get an equitable publication of that speech it has been the policy of the Labour Party to distribute it to all

the papers throughout the State at least a week ahead of its delivery so that on the morning after its delivery it can be published in full. So my policy speech was prepared and distributed a week before I delivered it. All that I want to do now is to quote from my policy speech setting out Labour's policy with reference to preference to returned soldiers. I said—

“Labour's idea of the treatment of service men when discharged from the forces is that they must not be disadvantaged in industry by the fact of having defended this country. They must be restored to at least that position in society they would have occupied had they not sacrificed years of their youth in war but had devoted their energies to their peacetime avocations. This is the major task of the repatriation organisation.

“Labour cannot visualise after the war long lines of unemployed men waiting at labour exchanges, and a labour agent selecting an unemployed ex-soldier here and there for some temporary labouring job. That would be a complete betrayal of the heroic men and women who have kept this country free.

“The Labour Party is determined that there will be no forgotten man when this war is ended.”

That was written a month or probably two months before the policy speech was circulated. Two days before I delivered the policy speech I got a letter from Mr. Angell of the R.S.S.A.I.L.A. asking a specific question on the point, and I replied saying that if the powers proposed to be given to the Commonwealth in accordance with the forthcoming referendum were not granted the Queensland State Government would introduce a Bill to carry out the present ideas of the party in relation to preference to returned soldiers. We have honoured that promise. The Commonwealth proposal was turned down some time in August, and inside three months we have this proposal before the House. I do not think we could have done anything more. I have nothing further to add.

Mr. MARRIOTT (Bulimba) (2.33 p.m.): After the cessation of hostilities in World War No. 1, I, as a union official, had a great deal to do with the re-employment and the repatriation of returned service men. In introducing the Bill the Minister made mention of an award or agreement I had handled that contained a clause giving preference to returned soldiers. That award related to engine-drivers. I want it to be distinctly understood that I deprecate the feeling that appears to be developing that there is to be the same scramble for employment as soon as hostilities cease in this war, or, as a matter of fact, as soon as the returned men and women of the various services begin to come back even before hostilities cease. There seems to be that feeling of pessimism—that we are going to have another unholy scramble after this war. What has become of all the talk about the new order in which there will be employment for everybody? We do not hear anything of it just now.

Without unduly delaying the passage of the Bill, I want to point out that upon examining it I am unable to find mention of one very important service, and that is the merchant navy. Will any hon. member tell me that the merchant navy is not part of the fighting services? Surely no-one in this House will tell us that the merchant navy is not a fighting service! Why, take any merchant ship that comes into or goes out of this port. It has its gun or guns mounted. I grant that usually a naval rating is in charge of that gun, or guns, but the fact remains nevertheless that that gun or guns are served by members of the merchant navy.

Mr. Devries: They are part of the fighting services.

Mr. MARRIOTT: They are not mentioned in the Bill. The Bill distinctly refers to the Navy, the Army and the Air Force.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The merchant navy is not included in the provisions of this Bill, therefore it does not come within its principles. A discussion on the merchant navy at this stage would be entirely outside its principles.

Mr. MARRIOTT: I want to enter my protest at the omission of the members of the merchant navy from this Bill.

Mr. Cooper: You should have raised that point on the introductory stage.

Mr. MARRIOTT: We must examine a Bill when we receive it after the first reading. Even members of the Government party are not supplied with a copy of the Bill before it is read a first time. The rank and file members of the Government party do not know all the details of a Bill before that stage, therefore it was not possible for me to raise the point on the introductory stage.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I have already ruled that as the merchant navy is not included in the provisions of this Bill, a discussion on it at this stage is not permissible.

Mr. MARRIOTT: People who were actively engaged on behalf of Australia are now prisoners of war. They were not ordinary civilians, but when they return after the war they will be excluded from the advantages of this Bill by its very terms. I enter my protest against the omission of members of the merchant navy from preference of employment.

Mr. BRAND (Isis) (2.37 p.m.): Every section of the community appreciates the fact that the Government are endeavouring to meet the very burning question of preference to returned soldiers by the introduction of this Bill. It will not be an easy matter to carry that preference out in its entirety, but I believe there will be much good will between service men and employers in an endeavour to achieve what this Bill implies. All political parties recognise the principles contained in the Bill. They made an appeal to the people on them. For a long time there has been considerable agitation for justice to be done

to those men and women who enlisted in the fighting services of the country to defend us from our enemies. It is known by all hon. members that any man or woman who enters the fighting services becomes completely disorganised in the arts of business and various vocations in industry. Consequently, in recognition of the great work of the fighting men and women, and the tendency that by engaging therein their industrial efficiency will have been disorganised, we must concede this preference of employment to them on their return. Members on this side of the House do not believe that preference to returned service men is all that this country should do to those who have fought against our enemies. Much more will have to be done by us and the general community. It would be a sad spectacle indeed if, on the termination of the war, we were to find the only people to get employment were returned service men and women, because of the preference conceded by an Act of Parliament.

We have to recognise that all sections of the community who have given service to this country during the period of the war will have to be cared for, too.

Mr. Power: You should have thought of that between 1929 and 1932.

Mr. BRAND: The hon. member always brings up something about 1929-1932; he seems to have things that happened in those days well imprinted on his mind. He should not condemn a man like Prime Minister Scullin for doing things he did not wish to do during that period. He should not condemn him.

Mr. Power: I am not condemning him.

Mr. BRAND: In 1944 we are discussing legislation that will serve a great body of people. Today employers of labour are giving preference, and indicating it in advertisements calling for applications for positions. I believe one of the disabilities will be that many will contend that they can take up positions in civil life for which they are not qualified. It is in directions such as that that there will be a good deal of misunderstanding, not only with service men but those engaged in industry generally. I hope we are not going to find ourselves in the position in which those who fought for their country are to be denied privileges that should come to them, particularly by those captains of industry who will have an obligation to see that these men are again trained to be efficient tradesmen. From my own experience, even during the present war, with the employment of men who have had two or three years' service in the fighting forces, I find it is necessary for employers to give them all the encouragement possible and to bear with them during the period in which they are endeavouring to concentrate their minds on industry again. I have found that it takes three to six months for some of these men to be able to concentrate on their work again. This is due to the fact that their minds have been diverted in other ways, and they find it hard to get back to industry. After the last war many men found it almost

impossible to get back to employment in industry. I believe that men who have had the experience of the ghastliness of warfare will welcome the help that can be given to them by employers of labour by bearing with them and helping them to regain a normal outlook and concentrate on industry. I believe this legislation will cast a great responsibility and obligation on employers of labour, whose co-operation will go a long way towards the success of this legislation.

In that respect the Government should seek the co-operation of all employers to make this legislation most effective. I commend the Government for bringing down this Bill in the first session of this Parliament, because I believe it meets with the general wishes of the people of Queensland: not that they believe that preference is all they can do for the members of the fighting services, but that it will at least inspire them with the confidence that their services at the fighting fronts will not be forgotten on their return, and a place will be found for them in the civilian life of the country.

Mr. YEATES (East Toowoomba) (2.46 p.m.): I shall try to confine my remarks to well within the 35 minutes allowed. I welcome the Bill as far as it goes, but I intend to have something to say during the Committee stage, and hope for the acceptance of certain amendments.

Mr. DECKER (Sandgate) (2.47 p.m.): I support the Bill and also the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Hamilton. The Bill is a very good measure, but could be improved by making good some of the obvious omissions. This would make for a full preference to returned soldiers. Some provision must be made for preference in promotion, and protection as regards dismissal. It is also very important that some preference be given between soldier and soldier, and some right of appeal to soldiers.

I should not have risen at this stage, because I know that everyone is as anxious as I am that this Bill should be passed as quickly as possible, had not the Minister in charge of this Bill charged me with not being able to read or digest the meaning of a particular clause in the Bill when I said it did not cover appeals in cases between soldier and soldier. The Minister is not au fait with his own Bill, because it fails in this respect, and I hope he will take the opportunity that will be given to him this afternoon to accept an amendment to make full provision for the purpose I have mentioned.

Mr. McINTYRE (Cunningham) (2.48 p.m.): The Bill is an excellent measure so far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. My interpretation of it is that it is a very cold Bill, and that it does not measure up to the very fine sentiments expressed by the Premier in his policy speech. There is the suggestion that, especially in the post-war period, there will be a shortage of employment and a scramble for jobs, in which there is a danger that our returned men will be overlooked. When our men

return from active service, are we merely to hand them this Bill and tell them that it is our contribution towards the fulfilment of the splendid sentiments expressed and the promises made when they were going forth to do battle for us? It is to be regretted that during the debate we got down to the stage of discussing whether it was the State Government, the Brisbane City Council, the Tramways Department or some other organisation that had done the most for the returned soldiers. We cannot discharge our responsibilities to our fighting men unless we all make the maximum effort, and the first thing we should do is to ensure that no soldier is discharged from the services until he has been given a training that will make him efficient to serve in an industry of his own choice. Moreover, he must be guaranteed a position, and continuity of employment.

In conclusion, I wish to refer to those men who return from the war with a rural outlook, who desire to go into the open spaces and make a contribution to the wealth of this country, in the development of which we are all so much concerned. Men are being discharged from the services today, and one of their first essentials is a house. The first thing we should do is to provide a home for them to live in.

I welcome the Bill, but although it is an excellent measure as far as it goes it is not all that this Government should do in discharging their duty to those men who have defended us in the various theatres of war.

Mr. MORRIS (Enoggera) (2.51 p.m.): On behalf of the returned soldiers, I wish to say that I feel very happy about the Bill, especially when I consider the amendments that have been foreshadowed by the Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. This Bill is a big move in the right direction. It shows the men who are on service now and who will be returning that this House appreciates the work they have done. I commend the Bill very strongly indeed.

Mr. JESSON (Kennedy) (2.52 p.m.): I have been astonished at the opportunity that has been taken by the Opposition during this debate to indulge in political propaganda. I think the majority of returned soldiers will not be appreciative of the flag-flapping and propaganda indulged in by hon. members opposite in this instance. I know from speaking to soldiers who have returned from this and the last war that they are confident that this Government will give preference to them. They recognise that the Labour Government in the Federal and State spheres believe in giving them jobs. They also realise that this preference is being introduced by this Government in the shape of an Act of Parliament because the private employers will not do it voluntarily. I have not yet met a private employer who will give a job to a man who cannot pull his full weight or who cannot give 100 per cent. service to the boss. I know of an instance just prior to the entry of Japan into this war, when a certain firm in Townsville discovered when certain of its young employees were in militia or citizen force camps for three

months that they could do without those employees by compelling the remaining employees to do their work. The result was that when these young men came back their services were no longer required. The Australian Workers' Union had to take the matter to court before they were reinstated. It is all right for the hon. member for East Toowoomba to talk about what he would do for the returned soldiers, but I should like him to lay on the table particulars showing the number of returned soldiers he employed after the last war. He is talking with his tongue in his cheek. Hon. members opposite are waving their flags and using this piece of legislation for their own ends.

Mr. Brand: What flag are you waving?

Mr. JESSON: What flag is the hon. member waving? He is only a flag-flapper. All he has ever done in any war has been to wave a flag. He was quite old enough to go to the last war but he sheltered behind a protected industry.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Brand: You have not done much.

Mr. JESSON: I have made an attempt, and that is more than the hon. member has done. I do not see him belonging to any returned soldiers' organisation or anything else. He had his opportunity and would not take it. The hon. member is a political flag-flapper and he has always been the same. The private employer is being forced to do the right thing and the Opposition are using this Bill, just as they do every patriotic occasion, for the purposes of political propaganda.

Mr. Morris: What nonsense!

Mr. JESSON: The hon. member for Enoggera does not come here with any mandate from a returned soldiers' organisation either. He has no authority to get up and congratulate this Government on behalf of the returned soldiers or anybody else.

Mr. Morris: I have every right.

Mr. JESSON: Then let the hon. member produce his authority. He has no right. He does not come here with any mandate from the Returned Soldiers' League of Australia or anybody else to congratulate the Government in his propaganda concerning the returned soldier. From my knowledge of the returned soldiers I know that 75 per cent., 85 per cent. or even 100 per cent. of the decent returned soldiers do not want much from anybody.

What they want is a job and the right to live and the right to make their own way in the world. They will get that from this Government but they never got it from private enterprise. They never got anything from the Government espousing the political views of hon. members opposite in the Federal arena after the last war. What did they get from them—nothing but a very bitter pill. So far as hon. members opposite are concerned, the war has been finished for a long

time. They want all the restrictions lifted so that they can go merrily along as if there were no trouble ahead. That is their attitude today and I speak with a great deal of feeling on the matter. I have gone to the Repatriation Tribunal to fight case after case on behalf of returned soldiers and I know the exact position. Many of them will have cause to thank me for my advocacy on their behalf before the Repatriation Department down in Mary Street. Fancy the hon. member for Bundaberg talking about this subject! He should have had a gun on his shoulder instead of being a flag-flapper. He would have had one on his shoulder, too, if I had anything to do with it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. J. F. Barnes interjected.

Mr. JESSON: Fancy the hon. member talking!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. J. F. Barnes interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask hon. members to obey my call to order.

Mr. JESSON: I am sorry.

Mr. J. F. BARNES: I rise to a point of order. The hon. member for Kennedy charged me with making a statement that I did not make. I did not make it and I ask him to withdraw it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member for Kennedy has already expressed regret.

Mr. JESSON: It is all very well for some hon. members to come into this House and get all hot and bothered about what they would do and would not do for the returned soldiers but I venture to say that if they were the Government they would do exactly as their colleagues did in the Federal Parliament after the last war. It was because of their treatment of the returned soldiers from 1919 onwards after the last war finished that the majority of the returned soldiers are in the plight they are in today. I am referring now to the returned soldiers from the first world war. They know what to expect from a Government composed of hon. members opposite and they clearly demonstrated that by their solidarity and their renewed expressions of faith in the Federal Labour Party at the last Federal election. I do not want to delay the passage of the Bill—

Mr. J. F. Barnes: That is a good job.

Mr. JESSON: I ask the hon. member for Bundaberg to withdraw that remark. (Laughter.) There are quite a number of hon. members opposite who could have belonged to returned soldiers' organisations if they had had the desire and the courage to enlist and fight for this country instead of talking about it.

Mr. KERR (Oxley) (3 p.m.) I cannot allow the occasion to pass without placing on record my appreciation of the action of

the Government in introducing this Bill, which meets with unanimous approval, provided the amendments that we have fore-shadowed are accepted by the Government. I think the Bill will meet with approval throughout the State.

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Mirani—Minister for Transport) (3.1 p.m.): This measure is a very important one. The Government have always looked upon this question as one that should not be regarded entirely from the political angle. The Labour Party has always treated the question of preference to returned soldiers in that way but unfortunately it becomes a political football during an election campaign, not because of anything that was said by the Leader of the Labour Party but because of the many statements made by various members of the Opposition with the idea that it would embarrass the Government. In discussing this question at election time they believed that the Government were not prepared to face up to such an issue and would not honour the promise they made.

There is one thing that the Labour Government can be proud of, that is, that in the brief space of four or five months after the election numerous promises that were made by their leader have been given effect to by the introduction of Bills into this House. This Bill is the latest evidence of a desire on the part of the Government to give effect to all promises made by them at election time.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. WALSH: It must be conceded that preference in itself to returned men is a small gesture for the sacrifices that they have made by offering their services in the interests of their nation. There are so many things associated with that sacrifice that it is well for us to remember that this Bill will not cover all the rights returned men are entitled to after this war. One realises that there has been a very serious break in the career of many young men, men who were either called into the Army or have volunteered of themselves to go into the Army at the age of 18 years or the early 20's when they were just beginning to build up their careers. That break was made not because it suited them individually but to do something to protect the rights and liberties for which their forefathers had fought for many years past. But since they have made that break it is reasonable that some consideration should be given not only to this question of preference, but all the rights that of course have to be dealt with in other ways by other Governments.

It is unfortunate that hon. members will persist in making this a political issue. I know that the executive of the R.S.S.A.L.L.A. have been very disturbed by demands of certain politicians to make this question a political football. The Government have their record of the past to look back on, for they have indicated their policy of preference to returned soldiers ever since the last war. That has been followed in this war by similar protection. The Government have passed regulations whereby employees in the

railway service particularly are given protection in seniority and promotion as if they had never joined the services. That is a very desirable thing. That is one of the things with many other rights that men of the services are entitled to, apart from this question of preference. The Government have been examining that question very carefully since the outbreak of war. Early in the piece many things were decided on by the Government. They gave protection of seniority to those in their employ at the time of joining the services. After all, if the Government are willing to do that on behalf of the taxpayers, we can ask ourselves whether there is not some justification for asking private industry to do likewise. It will be seen that while the Bill imposes on private interests certain obligations to returned men, at the same time it makes some provision for those retained in industries vital to war effort. That phase must not be overlooked. I have in mind applications from young fellows within the railway department who were very eager to offer their services in the interests of their country, but because the regulations had insisted, and rightly so, that as these men were in protected industries they should not be received into the fighting services, their applications could not be granted.

That raises the question discussed this morning about the rights of the Government, the Brisbane City Council, and numerous others, to employ other than returned soldiers. The hon. member for Hamilton raised the question of a certain person in the Railway Department and proceeded to say that the Government did not keep to their policy of preference to returned soldiers. He further said that the Brisbane City Council had done more than the Government had ever done in that matter. I challenge the hon. member for Hamilton or any one of his party to show that the Brisbane City Council has ever done more for returned soldiers than the Labour Government of Queensland.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. WALSH: That has been acknowledged not only by individual members of the R.S.S.A.I.L.A., but by returned soldiers generally. They recognise that a sympathetic Government are in power here, so far as the rights of returned soldiers are concerned.

Mr. J. F. Barnes: You both have not done much.

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member can satisfy his own conscience as to whether he is doing the right thing in these times. The hon. member for Hamilton raised the question about the appointment of Dr. Langer. He insisted that the Government had appointed this particular individual, who after all was a Jewish refugee—and I do not use the term in a disrespectful way; I merely emphasise that he was one of the many refugees who came to this country from Europe in the early days of the war. There seemed to be so much interest in employing this particular individual rather than accepting the application of a man who had served not only in

this war, but I understand the previous war also. The Brisbane City Council has its rights, as the law stands, to employ whom it likes subject to those laws. It is for it to give the answer why it was so interested in the appointment of a man who had been in this country for only a very limited period, and whose credentials nobody was able to say tallied with the statements made by himself, or to what extent. There is no authority to indicate that Dr. Langer is the talented man everybody claims him to be.

Mr. Luckins: You employed him in the railways.

Mr. WALSH: That is admitted. We employed him in the same way as the Government departments throughout Australia have employed other refugees. We do not distinguish between people because of their nationality; when they are here and have certain rights they are employed. The position to which he was appointed was advertised, it was open to any returned soldier to apply, and if a returned soldier had the qualifications I have not the slightest doubt that he would have got the job. It is interesting to remember that there was this particular interest in a man whom nobody knows much about. For all I know, he may have been—and I do not say this unfairly, but I am entitled to say it—associated with any Fascist organisation in Europe and sought refuge in this country, as thousands of others did in other countries. Under the protection of somebody, they were allowed to come into the country, and immediately they came into the country they seemed to come under the notice of the powers that be to give them special preference over their own citizens and returned men.

I only raise this question because the hon. member for Hamilton has spoken so extensively on it. He made the charge the Government were offered the services of a qualified architect to replace Dr. Langer. After all, there is no obligation on the part of the Commissioner for Railways to release Dr. Langer from the Railway Department because he accepted a position with the Brisbane City Council. If we accept that view the Commissioner would be just as entitled to release hundreds of young fellows who want to join the Air Force, the Army, or Navy. Why make a distinction because Dr. Langer is an importation from the other side and is stated to have certain qualifications as an architect, town planner or designer? The fact remains that applications were called for the position and it was open for returned soldiers to apply. No returned soldier with the qualifications applied, and Dr. Langer was appointed to the temporary position of architect, Chief Engineer's Office, on 15 May 1941. After a six months' period he was granted a further extension of time and a further period for an unspecified time was granted. In March 1944 an application was made by Dr. Langer to the Town Clerk, Brisbane City Council, for a position on the staff of the council. In May 1944 Dr. Langer applied for a release from the Railway Department, intimating that he had been appointed to the position of Assistant City

Planner. The council did not make any approach to the Railway Department to ascertain whether Dr. Langer could be released. It appointed him without having regard to the fact that he had been and was then employed in a protected industry; and it would have known that he could not have been released except with the authority of Man-power. Nevertheless the council proceeded to consider his appointment to the detriment of a returned soldier, and appointed him to this position. The Chief Engineer drew attention to the fact that the Brisbane City Council had not taken action to ascertain whether Dr. Langer could be released, and had disregarded the Railway Department's interest and the regulations covering the transfer of officers from one employment to another. Dr. Langer was informed by the Chief Engineer in May 1944, that he could not be released until he was replaced by a suitable man. Information to that effect was given to Dr. Langer by the Chief Engineer, who promised to notify him when arrangements had been made.

Dr. Langer interviewed the Commissioner in connection with his release, pointing out that he was anxious to take up town planning to utilise his wide experience in all phases of architectural work, including road construction, which he was not able to do in the Railway Department. The Commissioner pointed out that the attitude of the department was that it could not replace Dr. Langer and it was the practice to refuse releases, even for war services, where men could not be replaced.

In August of 1944—and I desire hon. members to follow this history very closely from now on—a letter was received from the Town Clerk of the Brisbane City Council to the effect that Dr. Langer had been appointed planning assistant and asking whether and when he could be released. In the same month the secretary to the Railway Department notified the Brisbane City Council to the effect that Dr. Langer could not be released at the present time. Notification in similar terms was conveyed to Dr. Langer by a letter from the secretary to the Railway Department. In August 1944, in a statement published in "The Courier-Mail," the hon. member for Hamilton contended that the services of a first-class architect and railway architect and a returned A.I.F. man who had specialised experience in the design of one of the best railway stations in the world had been offered to the Railway Department to replace Dr. Langer, but no action had been taken to appoint him. He referred to the intimation to Dr. Langer by the department that he would be released when he could be replaced by a suitable man. I just want to emphasise that point: that the Town Clerk had made known to the Railway Department that the services of a man with specialised experience in one of the largest railway stations in the world was available to the Railway Department. Hon. members should keep that in their mind when considering what is to follow.

Mr. Edwards: What is it all about?

Mr. WALSH: It has reference to the appointment of returned soldiers and preference to returned soldiers in the Government service. The hon. member for Hamilton also stated that prior to his appointment to the council's service, Dr. Langer had been employed almost wholly as a survey draftsman but immediately after his appointment he was given post-war proposals to design. On 12 August, 1944, a Mr. H. Jacobsohn wrote to Dr. Langer seeking his advice on the suggestion that the council offer the services of himself, Jacobsohn, to the Railway Department in exchange for those of Dr. Langer. Jacobsohn expressed his agreement with the exchange. On 15 August there was an application by Dr. Langer to the Man-power authorities for permission to change his employment from the Railway Department to the Brisbane City Council. The Town Clerk of the Brisbane City Council on 22 August addressed a letter to the Deputy Director of Man-power, Brisbane, advising that officer of the appointment of Dr. Langer to the position of planning assistant and pointing out the refusal of the Commissioner to agree to Dr. Langer's release, and appealing for permission for the latter to change his employment to take up duty with the council. He offered the Commissioner the services of an architect thoroughly competent in the design of overseas railway stations in order that Dr. Langer could be released without causing any inconvenience to the department.

In the same month, August this year, the secretary informed the Man-power authorities of the nature of the work that was then being undertaken by Dr. Langer. The report of the interview with Mr. Slaughter of the Brisbane City Council and Mr. McInnes, the Town Planner, by Mr. W. C. Harvey discloses that the Assistant Town Planner, Dr. Langer, would be assistant to Mr. McInnes with a special staff in the proposed planning of the communal areas in Greater Brisbane, which would be of a highly skilled nature, of which he would have considerable experience. Reference was made to the fact that the services of Jacobsohn had been offered to the Railway Department. This man was said to be highly skilled and had designed the third largest railway station in the world. Dr. Langer's duties in the Railway Department set out in the secretary's memo. referred to was attached to Mr. Harvey's report. Dr. Langer tendered his resignation as temporary architect as from 1 September 1944, intimating that the approval of the Man-power authorities had been obtained. The application was minuted by the secretary to the effect the resignation could not be accepted as the department proposed to appeal. Notification was received from the Deputy Director-General, Man-power, to the effect that permission had been granted to Dr. Langer to change his employment to take up the position as planning assistant to the Brisbane City Council. Again, at the latter end of August the council advised the Deputy Director-General of Man-power of Dr. Langer's release from the Railway Department. The appeal lodged with the Deputy

Director-General of Man-power by the secretary against the release of Dr. Langer from the department pointed out that he was engaged in preliminary design for many important works throughout the State relating to post-war work. Notification was received eventually from the Man-power authorities that the appeal would be heard on the date stated. We now come to some very interesting history regarding subsequent events in relation to this matter.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I hope the hon. gentleman can connect his remarks with the principles of the Bill.

Mr. WALSH: I am endeavouring to establish that the Government have in no way departed from their policy of giving preference to returned soldiers. In this instance the hon. member for Hamilton has sought to bring into the debate a case to prove that the Government have departed from that policy. I am attempting to show that the council itself has departed from the truth in that suggestion it made against this Government.

The appeal of the Commissioner for Railways was unanimously upheld by the Man-power Appeal Board on the ground that Dr. Langer was more gainfully employed in the Railway Department and the work associated with that department as connected with the war effort. It is interesting to note that during the hearing of that appeal the departmental representatives questioned the Town Clerk in connection with a telephone conversation he had with the Commissioner for Railways about the appointment of Dr. Langer as Assistant Town Planner. In the course of this conversation Mr. Slaughter informed the Commissioner that the council had a suitable substitute for Dr. Langer. However, he did not name the substitute, and when cross-examined by Mr. O'Malley he attributed this omission to the fact that he did not have the file of papers, but was unable to explain his failure to make himself conversant with Jacobsohn's name before getting in touch with the Commissioner nor could he recall the date of the telephone conversation.

I am sorry that the hon. member for Hamilton and the other hon. members of the Q.P.P., with the except of the hon. member for Toowong, have left the Chamber.

Mr. Decker: I am here.

Mr. WALSH: When Mr. Slaughter said he did not remember the name the magistrate directed that the council file be obtained. It was revealed that Jacobsohn's appointment dated from 21 July 1944, which was prior to the date when the offer of the services of a qualified architect was made by the council to the Railway Department. I want hon. members to bear in mind the date, 21 July 1944. Jacobsohn was then supposed to be in the Army. I have no doubt he was in the Army. The council appointed him whilst he was in the Army. It had no grounds for offering his services to the Railway Department because it had no knowledge

that he was going to be released from the Army or that his services would be available to the department. His release was granted on 5 September. It will be noted that Jacobsohn's release from the Army was granted on the day before the Commissioner's appeal against Dr. Langer's appointment was heard, which again indicates that the council was not in a position to make this offer to the Railway Department so far as Mr. Jacobsohn's services were concerned. It is interesting to note further that when Dr. Langer was questioned by Mr. O'Malley at this appeal he was not able to say whether Mr. Jacobsohn, as an architect, was good, bad or indifferent, and he did not know of any architectural work performed by Jacobsohn.

The "Courier-Mail" subsequently published a statement made by Mr. Chandler, who expressed his disappointment at the fact that Dr. Langer would not be released. He said that Dr. Langer had been advised by letter on the Government's behalf that he would be released when a substitute could be found. No attempt was made to find a substitute, according to Mr. Chandler. When one was offered, the Government, through the Commissioner for Railways, refused the offer, thereby dishonouring their promise. It is to be noted that subsequently a challenge was extended to the Lord Mayor by the Commissioner for Railways to produce any evidence, documentary or otherwise, that would justify the statement that had been made by him. Commenting on this statement, the Commissioner said that Mr. Chandler had said there was every reason to believe that Mr. Jacobsohn would be released from the Army, but when challenged with that statement he was not in a position to say that this man's services were available to the Government.

I have made these few remarks because, the charge having been made by the hon. member for Hamilton that the Government had dishonoured their promise to Dr. Langer and that the council had made certain offers to the Government, which were not accepted, it was only fair that I should show the House that the Lord Mayor was not in a position to offer the services of this particular individual and therefore that offer could not be taken seriously by the Commissioner.

It has since come to my notice that Dr. Langer has offered his services to the Mackay City Council at a fee of £300, and inquiries are being made in connection with that.

I hope the Bill goes through. In fact, I know it will go through and I feel confident that it will be commended throughout the length and breadth of Australia as a clear indication of the Government's sympathy with returned men.

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane—Secretary for Labour and Employment (3.27 p.m.): Much was made by the Leader of the Opposition and one other hon. member opposite of the question of the reinstatement of members of the fighting services. I said on Friday that there was no need for the inclusion in the Bill of a provision relating to the reinstatement of members of the

fighting forces in their former positions, for the reason that the matter was already covered by a National Security Regulation issued by the Commonwealth Government. That regulation provides—

“General Purpose.

“To ensure the reinstatement in employment of persons who have rendered war service.

“‘War Service’ Definition.

“(a) A member of the Citizen Forces called out for war service under the Defence Act, or a person in continuous training under that Act, or the Naval Defence Act 1910-1934, or the Air Force Act 1923;

“(b) Continuous service of any person who volunteers, and is accepted for service during the present war;

“(c) Continuous full-time service in the recognised Women’s Services.

“Reinstatement in employment.

“An employer to whom application is made by a person who has completed a period of war service, and was employed by such employer immediately prior to his period of war service, must reinstate him in his employment in an occupation, and under conditions, not less favourable to him than if he had remained in such employment.

“Thirty (30) days’ minimum is the period prescribed during which an employee must have been employed prior to war service to have any claim upon his employer.”

Nothing could be more definite than that, and why the Leader of the Opposition should whip himself into such a state because of the absence from the Bill of a reinstatement clause I am at a loss to understand. He added that the war might finish and the regulation then would have no effect. We all hope that the war will finish soon, but this regulation will be effective for at least six months after the conclusion of hostilities or the declaration of peace. In any case, it is sound and logical to assume that the Federal Government would continue the principle contained in the regulation in some form or another, thereby guaranteeing the reinstatement of members of the fighting services in their former positions. However, should there be any doubt on the point I want to assure the House that this Government would, if the necessity arose on the cessation of hostilities, amend this Bill to provide for the inclusion of a reinstatement clause, but I do not think that the Federal Government would fail to make some such provision either by Act of Parliament or in some other way on the expiry of this regulation.

The hon. member for Windsor wanted to know what was to become of those persons who were now occupying positions formerly held by members of the fighting services. That is a problem that will face this Government and indeed all the Governments of Australia, and for that matter all the Governments of the world. If the persons now

occupying the positions formerly held by members of the fighting services cannot be re-absorbed in other industries, it will be the obligation of the Government, as the Premier said in his policy speech, to do something for them. The Premier said in his policy speech that this Government did not visualise long queues of men and women standing, waiting and looking for employment. There will be no lack of effort on our part to prevent those circumstances from arising. Hon. members can depend on it that it will be our aim to find employment for those men and women in other industries. That is the problem, and it is not an easy one to solve. However, the people of this State have the assurance of the Government that everything humanly possible will be done with that end in view.

Mention has been made in the course of debate of dismissals, promotions and other phases of employment of returned soldiers. The subject of promotions is being left to the Committee stage of the Bill. On the subject of dismissals, I believe that if we are going to include a provision that an employer shall be unable to dismiss an employee who is an ex-member of the fighting forces from his employment without giving him the right of appeal to some tribunal, we are carrying the purpose of the measure a little too far.

After all, the Bill is designed to give preference in employment, and having got into a job it is on the ex-soldier to hold that job. It is not likely that employers will dismiss ex-members of the fighting forces merely because they have been members of the fighting forces. Therefore there is no reason for any alarm in that connection. Furthermore, most workers today are covered by awards and protected in the matter of dismissal. If an employee believes he has been wrongly dismissed by his employer—discriminated against or victimised—he has the right of appeal to the Industrial Court.

With regard to the assistance for returned soldiers suggested by the Leader of the Opposition, I do not think the means enumerated by him are quite appropriate to this Bill. We are setting up various organisations that are to provide amenities, social and otherwise, for ex-members of the fighting forces, whose job it will be to attend to those things. We have a Repatriation Department to see that ex-members of the fighting forces are fairly and justly treated in the matter of pensions, that help is given in the purchase of homes and other matters, but it would not be appropriate to include in this Bill the type of assistance suggested by the Leader of the Opposition.

The hon. member for Bulimba raised the question of the merchant seamen. I want to assure him that the claims of the merchant seamen received much consideration from this Government when this Bill was being drawn up. The Government are not unappreciative of the services rendered in this war by the merchant seamen. We do not underrate the risk taken by those men in the execution of their duty. We recognise that the efficient prosecution of the war

depended a great deal on our merchant navy. We recognise the risk that they run. We know, too, that many of them are today prisoners of war. However, the drawing up of a Bill of this kind, as I stated in previous remarks, is not an easy task. If the provisions of the Bill are widened to embrace merchant seamen, then consideration must be given to the part that other men and women in essential industries have played in this war, perhaps not with the accompanying risk but with a great deal of strain and sacrifice, together with a toll and tax on their physical strength. For instance, take the railway employees. When we were moving thousands upon thousands of tons of munitions and goods, in addition to thousands upon thousands of members of the armed forces, railway employees were required to work in the vicinity of 18 hours a day and more. While these men did not undergo the risk incurred by merchant seaman, they nevertheless did a job in a protected industry, an industry for which they were refused the right to enlist in the fighting services.

Mr. Chandler: Did they not get extra pay in overtime?

Mr. GAIR: That is right, but overtime, as represented by £ s. d., does not compensate a person for loss of health, loss of vitality, loss of home comforts and the pleasures of a home which are denied to him by working overtime. Many men and women in this country were called on to make those sacrifices in the interests of the nation and for the principles for which this war is being waged. We should have to consider them at the same time as we considered the merchant seaman. I do not say these things because I am unappreciative of the service rendered by merchant seamen—and I have always stated that—but merchant seamen are following their ordinary civil occupation, with the added risks caused by the war. They work under an award. Unlike the sailor, soldier or airman, they work under an award, and for the additional risk they undergo at present they are paid a war loading. Furthermore, when this war is over these men will be in their normal occupation or industry.

Mr. Marriott: Not necessarily all of them.

Mr. GAIR: I will come to that. Probably their numbers have increased because of war and some of them will be required to find employment elsewhere. If the hon. member reads the Bill—no doubt he has—he will find that an employer who desires to select a merchant seaman in preference to a soldier who perhaps has never been further than Atherton, will, in the event of an appeal by the soldier, be able to submit under the heading of “other relevant circumstances,” all those facts before the magistrate in support of the merchant seaman. He will be able to point out that this man worked in the war zone at great risk and that he was a member of the crews of ships that carried foodstuffs and other goods to the fighting services in the Mediterranean and elsewhere, while this soldier was at Victoria Barracks or at the Pay Office in Ann street. Under the heading “other rele-

vant circumstances” I do not think the merchant seaman would be disadvantaged to any extent. Every member of this Chamber is conscious of the job the merchant seamen have done. We are indebted to them, but if we go beyond giving preference to the three arms of the fighting forces, the Navy, the Army and Air Force, we shall have to give preference to thousands of men and women in other essential jobs, in other protected industries, all of whom have played a very important and indispensable part in the successful prosecution of this war.

Much has been said about the question of preference. The Leader of the Opposition charged me with having introduced party politics into the debate this morning. I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that in introducing this Bill party politics was furthest from my mind; but when the hon. member saw fit to flog the Government because he said their action was belated I believe it was relevant and logical to ask why the party of which he is a member did not legislate for preference when they were the Government between 1929 and 1932. I make that remark in defence of my statement this morning. The Leader of the Opposition cannot stand up here and flog this Government for having delayed this matter and not expect to be asked why his party did not do something in the matter when they were a Government. If private employers had done as much for returned soldiers as the Labour Government have done many thousands would have been saved the hardships they had to endure, particularly during the depression years. This Government have a very excellent record in the matter of preference to returned soldiers; and, as I stated in my introductory remarks, right back to 1917 clauses appeared in many awards—and the hon. member for Bulimba said that as an officer of the Federated Engine-drivers' Union he was responsible for one—that gave preference to returned soldiers, which showed that the industrial unions and the Government of this State were willing to give due recognition to the members of the fighting forces after the first World War.

Most members have accepted this Bill in a very approving manner, and those who have criticised it are the same few who criticise everything, but they have failed to advance any constructive suggestion for the improvement of the Bill. That is their usual role; because they sit in Opposition they believe that whether a measure is good or bad it is their job to oppose it.

Mr. Yeates: No, you are wrong. You were in 14 years before 1929. Why did you not do it?

Mr. GAIR: I am sorry if I woke up the hon. member. I did raise my voice a little bit. I was referring to a few members who criticised the Bill.

An Opposition Member: Not all members.

Mr. GAIR: No, I said a few members. They complained that the Bill did not go far enough, that it failed here and it failed

there, but advanced no constructive suggestion for the improvement of the Bill. It is only fair, if an hon. member sees fit to criticise, that he should advance some constructive suggestion for the improvement of the measure, particularly a Bill that aims at doing something for the ex-members of the fighting forces of Australia.

Motion (Mr. Gair) agreed to.

COMMITTEE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Mann, Brisbane, in the chair.)

Clauses 1 to 3, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—New Section 8A; Preference to members of a fighting force—

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (3.47 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

“On page 2, line 34, after the word ‘State,’ insert the words—

‘or a promotion is made to any office.’”

This is an amendment to the principal clause of the Bill, which relates to preference in employment to members of the fighting forces. The reasons for such an amendment must be obvious to the Minister. If it is proper and right to give to returned soldiers preference in employment it is also right that preference be given in promotion, subject to the important provisions of this Bill.

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane—Secretary for Labour and Employment) (3.49 p.m.): I fully appreciate the motive of the hon. member in moving this amendment but I think the purpose could be served by an amendment to a later part of the clause. I have circulated the proposed amendment, which I think will give satisfaction to members of the Opposition.

Mr. MAHER: In view of the Minister's assurance, I seek leave of the Committee to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) (3.50 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

“On page 2, after line 53, insert the following paragraph—

‘(b) as between applicants who are members of a fighting force the length, locality and nature of the service of each such member;’”

I do not wish to repeat what I stated on the second reading. This amendment will clarify the situation if two soldiers were applicants for the one position. In his introductory speech the Minister mentioned that this was intended, but the Bill as it reads at present does not clarify the position exactly. I feel that the amendment I have moved will put what is intended beyond doubt. After all, hon. members will agree that when it comes to a decision between two members of the fighting forces the one who has the best

record in regard to length, locality and nature of service should have preference.

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane—Secretary for Labour and Employment) (3.51 p.m.): It is true, as the Leader of the Opposition stated, that I dealt fully with this matter on the introductory stage of the Bill and instanced the case in which two discharged members of the fighting forces were applying for a position. I pointed out that the employer would have to consider the war records of the applicants. He would have to take into account the length of service and the locality in which each served, as well as the nature of the service. I indicated clearly that it was my intention, as well as that of the Government, that that should be done. Whether the provision in the Bill covers that is a matter of opinion, and my advisers say it does. Evidently the Leader of the Opposition and some of his colleagues believe that it is not clear enough. If that is so, I am quite willing to accept the amendment.

Amendment (Mr. Nicklin) agreed to.

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane—Secretary for Labour and Employment) (3.53 p.m.): I move the following amendment:—

“On page 3, after line 3, insert the following paragraph:—

‘(c) The qualifications, if any, prescribed by law, for appointment to the office or employment in question, and the procedure, if any, prescribed by law, in respect to filling such office or employment.’”

Paragraph (c) will be re-numbered paragraph (d) accordingly. This amendment is designed to cover the position that might arise if a building firm, for instance, needs an architect. The law provides for the registration of architects. Again, if a company wants to employ an auditor, the law provides that that auditor must possess certain qualifications. If an engineering firm requires a person skilled in machinery the Machinery Act prescribes the required qualifications. It is necessary, therefore, that we should include this amendment to make it clear that the applicant for such positions must possess the qualifications required by law.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) (3.57 p.m.): I move the following amendment:—

“On page 3, line 8, after the word ‘offence’ insert the proviso—

‘Provided further that no employer shall dismiss from his employment any member of a fighting force without reasonable cause. In any appeal as herein-after provided or in any proceedings for a contravention of this provision the onus of proving reasonable cause shall lie on the employer.’”

This is an important protection for the service men or women who may be unfortunate enough to run up against an unscrupulous employer. Hon. members will agree that the

big majority of employers will play the game by the service men and women, but on the other hand there is a section of them who may not. Therefore it is necessary that we should extend this protection to them. The amendment means that an employer cannot dismiss a service man or woman without good cause. The onus will lie on the employer to show cause in such cases, and such employee shall have the right of appeal against the action of the employer. The good employer need have nothing to worry about in this connection, and it will be an additional measure of protection against the unscrupulous employer. In support of the amendment I desire to quote this section from the Discharged Servicemen's Preference Act of Victoria—

“1. No employer shall dismiss from his employment or dispense with the services of any discharged service man without reasonable cause.

“2. In any proceedings for a contravention of this section the onus of proving reasonable cause shall lie on the employer.”

The amendment is a reasonable one.

Mr. PATERSON (Bowen) (3.59 p.m.): The point that troubles me is whether such an amendment is necessary. If it is necessary then obviously, under our law, an employer can dismiss a non-service man without reasonable cause, and if that is so we should provide further that no employer shall dismiss any employee without reasonable cause. I always understood that an employer could not dismiss an employee without reasonable cause. He might dismiss him for some cause that he considered reasonable in his own mind, and he has always contended that the cause was reasonable when the matter was contested in a court. I should like the matter made clear whether at present it is possible for an employer to dismiss any employee without reasonable cause.

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane—Secretary for Labour and Employment) (4.1 p.m.): I do not intend to accept the amendment, for the reason that I do not think it is necessary. I agree with the hon. member for Bowen that it would be wrong if an employer had the right to dismiss an employee, whether a member of the fighting services or not, without reasonable cause.

It would be plainly wrong and would call for immediate correction. The workers are protected by the industrial laws. If an employee feels he has been dismissed wrongfully from his employment he has the right of appeal to the Industrial Court to have the matter determined. When ex-members of the fighting forces are reinstated in employment they will have the same right as their fellow workers who have never been in the fighting forces. Not one member of the fighting forces will be disadvantaged because he has been a member of the fighting forces. He will enjoy all the rights, privileges and protection that our industrial laws give for the rectification of any grievance.

Mr. POWER (Baroona) (4.4 p.m.): I take the same view as the Minister. This is an

amendment of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Acts, in which is the provision that any employee who thinks he has been wrongfully dismissed can appeal to the Industrial Court and have the matter determined. I can cite a case in point. In the earlier days of the tramways the then manager, the late Mr. Badger, decided to dispense with the services of a tramway inspector named Moynihan. Moynihan took his case to the Arbitration Court, alleging victimisation by the department. The court determined that he had been victimised and ordered his reinstatement. Therefore that provision would apply in this case. It would be wrong to give protection to any individual section and not a general protection to all workers. Therefore, the amendment is not necessary, as provision for its objects already exists in the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Acts.

Amendment (Mr. Nicklin) negatived.

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane—Secretary for Labour and Employment) (4.6 p.m.): I move the following amendment:—

“On page 3, after line 8, add the following paragraph:—

‘(iv.) It is hereby declared that where a member of a fighting force has been appointed to any office or employment by way of re-instatement in such office or employment, such re-instatement shall and be deemed to confer upon such member all the rights and privileges including promotion to which he would have been entitled had he not served as a member of the fighting forces.

‘Any such member of a fighting force who has been so re-instated and has been refused any such rights and privileges as aforesaid may appeal to the Industrial Magistrate and such Industrial Magistrate after hearing the appeal shall make such order as he thinks just and reasonable; moreover the provisions of paragraph (vi.) of this sub-section shall *mutatis mutandis* apply accordingly.’”

I believe that this amendment will meet the views of the Opposition as expressed in their suggested amendment. It will place the private employer on the same basis as the Government in the consideration of claims of ex-service-men in the matter of promotion. I am sure therefore that the amendment will be acceptable to the Opposition.

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (4.8 p.m.): The Minister's amendment is more restricted in its scope than the Opposition amendment. His amendment limits the promotion possibilities to those members of the fighting forces who have been reinstated in their original employment, employment from which they resigned in order to enter the fighting forces.

We had in mind an amendment that would be general in application and not limited to those actually reinstated to their original positions. Otherwise, if a vacancy occurred and 20 men applied, a man who had been a member of the fighting forces would get

preference and be appointed. Perhaps three or four years subsequently the question of promotion would come up for consideration, and there might be two or three men who had equal claims to the higher position; and in those circumstances our amendment would have provided that the member of the fighting services, still subject to the provisions of this Bill, would have priority. To me the Minister has limited the amendment to those who have been reinstated to their original positions. It has not the same merit as our original idea. However, it is an improvement on the Bill, and we accept it. If it is found in actual practice that it is militating against their obtaining promotion it will be up to Parliament to amend the Act.

Mr. CHANDLER (Hamilton) (4.11 p.m.): I think the suggested amendment is a reasonable one. As far as I can see, it adequately covers the necessities of the case. It does not go as far as the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Opposition, which in my opinion went too far, and would have the effect of upsetting all the Public Service regulations and the Brisbane City Council appeal regulations. I think it carried the provision much further than it is either wise or desirable to do. I think the Minister's suggestion is a reasonable compromise under the circumstances.

Mr. PATERSON (Bowen) (4.12 p.m.): I do not want to say much except that I oppose the general principle of preference to returned soldiers in the sense that a returned soldier should get any preference over anybody else in regard to a job, except that he should receive special treatment along the lines I mentioned in my speech on the introductory stage of the Bill. I agree with this amendment, however, which is not so much a preference to returned soldiers as simply a provision which says to the soldier, "You had a job before you went to the war; that job is open and will be available for you when you come back. When you come back you will not have suffered anything in relation to promotion and other rights and privileges by virtue of the fact that you were absent from your job for one, two, three, four or five years." Apart from my general opposition to the principle I support the amendment. I think it is a very wise and sound provision.

Amendment (Mr. Gair) agreed to.

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane—Secretary for Labour and Employment) (4.14 p.m.): I have a further amendment, which is consequential on the amendment just agreed upon. I move—

"On page 3, line 16, omit the words—

'paragraphs (a), (b) or (c),

and insert in lieu thereof the words—

'paragraphs (a), (b), (c), (d) or (e).'

Amendment (Mr. Gair) agreed to.

Mr. PATERSON (Bowen) (4.15 p.m.): I am opposed to the general principle of preference as set out in Clause 4, other than the amendment just inserted, which will grant

certain rights of reinstatement under certain conditions to ex-members of the services. I am not going to take up the time of the Committee by stating my reasons, because I stated them fully when I was speaking on the Address in Reply and also on the introductory stage of the Bill. What I want to point out is that this clause does not give an absolute preference to returned soldiers.

Returned soldiers might well wake up to the fact that under this clause they will not be much better off. I draw the attention of hon. members to certain parts of Clause 4, and particularly those that set out the conditions necessary to enable the court or an employer to determine whether an ex-member of the services should receive employment. Paragraph (3) states—

"In determining whether reasonable and substantial cause exists for not appointing a member of a fighting force the employer shall consider—

(a) The length, locality and nature of the service of the member of a fighting force;"

I do not contend that I can decide now how any court of law will interpret that. Notwithstanding what the Minister, any hon. member or I might say, it will ultimately be left to the court to determine the meaning of those words in the eyes of the law, and anybody who knows anything about law courts knows that it is not permissible to quote speeches of members of Parliament or Ministers in support of a contention. So far as I can see, that clause means—but because I say it, it does not necessarily mean that the courts will so decide—that the court, for instance, will give a greater preference to a man who had not been stationed in Australia the whole time but had been fighting in New Guinea, greater preference to a man who has been in the service two years than to a man who had been in the service only one year, and so on.

Now to take the next sub-paragraph—

"(b) The comparative qualifications of the member of a fighting force and of the other applicants for the office of employment."

And then—

"(c) Any other relevant circumstances:"

I am honest enough to say that I could not say what the other relevant circumstances are. The courts will determine that, and once it is determined by the Industrial Court it will then be the law, and that law will be binding. Certainly I should not like to be asked to determine now what is the meaning of the phrase.

"Any other relevant circumstances."

It is very easy to see what sub-clause (b) means, because if we read further on, we find—

"Moreover, if an employer satisfies the Industrial Magistrate that the appellant—

(a) Would be unable to perform the duties appertaining to the office or

employment by reason of lack of skill or reasonable degree of efficiency; or

(b) Is physically or mentally unfit to undertake the duties of the office or employment involved; or

(c) Has since the termination of his service as a member of a fighting force been convicted of an indictable offence, the Industrial Magistrate shall refuse to order the employer to appoint such a person."

It is only right that members of the fighting services should know that these provisions are there.

Work is not guaranteed to members of the fighting services under the provisions of this Bill. For instance, Smith, an ex-member of the services, competes with Brown, who is not an ex-member of the services. An employer merely has to say that the man who is not an ex-member is more skilled and more efficient. Or he may state that the ex-member is physically unfit or mentally unfit for the job. I take it that does not mean so mentally unfit as to need to be detained in a mental hospital. If the employer refuses to accept the ex-service-man and the soldier appeals to the court, the court will ask the employer to satisfy it that the ex-service-man is physically or mentally unfit to do the job, or has not the skill or the degree of efficiency of the other man. The employer is then on safe ground in refusing to employ an ex-member of the services.

Mr. Brand: The court will be impartial.

Mr. PATERSON: No matter how impartial the court may be, all the employer has to do is to produce the evidence, and I think we can agree that many ex-members of the services, by virtue of their service itself, will lack the skill of a man who has been here working, and by virtue of the fact that they have been away in New Guinea may not be so physically or mentally fit for a particular job as those who have stayed here. It will not be very difficult for the employer; in fact, it will be easy for the employer to drive coaches, wagons and railway trains through the Act so far as preference to returned soldiers is concerned.

If the employer can prove that the soldier has been convicted of an indictable offence he need not employ him. In other words, we ask men to go away and fight for us, to shoot the enemy, and commit all kinds of assaults to defend this country. When they come back they are not balanced citizens similar to those who have not been away doing these things. A man may commit an assault and be technically guilty. He may be convicted of an indictable offence for assault, because there can be an indictment for assault. He may have been convicted of doing grievous bodily harm or bodily harm. The judge may think that the circumstances are such that the man should not be sent to prison or even be fined, but by the very fact that the man has a conviction against him, an employer can refuse to employ him.

That is the worst feature. I can understand that there are some indictable offences

that should prevent a man from getting a particular job, but it would be wrong for this Parliament to lay down that if an ex-service-man is convicted of any indictable offence the employer may refuse to employ him. It should be left to the courts to determine the punishment that should follow conviction for an indictable offence. I do not think this Parliament should have anything to do with it. If a man is engaged in a work of trust, and is convicted of stealing funds, then that probably, in fact almost certainly, would be a case in which the employer would be justified, by virtue of that conviction, in refusing either to continue to employ that man or to employ a man of such a character, but it would be definitely wrong for us to decide that conviction of any indictable offences would be sufficient to warrant an employer's refusing to employ a returned soldier.

I mention this irrespective of my general views against the principle of preference. If we are going to pass this Bill, then at least we should see to it that the preference that is granted is as reasonable as possible. I ask the Minister to reconsider paragraph (c) in particular. Even if we were dealing simply with a clause in the Industrial Arbitration Act, relating to all employees, I should be opposed to any provision that the employer had the right to refuse to employ a man simply because he had been convicted of an indictable offence. After all, we believe in the principle of one punishment for one offence. When a man suffers his punishment, when he pays his fine or goes to gaol, or when the judge thinks it does not warrant even a fine or punishment, then in no one of those three cases should a further stigma be attached to the person concerned.

Mr. Maher: Have you got an amendment for it?

Mr. PATERSON: I think the provision should be omitted. I am not proposing to amend, because I am against the whole clause on principle. I am putting this point up for the consideration of the Minister, because I feel certain that the aspect I have raised has never been considered before. It is our duty to place these views before the Committee. I do not care how brilliant or experienced a man may be, he cannot be expected to think of every circumstance in every possible case. I am putting this forward to the Minister, because I believe that my attitude should not be that I should shut my mouth and offer no constructive suggestion or advice simply because I oppose the principle. Notwithstanding the fact that I am opposed to the general principle and opposed to the clause as a whole, it is my duty to make these suggestions to the Minister.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Treasurer) (4.25 p.m.): The hon. member for Bowen is quite wrong in suggesting that no thought has been given to this matter.

Mr. PATERSON: I rise to a point of order. I did not say that. I said that no matter how brilliant a man is or how experienced he

is he could not be expected to think of everything. I did not say that no thought had been given to it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the Treasurer to accept the hon. member's explanation.

Mr. HANLON: I accept it. But I want to assure the hon. member that this is not a Bill that has been lightly undertaken by the Government. It is breaking entirely new ground, and nowhere else has anything of this kind been attempted. There have been precedences of Bills giving preference of employment to returned soldiers, but this is the first occasion on which a Government have faced up to the responsibility of giving members of the fighting services an advantage over the rest of the community in the seeking of employment. I know from my experience of the last war and my work amongst ex-service-men in the post-war years, that a number of ex-members of the fighting services who committed offences on active service were given very little chance of rehabilitation. The environment in which men live on active service makes for the breaking down of the moral fibre. Taken away from their homes and from the companionship of their own womenfolk, herded together in a way that destroys individuality, they are particularly susceptible to temptations that they would never encounter in civil life. A great variety of offences are committed by service men on active service, but these offenders, if given an opportunity, become excellent citizens again on their return to civil life. Regular employment with good wages and under decent conditions is the best form of rehabilitation that can be offered to ex-service-men. The Government have decided that any offence committed by a member of the armed forces while he is with the armed forces shall be disregarded. No matter what he may have committed whilst on active service no regard must be paid to it when arriving at a decision as to preference for employment under this Bill. That is as far as we can reasonably go.

On the return of members of the fighting services, if any of them continue in a life of law-breaking, are we to expect anybody to continually submit himself to the loss that might be inflicted upon him by such a man? If it is the crime of violence to which a man is addicted, is it a fair thing to ask an ordinary citizen of this country to continually re-submit himself to the violence to which that returned member of the forces is addicted as a result of his war service?

During the years I was in charge of the Department of Health and Home Affairs I tried very hard to help those men who had gone down as the result of war service. I know that many men who got into the ditch after the last war would never have been other than decent citizens if they had stayed at home with their womenfolk and had not been separated from the anchor of mankind, which after all is the home and the female relatives. But when we come to compelling a man to give others employment we must

at least give the employer some protection. He should at least have the assurance that he will not be subjecting himself to certain financial loss and assault by the employment of certain men. Every assistance will be given, I am sure, to the service men who have got into trouble. It is something entirely new for a Government to say that no matter what crime a man may have committed during perhaps five, six or seven years in the Army it must be entirely disregarded by the employer. A man may have committed violence, a sexual offence, robbery, burglary or an armed assault, but we are going to say to the employer, "You must have no regard to that but you must give him an opportunity of rehabilitating himself." Even if a soldier did get into difficulty in the course of war I believe that if given a job at decent wages and decent conditions he would afterwards live a decent and useful life in 99 cases out of 100. He would respond to good treatment and he would be removed from the fear of further degradation. I think that is as far as we can go and that is the purpose of the Bill.

Mr. PATERSON (Bowen) (4.29 p.m.): I feel that the matter is so important that I should like to make some further observations, not that I want to have my view accepted, but because I believe that the only way by which we can get anywhere is by putting forward our views. The more we express our views and the more discussion we have the better it will be for the country.

I agree with the Treasurer that if a man continues with crimes of violence then obviously he should not get the preference provided by the Bill. But that is not my point. My point is that a man may be excluded for any conviction or indictment. Let me give my own experience as one who has taken part in many criminal trials. I have seen men convicted of assault, sometimes involving the element of bodily harm and sometimes the element of grievous bodily harm. Very often these offences arose out of a brawl and out of drunken brawls. I have been in cases in which the judge has commented on the fact that the offence would never have taken place had not a number of men gathered together and started to take some drink. I am pointing out that if Paragraph (c) is carried the returned man so convicted under those circumstances would be deprived of preference in employment. I said earlier that I should not like to give the meaning of the phrase "Any other relevant circumstances" in paragraph (c), but I think one of the circumstances would be the general character of the man. I think that that would be sufficient and then the court in determining the matter would be able to take character into consideration but it would not necessarily have to give an adverse verdict simply because there was a conviction, and it would be able to draw a distinction between a man who continued in the crime of violence and the man who committed an isolated offence in, say, a drunken brawl.

Mr. Hanlon: Then this clause takes care of your objection?

Mr. PATERSON: No. If a man is to be excluded from preference provisions merely because he was convicted on indictment for an isolated assault, no matter how mild, then he could be excluded from preference.

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane—Secretary for Labour and Employment) (4.31 p.m.): The Hon. the Treasurer has adequately answered the objections raised by the hon. member for Bowen. He pointed out that any offence committed by a member of the fighting service during his military career is to be disregarded in the administration of this clause of the Bill, which says that the industrial magistrate shall refuse to order the employer to appoint a person who—

“has since the termination of his service as a member of a fighting force, been convicted of an indictable offence.”

That only applies in connection with preference but in our desire to give preference to ex-members of the fighting forces we must have some regard for or give some consideration to the employer who will be called upon by the Bill to give preference to the returned soldier.

Mr. Maher: And if the employer raises no objection?

Mr. GAIR: That is all right.

Mr. Maher: Then there is no difficulty at all?

Mr. GAIR: No difficulty at all.

Mr. Maher: Many employers would not.

Mr. GAIR: If a discharged member of the fighting forces is convicted of a major offence of stealing it would be difficult to compel an employer to engage that man in a position of trust. To do so would subject him to the risk that that ex-member of the forces would steal from him. In our enthusiasm to give the returned soldier his due recognition and rights we should not expect an employer, whoever he may be, to take that risk. We have to be careful in that respect but we should not be exercising the due care that is expected of us if we accepted the suggestion of the hon. member for Bowen. As stated by the Treasurer, if an ex-member of the fighting forces addicted to committing assaults when in a state of excitement brought on by his war service or for some other reason was convicted of an indictable offence while in employment I do not think any other employer should be forced to disregard that fact, take him into his employment and run the risk of having his head knocked off on the first occasion on which he reprimanded him. We must be reasonable and act in a common-sense way. That is the position as I see it. If hon. members will examine the draft Bill circulated by the R.S.S.A.I.L.A. they will see that the league recognised the importance of giving this protection to the employer. We cannot in this measure undertake to interfere

in the internal management of anyone's business and say “You have to do this, that, and the other thing.” To do so would destroy the owner's control of his business. It would also destroy the opportunity of the soldier to get what we intend him to get under this measure.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

HOSPITALS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

Hon. T. A. FOLEY (Normanby—Secretary for Health and Home Affairs) (4.38 p.m.): I move—

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

I explained very fully the principles of this measure on the initiatory stage. It contains 17 main principles. Hon. members since then have had the opportunity of perusing it and obtaining first-hand knowledge of what the principles mean. I intend repeating them and elaborating on them.

The first principle, and an important one, is that relieving local authorities from their liability of a share of the cost of the establishment and maintenance of our public hospitals.

This is to take effect as from July 1945. The annual saving to local authorities is estimated to be in the vicinity of £300,000, and as a result they will be able to concentrate more upon health matters generally and on the other work laid down for them in the Local Government Act and the Health Act, and there will be a greater possibility of preventing outbreaks of infectious diseases from time to time, which will mean a general saving, not only to the authority concerned, but also to the State because the workers will be healthy and in a condition to carry on production.

The second principle deals with the division of the State into hospitals regions, and the improvement of the health and hospital services on a basis of decentralisation. This of course, as I foreshadowed, is a matter for the future. We are not going just to rush into the casting of certain regions; we will do it gradually as circumstances prove to the department that it is necessary for the purposes of decentralisation and that definite advantage will accrue as a result.

The third principle is the determination of certain hospitals within the hospitals regions to be base hospitals, and linked to that is a greater degree of co-operation and co-ordination between the various hospital boards throughout the State. It is hoped by this method to bring about improvement in many of our country hospitals by declaring one hospital in a region a base hospital, linked up with and fed by others in that region. That will give greater facilities and bring about greater improvements than now exist.

As a result of the new organisation, of course, the appointment of specialties is

warranted if the Governor in Council thinks they are necessary for the benefit of the people in that area. The fourth principle, therefore, is the establishment of medical specialties at base hospitals. The Bill gives power to the Governor in Council to arrange for that where it is desirable.

Other principles are—

(5) Establishment of health centres for the purpose of increasing the good health and wellbeing of the people.

(6) The retention of hospitals boards for local management and control of hospitals within each hospitals district.

(7) Imposing a duty upon all hospitals boards to co-operate with one another, and particularly with the board within the region managing and controlling base hospitals, and also with the other boards within the same region.

(8) The imposing of a duty upon all hospitals boards to furnish to other hospitals boards any medical history of a patient, or other information required to improve the treatment of patients.

(9) The recognition of certain hospitals as medical schools for the training of medical students.

I dealt with this very fully on the introductory stage. The main reason for this provision is that it is generally felt today that although certain hospitals are recognised as training hospitals, actually there is no legal status for the students at those hospitals, and the Bill proposes to legalise such hospitals as training centres, thereby giving a protection to the students that they have not now.

(10) Conferring on the Governor in Council when approving of the budget the power to alter, add to, or delete from the Budget, after considering the representations of the board.

That is an important question. Under the Hospitals Act we have a limited measure of control in that respect. This goes a little further. Of course, it is necessary because in the future the Government will be footing the whole of the bill. That is to say, the whole of the net maintenance cost of the hospitals throughout the State, running into roughly £900,000 per annum, will be thrown upon the Government.

There will be no financial responsibility on the local authority or on any other body, and consequently the Government desire to have full control, if they think it desirable, to make any alteration or alter the budget of any hospitals board.

As the local authorities are being relieved of the duty of contributing to the cost of public hospitals, we are providing that the administration of the Act shall be subject to the Minister. That does not exist in the existing Hospitals Act, principally because there was a dual responsibility between the Government and the local authorities as to contributions for the maintenance of hospitals. Now that the Government will be carrying the whole of the burden, it is

desirable that the administration of the Act shall be subject to the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs.

The next provision is for the appointment of chairman of committees by the full board. A very great principle is involved in this, but it has been found that the practice of allowing committees to appoint their own chairmen has not worked successfully, and it is felt that by arranging for the board, which in turn appoints the committee, to appoint the chairman of the committee also we shall achieve a greater measure of responsibility and we predict that in consequence better results will be achieved than under the old system.

We provide for the discipline of medical students in training at hospitals. Those who have studied the Bill will have observed that medical students are subject to the by-laws of the hospital concerned, as well as to the rules of the University, at which they are students, so that there will be to a certain extent a double check on discipline that will safeguard hospitals boards and the University.

Provision is made for the appointment of tutors at training hospitals. I outlined this system previously, but for the benefit of hon. members I repeat that when the Treasurer held the portfolio of Secretary for Health and Home Affairs he found it desirable to appoint a committee to go into certain issues that had arisen between the Brisbane and South Coast Hospitals Board and the University. One of the matters investigated and reported upon was the appointment of tutors by the hospitals board. Provision will be made that whereas previously the Director-General of Health and Medical Services reported to the board concerned he will, in future, be aided by representatives of the hospitals board and representatives of the University. It is felt that he will thus be better advised and have greater information concerning not only the medical and other abilities of an individual who may be appointed, but he will also have a knowledge as to the teaching qualifications of the appointees. He will then be in a position to make his report and recommendation to the hospitals board. The board may or may not accept his recommendation. Of course, it will be left to the board. This is an extra guide, as it were, to enable the Director-General to make a better report than he otherwise could.

Other principles deal with the duties of hospitals, and there is provision requiring hospital secretaries to be public servants. We provide that all existing hospital secretaries, full-time or part-time, shall on application be appointed by the Governor in Council as Crown employees, and as to future appointments, vacancies will be filled by the Governor in Council in conformity with the Public Service Act.

The remaining principle deals with approval by the Minister before a hospitals board proceeds with the preparation of plans for any work. Hon. members will easily discern what is aimed at. One may find some hospitals

board with an irresponsible majority. Time alone will tell whether we shall get the same good service that we have received in the past.

In the past there were Government representatives who were responsible to the Government because of the Government's contributions, and local-authority representatives were acting as watchdogs on the expenditure of hospitals boards because ratepayers were contributing their share of the cost of maintaining those institutions. That is now changed. The Government will have full responsibility for the cost of maintenance of hospitals throughout the State and for capital expenditure involved in the expansion of our hospital services. The approximate saving to local authorities throughout Queensland will be £300,000 and the total cost borne by the Government for the next financial year will be between £900,000 and £950,000.

As a result of the financial relief that local authorities will enjoy it is to be hoped that they will concentrate more on the other health responsibilities that remain with them. For instance, on the basis of the 1943-44 precepts, the Ayr shire will show a saving of £3,667 10s. Hon. members will agree that much good work can be done with that amount of money in that district on drainage, mosquito prevention and the other things that go to reduce the risk of infectious disease. The Brisbane City Council will save £63,297 7s. 7d. Here again the local authority will have considerable funds for the extension of health work and services. The total saving in the Brisbane and South Coast Hospitals Board area, which embraces the city of Brisbane, the town of Coolangatta, the shire of Redcliffe, the town of Southport and shire of Beenleigh, and the shires of Caboolture, Cleveland, Coomera, Kilcoy, Landsborough, Maroochy, Pine, Tamborine, Tingalpa and Waterford will amount to £73,691. The total saving to the city of Bundaberg will be £2,278 and for the whole of the shires comprising the Bundaberg hospitals district it will be £8,145. The saving to the Cairns City Council will be approximately £2,484. To the Mulgrave shire in the Cairns hospital district the saving will be £2,063, making a total of £4,547 for the area. The total savings to the Local Authorities in the following hospitals districts will be—

	£	s.	d.
Gympie	4,270	0	0
Ipswich	8,432	10	0
Longreach ..	3,735	0	0
Mackay	4,500	0	0
Maryborough ..	6,997	0	0
Roma	3,300	0	0
Toowoomba ..	5,917	0	0
Townsville ..	6,437	0	0

I hope that local authorities will use part of the savings on improving health facilities in their areas with a view to minimising the risk of infectious disease.

I can easily visualise the complete change that will take place in the administrative methods of the hospital system in Queens-

land. The aim of course is to ensure economical management and to give an efficient hospital and medical service in every centre in the State where it is practicable and economical to do so. Looking back over the years one recalls the changes that have taken place in our hospital system. First of all, we had the old voluntary system, which in those days was regarded as a charity organisation. Time was, for instance, when one had to go round and find someone who was a contributor to the hospital and procure a ticket from him before one could enter the hospital. Then, when one did enter the hospital and was unable to pay the fees, a card was placed at the head of the bed to indicate that one was a pauper. That is the position that obtained a comparatively few years ago, even in my lifetime. However, there has been a gradual change from the voluntary system to the system of districting, with local hospitals boards and contributions from the ratepayers to the extent of 40 per cent. of the deficiency in maintenance costs at the beginning of the scheme, later reduced to 25 per cent., and now to be eliminated entirely. Power to borrow was an enormous advance upon the old system under which the hospital committees had to go cap in hand to the Government of the day and ask for a few thousands pounds in order to expand the hospital service. With the new system we have got away from that charitable outlook and the people now look upon hospital treatment as a right, something that every man and woman in the community is entitled to receive whether he or she can pay for it or not. Hospital administration has changed remarkably and many savings have been effected by the standardisation of purchases and the manufacture of certain lines by some of the larger hospitals. I might mention, for instance, that by the manufacture of the simpler lines used extensively in the Brisbane General Hospital that hospital alone has effected an enormous saving. It has also effected a saving by the bulk purchase of drugs amounting in all to about £14,000 a year over a number of years. Further savings have been effected by the introduction of up-to-date methods for laundering and the making of sheets, pillow-slips and other things required in the hospital. I can visualise the possibilities of further tremendous savings. Further savings may be effected by centralising the purchases, not only of medicine and drugs and similar things required by hospitals, but also by the purchase of furniture, sheeting and the hundred and one things that are necessary. Already the department has had some experience in this connection. For instance, I have a report from one of my officers in which he points out that the present international conflict has demonstrated the need for a close and constant liaison between the department and the boards. The system of buying supplies locally, particularly in the North, created difficulties and cases are on record in the department in which delegations have come from Bowen and Mackay, where supplies of furniture and linen were not obtainable locally by the boards from their usual sources of supply. During this period of stringency

the department has had requests from boards and has made representations to the appropriate authorities and agencies for supplies of building material, timber, paint, iron for tanks, hoses for gardens, refrigerators, tyres for cars and bicycles, blankets, linen, restricted drugs, malaria drugs, fresh food and vegetables. There have also been requests for wireless sets, eggs, bitumen, blankets and coupons for nurses' uniforms. Those facts, taken at random from the report, give some idea of what has already been done by the department for some of the bigger institutions. From that hon. members can visualise the possibilities of the future.

In my opening remarks I referred to the establishment of health centres. I elaborated on that aspect of the scheme, pointing out that already we have a system of health centres in operation, particularly with respect to maternal and child welfare, medical servicing of our schools, and the dental service that we are giving through our various dental clinics to school children and adults. They were all established for the purpose of creating in the community agencies for the betterment of the health of our people. Unfortunately, during the war period we have been handicapped to a considerable extent by failure to get the necessary man-power. Naturally that fact has to some extent retarded progress. It is now proposed to go one further and, quite apart from our hospitals, to establish health centres where men, women or children may go periodically for a proper check-up on their health. It has been found that this is necessary if we want our people to keep fit. The health centre will be equipped with the necessary doctors and dentists, together with first-class equipment and facilities necessary to give advice. The doctors and dentists will give surgical treatment in minor cases. There will be individual consulting rooms, dressing rooms, etc., according to the circumstances and degree of requirement. This system will be inaugurated in some of the bigger centres and will be launched in a small way.

I visualise in the future the establishment of something here and there throughout the various districts on similar lines to the existing Brisbane Clinic, where there is what is known as a group practice in medicine. First of all, a skilled nurse or technician records your medical history. That is passed on to the physician, who is able to determine whether you are a case for surgical treatment or X-ray, or whether a pathological test or a blood count should be taken, and so on. As a result of the various examinations that take place, the surgeons are able to give a better diagnosis of your trouble than one can obtain from a single practitioner. I visualise that something along those lines will eventually develop from this principle of health centres. I will not say anything more in regard to that matter. I will leave hon. members to fill in any gaps I have left. They will agree with me that the establishment of health centres will keep people out of hospitals. It will lead to better health in the community, and consequently we shall

not be faced with the recurring problem of extending our hospital system. By preventing sickness we shall build up a system that will prove to be sound economically.

I do not intend to keep the House any further, other than to state that related to the State's financial burden of the present hospital services of over £900,000 in the next financial year are what are known as pre-natal maternity services, child-welfare services, and medical and dental school inspection services. We are also instituting an optometrical service. That is in operation at present on a limited scale at some of our main hospitals. Our dental services are gradually growing. We have also a special home for the treatment of trachoma; some children from the western districts of the State have contracted that dread disease. Then during the war period we have given splendid service in the treatment of venereal disease. We are reaching a stage with the new drug penicillin, when we can be assured that in the not distant future we shall be able to stamp out that dreaded disease.

I now come to the development that is taking place in the free treatment of cancer. Patients are brought from any part of the State, free of charge, and are given free treatment at the Radium Institute, which is the best service that can be given in the Southern Hemisphere.

In order to ensure a supply of medical men for our hospital service, we have introduced a system of medical and dental fellowships.

We are also at the present time awaiting a report from the Brisbane and South Coast Hospitals Board, which is developing a plan to deal with tuberculosis. That is a scheme that is subsidised by the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. Sparkes: You have fixed that up with the dairy herds.

Mr. FOLEY: That is one aspect of it. We are going a little further. The Commonwealth scheme provides for the diagnosis of the whole of the community eventually, starting with certain known groups where tuberculosis exists and going on to other age groups, and having an X-ray photograph taken. All that is free treatment. In addition to that the Commonwealth Government are aiming at inducing a T.B. sufferer to undergo treatment by giving a pension to every sufferer, to his wife, to the first child, and also the child endowment to the rest of the children. When the sufferer comes out of the sanatorium—and they will be established in various parts of Australia—he will go into an after-treatment institution, and he will receive extra remuneration in addition to his pension to enable him to buy some of the desirable foods to build up his system.

If the Commonwealth go on in the February or March session with what is already proposed and agreed to between the States and the Commonwealth, we shall in the future have a free hospital service

throughout Australia. In other words, whether you are rich or poor, there is a general public ward in our hospitals throughout the State, with the best treatment that can be offered; but if you are a bit fussy, and wish for private treatment, provision is made to subsidise you to the extent of 6s. a day or £2 2s. a week.

Mr Yeates: Is that irrespective of income?

Mr. FOLEY: That is irrespective of income. We go from free maternity treatment to free tuberculosis diagnosis and treatment, free tuberculosis after-treatment with a pension for a patient and his wife, to which I have referred, greater extension of dental service and child-welfare service, and better hospital and specialist service to the isolated parts of the State. And as we proceed with our building programme, more modern hospitals will be built in addition to the health centres I have referred to.

I think hon. members will agree that the possibilities for the future are great. I have not painted an imaginary picture; I have outlined something that we know is developing in the community. As a result of the developments that are taking place in the scientific field for the cure of disease, the people can look forward to something better in the way of hospital and medical services than their forebears had in the past.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (5.14 p.m.): I listened with considerable interest to the Minister, both this afternoon and on the initiatory stage; and I should like to take this opportunity of congratulating him on being the first Minister actually to introduce a Bill to nationalise the whole of our hospital service. Despite the fact that this matter has been talked of for a number of years, it was not until the end of this session that we see the introduction of a Bill that will provide a greater social service to the people than has been introduced in my time at any rate.

I should like to say right now that we of the Opposition welcome this Bill because it fits in with the principles we have advocated over a number of years, that is the nationalisation of hospital services.

Mr. Foley: Don't start stealing our policy.

Mr. MULLER: We always contended that it is wrong to charge one section of the community to provide a hospital service for the whole. The old system could not be defended. It was not right or proper that one section of the community should find a large percentage of the money for hospital services and the other money required should be contributed through the Government by the same people, along with the taxpayers in general. This Bill is very important and, generally speaking, will be welcomed and approved by the electors of the State. The Minister said that the Bill contains 17 important principles but there is one principle that stands out head and shoulders above the other 16 and that is the spreading of

the whole of the charges over the whole of the community. That is as it should be. I notice that the Minister estimates that it will effect a saving of £300,000 to the local authorities of Queensland and he also remarks that he hopes that local authorities will devote all of this money, if possible, to the prevention of disease. If an effort is made to guard against the outbreak of an epidemic much money can be saved in the treatment of patients who would be affected by it. So many things require to be done that I feel that the work is not always appreciated, for instance, in mosquito and fly control, proper drainage, and attention to the sale and distribution of foodstuffs. At the moment a number of health inspectors are employed throughout the State and, as I said previously, this work is not being carried out as it should be. I make that statement without reflection on the health inspectors. It may be due to the fact that some areas are too large for an inspector to render the necessary service, but in other instances a health inspector should be able to give closer attention and supervision to his duties. In some of the larger cities of Queensland the open sanitary service is still used. Cabinets are not closed, and no effort is being made to close them, despite the fact that I made a complaint in this House 18 months or two years ago. The same thing is still going on.

Mr. Hanlon: Local authorities resist having to pay health inspectors.

Mr. MULLER: That is so, but the fact remains that the work is not being done. It affects the public health and an honest attempt should be made to see that cabinets are properly closed. These regulations are being carried out more effectively in the farming areas than in some of our cities and towns. I regret that this supervision is not being carried out. Perhaps the omission could be largely remedied by having each inspector under the sole control of a local authority. Under the existing conditions an inspector is under the control of sometimes two, three, four and five local authorities.

Mr. Hanlon: That is because local authorities resist having to employ one themselves.

Mr. MULLER: Several local authorities had one inspector to reduce costs. That is false economy because much money is expended in transporting such an inspector from one shire to another and if he devoted the greater part of his time to his active duties he would probably render a greater service than he does. It may not be only the matter of confining an inspector's activities to one shire. He may have too much to do. His duties should be confined to a reasonable area. At the moment it is not so much a question of an inspector's having too large an area as of his not being personally responsible to one shire. One local authority does not know whether he is working in another's area. At any rate, I regret that this work is not being carried out as effectively as it should be.

There is room for great improvement there. Perhaps two or three of the smaller shires may be able to work with one inspector but a number of them could each carry their own inspectors with advantage. In the final analysis the cost to the shire would not be any greater. Again, in some areas, a close enough watch is not being kept either on the breeding of mosquitoes or the sale of foodstuffs.

This Bill does contain some admirable features. For instance, I am delighted to know that the Government have decided to retain the services of boards. Boards are essential to the effective administration of hospitals although I object to the proposed system of electing them.

Another important principle is the provision for training students. I understand that at the moment the Brisbane General Hospital is the only recognised training institution. Perhaps base hospitals at such places as Ipswich and Rockhampton could be declared training hospitals.

We must appreciate the fact that although the Government are finding the money it comes from the whole of the community in the first place by way of taxation, nevertheless the Minister in charge of the department is responsible to the people of the State for seeing to it that hospitals boards do not spend their money unwisely. It is gratifying to know that the application of this system to local government has made for greater economy in that sphere in that supervision of the budget has made local authorities more careful about spending a given amount of money in a given time. It is desirable that hospital costs should be subject to the approval of the Minister, but I suggest that he would have much more help from boards if he gave more equitable representation on them.

It is also gratifying to know that the tutors at hospitals will be selected carefully. Not every person is capable of teaching others, and it would seem from the Minister's remarks that great care is to be taken in the selection of tutors. None of us is infallible, and there is always a possibility that no matter how much care is taken some unsuitable person will be appointed a tutor, but if the right people are selected it must make for great improvement in the work carried out.

I was amused at the Minister's reference to the appointment of chairman of committees by the full board. This seems to conflict with the main feature of the Bill, the appointment of the chairman of the board. I notice that the Minister proposes appointing the chairman himself. He does not allow the board to elect its own chairman. If it is right that the board should appoint chairmen of committees it is equally right that it should select its own chairman.

The Minister may be able to select the most capable persons in the State, but after all it must be remembered that it is the people who make up the board, the people who work together, who are the most competent to judge who should be their leader. At least that is how I feel about it, and the fact that the Minister will appoint the chair-

man of the board does not necessarily mean that his selection will be the most suitable. I know that under the present Act these appointments have been made by the Minister, but I do not think they should have been.

I agree that under the new system it is only right that the secretaries of the boards should be appointed by the Minister and that they should be officers of the Public Service. I offer no objection to that principle in any way. However, I feel that the question of responsible representation on the boards is a very important matter, and I propose to deal with it later.

The prevention of sickness is another very important aspect of the Bill, and I am delighted to know that in addition to guarding against outbreaks of infectious diseases and controlling such pests as flies and mosquitoes, there is the important aspect of requiring the people in the different localities to take preventive measures. The Minister may be rather optimistic concerning his proposal to establish health clinics throughout the State, but I hope that when they are established they will be at such points as to make them reasonably available to people in country districts. The hon. member for Aubigny inquired by way of interjection where the proposed health centres were likely to be established. I know that the health clinic in Brisbane is rendering a wonderful service to the people, but it must be remembered that there are many people who are not within reach of that clinic and thus are unable to have an overhaul from time to time. If a health clinic could be established at each base hospital in the various regions throughout the State, it would render valuable service to the community. I am given to understand that with the present methods of treatment, if cancer is taken in its early stages nearly every case can be cured, but the difficulty is that so many people suffer from cancer without being aware of the fact, and it is only when it has reached an advanced stage that they become conscious of the fact that they have the disease. I believe that much can be done with the new wonder drug, penicillin. I hope that the Minister will press for the establishment of these district health clinics.

Another point made by the Minister was that there was need to get away from the old system of providing hospital service on a basis of charity. There was a time, as the Minister said, when no-one made any business-like contribution towards the maintenance of hospitals, notwithstanding that hospital, medical and nursing services called for the expenditure of a considerable amount of money each year. There were some who were content to collect whatever money they could for this purpose in a haphazard manner.

Mr. Hayes: We have a pretty up-to-date system now.

Mr. MULLER: We went on to improve it, but for some reason or other the Government of the day saw fit to place a greater proportion of the charge on one section of the community than on another. However, this is not a subject to be considered in any party-

political way. This is a time when all hon. members, both in the Government party and in the Opposition, should get together for the purpose of improving the health services of the State. Surely the question of public health is more important than party politics, and even if many of us have made mistakes in the past, let us resolve now to endeavour to establish a more humane and more effective way of dealing with the sick in the community. Those of us who do not require medical services should thank God that we have been so fortunate as to avoid illness of any kind. After all, the responsibility is upon us to make a reasonable contribution towards the maintenance of the public health, and nobody should quibble at that.

I know that the Minister is not in a position to give us the cost of the entire health services of the State including the new health services that it is proposed to give under the Bill. When these additional services are established, some will inevitably be established in our country districts. It will then be necessary to appoint specialists to attend to the requirements of the people. Even if costs are double, it will be worth while. After all, we must remember that nothing in life matters very much if one's health is impaired. This will be a wonderful method of helping the medical profession to look after our bodies. There will not be the slightest doubt that the life of the individual could thereby be prolonged very considerably.

I welcome this Bill, but there are one or two matters in which an improvement could be effected. One of the principles referred to by the Minister, not only on this but on the initiation stage, was the establishment as far as possible of regions, thus decentralising hospital services. Up to a point that is wise, but although the service could be improved very considerably by a greater degree of decentralisation, to effect that the Government should be willing to appoint a greater number of representatives from those regions. These hospital regions will be governed by a board of from five or nine members. I take it that in the smaller areas the boards will consist of five members, while in the larger areas they will consist of nine. Under district control by five members, the local authorities will appoint one member of the five comprising the board, notwithstanding that there may be five local authorities in the region.

Mr. Foley: The other representatives may also be members of local authorities. It all depends on who is chosen.

Mr. MULLER: That is what I am trying to get at. I made a suggestion that may have the effect of establishing a further degree of decentralisation even if it is not adopted in its entirety. One local-authority representative on a board of nine is not sufficient. The Minister said that there was need as far as possible to protect the local authorities. This scheme will save local authorities £300,000, but up to a point some of that money will be used for the protection of health and the prevention of disease. Therefore we should give local authorities greater

representation than is proposed. Take the Brisbane and South Coast hospitals district. There are eight or nine shires in that area, and these elect one representative to the hospitals board, the Government appointing the remaining eight. If the Government accept the principle of a greater degree of decentralisation, local authorities are entitled to greater representation. If the Minister is now willing to allow an increase in the number of local-authority representatives, will he agree that the appointments he will make shall be made within the different parts of the hospital area? If there are five shire areas, each should appoint one individual.

Mr. Foley: We will endeavour to give fair and equitable representation.

Mr. MULLER: The Bill does not say so. The Bill sets out that the Minister will appoint those representatives from within that area. I will illustrate my point. Take the West Moreton district. It consists of the Ipswich City Council and a number of shires. The Minister may appoint his four representatives from within the city of Ipswich. I am not saying that he may not select four very suitable men, but to do so would ignore such large shire areas as Esk, Rosewood and Boonah. If the Government expect efficiency and look for the co-operation and confidence of the people, they must take the people into their confidence. If something along the lines I have suggested was done, the Government could expect greater results from the Bill than will otherwise be obtained. Confidence is a very important matter.

Confidence in the Government, in public bodies and in members of the local authority works wonders. If the people have confidence in their local authority they will do everything they possibly can to co-operate with it. We had an example last week. Rather a serious complaint was made by the hon. member for Windsor about the Brisbane Hospital—and I am not going to refer to the merits or otherwise of the complaint—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The administration of the Brisbane General Hospital is not one of the principles of the Bill.

Mr. MULLER: I am trying to make the point of the need to retain the confidence of the people in the area. In my opinion what the hon. member described arose because the representation on the board was not sufficiently wide to give people an opportunity of expressing their views. I believe that criticism by the Opposition of any activities of the Government, if it is constructive, is good for the Government and the country. I believe that under our democratic principles we should be entitled to express our views whether they are right or wrong. Sometimes criticism is ill-founded and sometimes it has a sound basis. I believe that if you are going to win the confidence of the people you have to take the people into your confidence. People in the outlying districts, in the West, North, or South-West, should have some right to elect their own representative because indirectly they all make a contribution. Take this Parliament. The whole of

the State is divided into electorates, and the people in each district feel they have a right to exercise their rights through their representative. In that way we retain the confidence of the people. If a representative falls down on the job that is the people's affair.

I hope the Minister will try to guard against the difficulties that I have outlined. If you appoint representatives to a board from one section the danger is that they will be appointed from where the hospital is to be established. There is a danger in very many cases that some district hospital might be closed. Take the position at Beaudesert. It is one of the few hospitals that retain the voluntary system. The people preferred to maintain their own hospital rather than be brought under the Act, and they did it right to the end, and provided a very satisfactory service too. The real reason for continuing the voluntary system, I am informed, was that there was a danger of having no representation on the board and the whole of the service might be provided somewhere near or round the city and they might find themselves without any hospital service at all.

In order to work effectively and smoothly the scope of the Bill will require to be widened. Your representation should be spread as widely as possible. If that is done I believe you will get a much better result than if appointments are made by the Minister without consulting anybody, and without regard to the various interests throughout the State. I should be very sorry if those appointments were political. Under the old system, when Government appointments were made to the hospitals board, in nearly every case it was someone who had taken a very important part in Labour organisation.

Mr. Ingram: What about 1929 when J. C. Peterson was Home Secretary?

Mr. MULLER: I am not talking about that.

Mr. Ingram: I am. You sacked every Labour man and appointed your own political supporters.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MULLER: Supposing the Country Party were the Government and certain influences were brought to bear on the Minister to recommend the appointment of someone because of his politics, I think that would be unwise.

It is remarkable that almost every appointee was a man who had played a very prominent part in the Labour movement. That is getting away from the principles of our democracy. The best method—and this applies regardless of who the personnel may be—is to have the elected representatives of the people in the district. We are not asking for a franchise for the landowners or anything of that kind. Everyone pays for this service, therefore would it not be reasonable to suggest that the people who live in a district should appoint at least four out of the five members and, if the Minister so desires,

he can appoint the chairman? Each of the districts would have representatives and their work would be subject to the approval of the Minister.

Mr. Power: Why not go further and let them appoint their own policemen and clerks of petty sessions?

Mr. MULLER: We do not do that now and no-one is asking for that. There is no reason to go that far. That is a different matter altogether. When the hon. member for Baroona joins in the election of a representative to the Brisbane City Council he does not ask the Minister to make a choice for him. He feels that it is his democratic right to make his own selection. In local government elsewhere in the State also the people make their own selection.

The appointment of public servants or officers who actually do the work is a different matter. The establishment of hospital boards on the basis provided in this Bill will be a big thing. The eyes of the people of the Commonwealth will be on the Queensland system for control of hospitals. It is just as important as, and in some respects more important than, local government itself. The areas are larger and after the system has been in operation for a few years it will be found that the work is so great that it will warrant the support of the whole of the people in the area. It would not be a costly matter to do it every three years or even every five years, but the people of a district should be allowed to make their own selection. In that way a greater degree of co-operation could be expected. I dislike dividing the people in a matter of social service such as health, or to introduce politics into sport, or other matters. These are some of the things we have to guard against. If the community is divided on a political matter it is very hard to unite it again. The same applies to sport and religion. If the system I have suggested was accepted by the Minister it would make for a big improvement to the Bill. As I stated in reply to the hon. member for Baroona, the appointments of officers may be required to be made by the board and approved by the Minister or Government.

Before concluding I desire to say one or two words about the services that we have already in our public hospitals. I refer to the position at the Brisbane Hospital. I do not wish to trespass on your generosity, Mr. Speaker, but I have certain information with regard to it. I should like to say that whilst I know that some part of that complaint is true, I believe that in the intermediate section of the Brisbane Hospital we really have a wonderful service. In the last 12 months my wife was a patient of that institution and the service given there was second to none. If we could do that with an institution of that kind, I had hoped we should be able to do it with the public section and have its services at a very much higher standard than it is at present.

A system such as this should go a long way towards overcoming some of the present anomalies found in the treatment of our

nurses. I am one of those who believe we have not been fair to many of our nurses, but perhaps the system has precluded our being fair to them. When we realise that a young girl who chooses to become a typist can earn £5 or £6 a week whilst the one who joins the nursing profession gets only £1 a week and keep in her first year, we appreciate the great sacrifice the nurse makes, and we are lucky to have as many as we do at present in the nursing profession. No-one makes greater sacrifices than the girls who seek to become nurses, and I hope that when this Bill becomes law it will be wide enough to rectify many of the present anomalies.

I welcome the Bill. If the Minister is willing to listen to the Opposition it can be improved considerably. It has taken at least 10 years to convince this Government that legislation along these lines is necessary. Now that we are prepared to join forces with them and hammer the Bill into shape, I hope he will co-operate with us. It is only by having the co-operation of all the people that we can hope to make the venture a success. In the past, certain sections of the people felt they were suffering an injustice, and perhaps they were. Now that the Government have agreed that hospital service is the responsibility of all, let us all get together and make a reasonable measure that will give equitable treatment to all. I wonder that the old system, under which wealthy people who made no contribution whatever to the cost of maintaining hospital services and who were able to enjoy the same service in the hospital as other sections of the community, was able to carry on for so long. I am glad to know that at last the Government have agreed to fall in with the views expressed by the Country Party and adopt a more equitable system.

Debate, on motion of Mr. Pie, adjourned.

The House adjourned at 5.56 p.m.
