

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 1950

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Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. J. H. Mann, Brisbane) took the chair at 11 a.m.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Assent to the following Bills reported by Mr. Speaker:—

Diseases in Stock Acts Amendment Bill.

Rabbit Acts Amendment Bill.

Margarine Acts Amendment Bill.

Commonwealth Jubilee Holiday Bill.

Poultry Industry Act Amendment Bill.

QUESTIONS.

FEDERAL ROADS AID.

Mr. RIORDAN (Flinders) asked the Premier—

“1. Has his notice been drawn to the Press statement in Courier-Mail, 23 November, alleged to have been made by Mr. H. G. Pearce, M.H.R. (Liberal, Queensland), that ‘Commonwealth Road Grants Funds were being misused in Queensland to win votes for the State Labour Party?’

“2. Would he care to tell the House whether there are any grounds for this preposterous assumption on the part of the Federal Member for Capricornia?”

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca) replied—

“Mr. Pearce has displayed abysmal ignorance of Queensland affairs in the past, and his latest reference to expenditure under the Commonwealth Aid Roads and Works Act is no exception. The Act specifies the kind of work for which the money is made available, and a programme of works is prepared each year and submitted to the Commonwealth Minister for approval before one penny is spent. Mr. Pearce, in his anxiety to be offensive to me, is really questioning the integrity of the Commonwealth Minister for Fuel, Shipping, and Transport. In any case, Mr. Pearce would not understand the needs of the Western-North-Western, and Far Northern parts of the State, and many of the place names might be those of Tibet for all he knows. I can only attribute the statement made by Mr. Pearce to ignorance, or alcohol, or perhaps both.”

HEARING AIDS.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) asked the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs—

“In view of the decision of the Commonwealth Government, as conveyed in a letter to me, dated 16 November, copy of which I have handed to him, that the Commonwealth does not intend to extend the benefits of the supply of hearing aids beyond the school and pre-school children groups and deafened ex-servicemen, will he again examine the possibility of making these aids available to members of the general public through the State Hospitals Boards?”

Hon. W. M. MOORE (Merthyr) replied—

“The advice the hon. member has received from the Commonwealth does not alter the fact that as the Commonwealth Government has by its action in supplying deaf children with hearing aids acknowledged that these instruments come under the category of assistance given under the Commonwealth National Health Scheme, any extension of the scheme to the deaf generally is a matter for the Commonwealth and not the State Government. The Commonwealth raises large sums in taxation to finance its social services and national health schemes, and it is difficult

to understand why the State should be expected to relieve the Commonwealth of its responsibilities to the people under those schemes.”

SPREAD OF LANTANA.

Mr. CHALK (Lockyer) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

“1. Is he aware of the rapid spread of lantana in South-eastern Queensland, and that in many instances it is encroaching on valuable agricultural land?”

“2. Is it correct that the lantana bug which was introduced into Queensland some years ago has been somewhat of a failure because it only feeds for about three months of the year, usually during the non-growing period of the lantana, and that in the spring when lantana growth is prolific the bug is extremely lazy?”

“3. Is there any truth in the published statement of a Gatton shire councillor that banana-growers on the North Coast have opposed the destruction of lantana because they contend country on which it grows is ideal for banana crops?”

“4. Will he advise the House what steps his departmental officers are taking at present to combat the lantana menace?”

Hon. H. H. COLLINS (Tablelands) replied—

“1. A general spread of lantana in South-eastern Queensland has been noted, but few instances have been recorded of its seriously invading valuable and properly cared for agricultural land.

“2. The lantana bug introduced into Queensland to check lantana has not proved the success desired. It has some adverse effect on its host plant, but the bug population does fluctuate greatly and the establishment of this insect cannot be regarded as having solved the problem of control.

“3. Some banana growers on the North Coast are of the opinion that lantana is a useful plant on their properties and accordingly should not be destroyed.

“4. Trials are being carried out by departmental officers to determine the value of modern weedicides in lantana control, and the use of plant competitors against lantana is being investigated.”

EX-SERVICE SETTLERS, ABERGOWRIE SUGAR LANDS.

Mr. EVANS (Mirani) asked the Secretary for Public Lands and Irrigation—

“In reference to the Press statement on 21st instant that the Central Cane Prices Board hoped to place 180 to 200 new sugar growers on the Abergowrie lands, near Ingham, as there are still about 180 ex-service men approved as eligible applicants, will he give consideration to the reserving of the whole or portion of that area for

settlement by ex-service men under the provisions of the War Service (Sugar Industry) Land Settlement Acts?"

Hon. T. A. FOLEY (Belyando) replied—

"Most of the land which will be commanded by the proposed extension of the Victoria Mill tramway into the Abergowie area is held either as freehold or under Perpetual Lease tenure and some of it has already been subdivided into comparatively small areas. As will be seen on reference to the full text of the pronouncement made by the Central Cane Prices Board, that Board contemplates the granting of assignments to the owners or purchasers of these lands in suitable subdivisions. These lands will therefore not be available for settlement either under the provisions of the Land Acts or the War Service (Sugar Industry) Land Settlement Acts. There will be only a small area of Crown land available for settlement by the Department and preliminary discussions have already been held between officers of the Department and the Central Cane Prices Board in regard to assignments for these portions."

PRIZE MONEY—GOLDEN INVESTMENTS.

Mr. PIE (Kedron) asked the Acting Attorney-General—

"1. In regard to the answer to a question on the 3rd instant in which he intimated that for an outlay of £45,122 during the period 22 February to 31 October Golden Investments won £29,745 in the Golden Casket for overseas subscribers, as this seems to be a particularly high winning average, will he investigate the correctness of the figures supplied?"

"2. As he indicated that the £29,745 was won on behalf of overseas subscribers only, will he state the number of tickets purchased by Golden Investments on behalf of their interstate subscribers and the amount of prize money won for them during the same period?"

"3. Will he give details of the number of Caskets drawn (10s. and 5s. 6d.) during the period mentioned, the number of tickets purchased in each by Golden Investments and the prize money won by them in each on behalf of (a) overseas subscribers; and (b) interstate subscribers?"

Hon. A. JONES (Charters Towers—Secretary for Labour and Industry), for **Hon. W. POWER** (Baroona) replied—

"1., 2., and 3. Prizes are distributed entirely by lot and obviously cannot be distributed evenly amongst subscribers. As an instance, Mr. M. Shelton, of 44 Brisbane road, Ipswich, won first prize of £15,000 in Casket No. 1385, on 29 August, 1949, and first prize of £15,000 in Casket No. 1535 on 7 November, 1950. This may seem an exceedingly high ratio, but only indicates the fact that the machine is beyond human control and the distribution of prize money is entirely by chance. For

the information of the hon. member, Golden Investments do not purchase tickets on behalf of interstate subscribers."

GOVERNMENT AUDIT OF GOLDEN INVESTMENTS ACCOUNTS.

Mr. PIE (Kedron) asked the Premier—

"1. Is the clause giving the Auditor-General the right to audit the accounts of Golden Investments still in the agreement between Golden Casket and Golden Investments, as the Premier (then Minister for Health and Home Affairs) indicated to Parliament existed in 1936?"

"2. Has that right ever been exercised? If so, what form has the audit taken?"

"3. Was such audit, if any, designed to ascertain if payment of prize money was made to the published winners?"

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca) replied—

"1. Yes.

"2. There has never been any necessity for an audit of the accounts of Golden Investments by the Auditor-General as the proceeds of all ticket sales by this organisation have been properly accounted for.

"3. I would refer the hon. member to page 42 of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Golden Casket, wherein it is stated that the system of auditing of the Golden Casket provides a check upon payments of prize money being made to the proper persons."

GOLDEN CASKET EMPLOYEES.

Mr. PIE (Kedron) asked the Premier—

"1. Will he state if one John Barron Quinlan, recently described in 'Truth' newspaper as a well-known city sportsman and political light, was ever in the employ of the Golden Casket Office?"

"2. If so, will he state the date he joined Golden Casket, what were his duties, the date his service terminated and the reason for such termination?"

"3. When was Frank Burke, the present manager appointed to that position?"

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca) replied—

"1. A John Barron Quinlan was an employee of the Golden Casket office.

"2. Mr. John Barron Quinlan joined the Golden Casket staff in March, 1921, as supervisor of male ticket writers. He resigned in October, 1947. No reasons were given for his resignation. During his period of service with the Golden Casket office he also occupied the positions of collector, acting inspector of agents' accounts, and inspector of agencies and agents' accounts.

"3. Mr. Frank Burke was appointed acting manager in October, 1937, and his appointment as manager was confirmed in April, 1938."

SUGAR AGREEMENT; PREMIER'S VISIT
OVERSEAS.

Mr. JESSON (Hinchinbrook), without notice, asked the Premier—

“In reference to the report appearing in the Brisbane ‘Courier-Mail’ of this morning regarding a request to him to go overseas on behalf of the sugar industry, will the hon. gentleman make a statement to the House as to the truth of that report?”

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca) replied—

“I desire to inform hon. members that yesterday a deputation from the Queensland Cane-Growers’ Council and the Australian Sugar Producers’ Association Ltd. waited on me in regard to matters associated with the finalising of the Sugar Agreement with the United Kingdom Government, which I negotiated as leader of the Australian Sugar Delegation to the United Kingdom in December of last year.

“It is expected that the formal agreement will be presented for signature at an early date, and by virtue of the arrangements made in London last year the price which is to apply for 1951 must be determined before the end of the current year.

“The sugar industry has suggested to me that it would be in the interests of the industry for me to again proceed to London with a view to finalising the formal agreement, and also to negotiate with the United Kingdom authorities on the question of price.

“I have also received a communication from the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister indicating that if I were to proceed to London to finalise the Sugar Agreement previously negotiated by me in December last, the Commonwealth Government would be pleased to give me the same accreditation and authority to act on behalf of the Commonwealth Government as were given to me on the previous occasion.

“Having regard to the desirability of concluding at the earliest opportunity the agreement that was negotiated in December last, and the need for determining the price question without delay, my Cabinet colleagues believe it would be in the interests of the sugar industry and the State generally for me to proceed to London to finalise these outstanding matters. I have, therefore, decided to go to London and expect to complete arrangements to leave Australia for the United Kingdom within the next fortnight.”

PAPER.

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

Report of the Department of Harbours and Marine for the year 1949-50.

TULLY FALLS HYDRO-ELECTRIC
PROJECT BILL.

SECOND READING.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (11.18 a.m.): I move—

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

All the provisions of this measure were dealt with thoroughly on the introductory stages and I think it will be sufficient at this stage if I give a practical outline of the various matters covered by it.

This Bill provides for the construction of a hydro-electric project to develop the hydro-electric potential of the Tully Falls. The Co-ordinator-General of Public Works is to be the constructing authority, and he is to carry out the construction of the project in stages as directed by the Governor in Council.

The complete project will be a major work. The object of constructing it in planned stages is to ensure that the completed work to a particular stage may be used to generate electricity while the next stage is progressing.

The usual powers of a Crown constructing authority are conferred upon the Co-ordinator-General. These include power to enter and occupy land in order to make necessary surveys, set up workshops, and get required materials. There is also power to interfere with existing riparian rights along the Tully River. Provision is made for compensation to persons who suffer damage consequent on the use or occupation of their land, or interference with their riparian rights.

All construction work will be financed in the first place, by Treasury or debenture loans. When a stage of the project is completed to the extent of being available for use in generating electricity, the Governor in Council may include the works completed to that stage in the electricity undertaking of the Cairns Regional Electricity Board. The Governor in Council is to fix the capital cost of work so included, and that cost is to be paid by the Cairns Regional Electricity Board. The capital cost to this board will be less any government subsidy and any Commonwealth grant.

As a work, for instance the main power house, may be available to supply electricity before it is completed to its maximum capacity, provision is made for the Governor in Council to charge part only of the capital cost of the work to the regional board, if that work is handed over in a partly completed state. The remainder of the capital cost will, of course, be added later and may be added in instalments according as the completion of progressive stages of a work adds to the use that may be made of that work.

Generally speaking, the Bill accords with the legislation passed last session in relation to the Burdekin dam project, except, of course, that there an irrigation project was dealt with, whereas this Bill covers a hydro-electric project.

That statement sets out factually the various provisions of the Bill. I believe that this project will be a major factor in the development and populating of North Queensland and I accordingly move the motion.

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) (11.21 a.m.): The Premier prefaced his second-reading speech by stating that this project had been kicked around considerably during the introductory stage of the Bill but I go even further than that and say that this Tully Falls proposal has been a political football in the State and kicked around since 1926.

Mr. Hanlon: The Government have brought it to a stage of an actual construction project.

Mr. NICKLIN: The Government have been long enough in doing that and it is time that an important project like this, which will be of undoubted benefit to the northern part of the State, was brought to a stage where something real will be done. I would refer to some of the Premier's remarks in his introductory speech, because he went back further than 1926 and said that a general investigation and survey of the Tully Falls scheme had been made by the Labour Government in 1920 but that they were prevented from going on with the work by a Liberal delegation that prevented the Government from getting a loan. Did you ever hear such political tripe as that? It demonstrates how far Labour can stretch out investigations, surveys, &c. before getting down to the real work and actual construction. And do not let us forget, Mr. Speaker, that this delegation that allegedly prevented a Labour Government in 1920 from going on with this project actually left Queensland in 1919, a year before that mentioned by the Premier. And we must also not forget that a definite promise was actually made by Mr. McCormack in 1926 to construct this project.

The Premier uses rather remarkable statements to bolster up a remarkably weak case. For instance, he said that it was a Labour Government who linked up the North Coast railway and that previously we had to travel by boat from Gladstone to Rockhampton and from Rockhampton to Mackay and Townsville to Cairns. Labour did not achieve political power in this State until 1915 and the Brisbane-Rockhampton line was constructed and completed in 1910, five years before Labour came into power. Prior to Labour's coming into power 672 miles of the line between Brisbane and Cairns had been constructed by a non-Labour Government, although Labour Governments constructed the remaining links totalling 370 miles at the magnificent rate of 41 miles a year. We can see therefore that the Premier's statements about this Tully Falls hydro-electric scheme are typical of the statements associated with claims regarding alleged development in this State by Labour Governments. Actually, during the period in office of the present Government real development has been practically at a standstill. As I said before, we have fallen down on the real job of developing the State; indeed, we have fallen down to the extent that we are not able to maintain the assets we already have.

Briefly, the Bill provides for the construction by the Co-ordinator-General or his delegates of the Tully Falls hydro-electric scheme and the handing over of the completed sections to the Cairns Regional Electricity Board. The constructed works will not be handed over until they are available to supply electricity to the Cairns Regional Electricity Board. By order in council dated 23 February, 1950, under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Acts, the Co-ordinator-General was authorised to undertake the construction of the first stage of the Tully Falls project and to delegate his powers to the Commissioner of Electricity Supply, the Cairns Regional Electricity Board and the Commissioner of Main Roads respectively. When we turn to the order in council we find that power is given to the Co-ordinator-General or his delegates to go on with the construction of the project, that is, with the first stage as set down in the report furnished to this House on 24 February, 1949, which says—

“A dam to be located approximately 7.7 miles above Tully Falls to impound sufficient water to provide a regulated water flow of 261 cusecs. to the Tully Falls power station.

“A diversion weir to divert the water.

“An intake works designed to exclude sand.

“A tunnel 2,500 feet long complete with surge tank near the outlet end.”

Then it goes on to mention one penstock with a haulage way leading from the outlet end of the tunnel to the power-station site. It includes also portion of the power-station building, complete with two 18,000 k.w. Pelton-wheel-driven alternators. It includes a step-up sub-station to match the generating plant, 214 miles of transmission lines, step-down sub-stations, and the necessary access roads. In that order in council we have already given by regulation under the Act the necessary power to the Co-ordinator-General to go on with the construction of this project and he has already begun the construction of the works under the authority granted to him there. I do not for one moment say that because of that we should not pass legislation to confirm that order in council. That is exactly what this Bill is to do. The order in council already issued provides for the project to be carried out in stages and the Bill lays it down that the Governor in Council has and always has had power to decide that the project shall be constructed and the construction shall be governed by the order in council issued under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Acts, 1938 to 1949.

It is interesting to note that in all the reports that have been presented to this Parliament in connection with this scheme great stress is laid on the urgency and the dire need to construct the project to enable the Cairns Regional Electricity Board to have an opportunity of supplying the heavy demand made upon it for electricity. Early this year Mr. Kemp made the announcement that the first stage of the Tully Falls hydro-electric scheme would begin almost immediately at a cost of £7,600,000.

Mr. Kemp stated—

“The power scheme has been under consideration for 13 years. It is estimated that the falls will begin providing power in 1955 or 1956.”

We further find that the annual report of the State Electricity Commission for 1948-49 gives details of the three stages by which the scheme will be put into operation. It states—

“Either the proposed Tully Falls Scheme must be put in hand absolutely as soon as practicable or attention must be given to the immediate construction of a coal-burning steam station which would be a less economical method of providing supply.”

The report also states that the existing plant “is sufficient to meet requirements up to only June, 1953.”

We see from that that no time is to be lost in getting on with the construction of the project. As I shall point out later, I doubt whether sufficient provision has been made in this current year to hasten that project to provide the power that is urgently needed to take up the slack in the supply available there in 1953. It is an urgent project and is one to which I trust the Government will give every possible attention; they should see that nothing is done to hinder its construction in the most expeditious way. We all realise the difficulty there is at the moment in obtaining materials. That being so, it will be necessary to plan well, and plan well ahead, so that supplies will be available for the various stages of the project and there will be no serious delay.

There was a rather unfortunate feature in the first-reading debate. The Premier devoted a tremendous amount of his time to abuse of the present Commonwealth Government. It is unfortunate that the Premier should have adopted this attitude because I believe that the Commonwealth Government will give every possible assistance for the construction of this scheme.

Mr. Hanlon: We are doing it without getting a cent from them.

Mr. NICKLIN: The Government may be hoping and I hope that their hopes will be realised, but the Premier will not get any Government to respond sympathetically to what is undoubtedly a worthy project that must be assisted by the Commonwealth Government if he continually abuses them and blackguards them up hill and down dale, as the Premier has a habit of doing and did very much during the first-reading debate.

However, the Premier said also that he did not know whether any power would be available in three years' time. I should say, after reading the reports in addition to the comments of Mr. Kemp and the State Electricity Commission, that there was very little possibility of his getting any power from that project in three years' time, except the very limited power that will be needed in the construction work, and the earliest date we can aim for in regard to getting substantial supplies of power from this scheme seems

to be 1953. Therefore we should set July, 1953, as the zero hour and do everything possible to get this scheme constructed by then.

Undoubtedly all hon. members must realise the urgency of the job. At the present time we have an electricity undertaking there with its power plant and facilities loaded almost to the limit, and it will be certainly overloaded at least by April 1953, if not before; so every endeavour should be made to see that in carrying out the construction works emphasis is placed on the urgency of them and everything is done to expedite their construction as far as possible so that we may complete the preliminary stage of the scheme by the zero hour of July, 1953.

An important point is the financing of the scheme. I agree with what the hon. the Premier said on the introductory stage, that he did not want to do anything that would in any way overload the scheme with capital. We have seen far too many public works overloaded with capital and consequently made uneconomic when they came into use. If we do not keep a careful check on the capital outlay of this project, it may become uneconomic, notwithstanding the urgency of the need for its construction. It has been estimated that the scheme will cost £7,636,000. When we realise that costs are going up and up all the time and that we are faced with additional costs, we shall be fortunate if we can construct that project at anything from £1,500,000 to £2,000,000 more than the original estimate of £7,636,000.

We find that a trust fund is to be established into which shall be paid loan appropriations, State subsidies if any, moneys raised by the Co-ordinator-General by sale of debentures, and Commonwealth subsidies if any. The Premier stated that without Commonwealth assistance the work would go on with the State subsidy of 33½ per cent. It is not a bit of use making those heroic statements—that work will go on whether the Commonwealth Government come into it or not. I suggest that the Premier should make a reasonable approach to the Commonwealth Government and put before them the full facts of the case and I am sure that if he did that he would get assistance from them because it is undoubtedly a project that should be assisted by the Commonwealth Government; and I believe the Commonwealth Government will assist it because it is a sound scheme.

Mr. Hanlon: We should be still waiting to start the thing if we waited till the Commonwealth Government agreed.

Mr. NICKLIN: If there are any delays in the Commonwealth's giving a decision on this matter, the Premier must accept the whole responsibility—

Mr. Hanlon: What rot!

Mr. NICKLIN:—because he has lost no opportunity both at Loan Council meetings and Premiers' Conferences and on the introductory stage of the Bill of abusing the

Commonwealth Government up hill and down dale. You will not get sympathetic treatment by that attitude.

Mr. Hanlon: At the Premier's Conference they tried to stop the work from going on.

Mr. NICKLIN: I suggest that the hon. gentleman adopt a reasonable attitude. The Commonwealth Government have a high regard for the possibilities of this State and a high regard for the need for developmental works in the northern parts of the State.

Mr. Smith: What did you go to Canberra for?

Mr. NICKLIN: What we went to Canberra for was to endeavour to break down the situation created by the hon. the Premier so that this State would get the facilities and the assistance it needed. (Government interjections.) As the result of our visit I believe we were able to undo a lot of the damage that had been done by the Premier, and if the Premier would only make a reasonable request to the Commonwealth Government, he would receive sympathetic consideration for this project and the Commonwealth Government would be prepared to come in and assist this scheme.

Mr. Smith: They are worse than the Coms.

Mr. NICKLIN: As I said previously, I repeat that the way to get sympathetic consideration from anybody or any Government is not to abuse him or them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard an interjection and I think it was from the hon. member for Carpentaria, that I am worse than the Coms.

Mr. Smith: I said that the Commonwealth Government are worse than the Coms.

Mr. NICKLIN: Had the same thing been said by an hon. member on this side of the House, we should have had hon. members of the Government jumping up to protest that they were not associated with the Communist Party. We on this side have no need to do that, because everybody knows we are not. (Interjections.)

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Farrell): Order! I hope hon. members will obey my call to order. The Leader of the Opposition is entitled to make his case without this continual interruption when he is speaking.

Mr. NICKLIN: From time to time we hear many wild statements from hon. members opposite about the carrying out of these various spectacular projects of development and how they propose to carry them out, and unfortunately we have become used to them, and we cannot be blamed if we have something to say in an endeavour to get a really worth-while proposal like this put under way as quickly as possible. When you think of these airy-fairy schemes for the development

of this State that the Premier has tossed into the political ring from time to time in favour of his Government, for example the Blair Athol scheme, the Courtaulds £6,000,000 rayon factory to be established in Queensland, the Border Rivers developmental scheme, and the Burdekin Scheme, which at the present rate of progress would take 600 years to complete, and all the major irrigation schemes totalling £14,000,000 that the Secretary for Public Lands has told us about, you cannot be surprised at our endeavouring to get something done quickly in connection with the construction of a worth-while project such as this. After all, the present Government have made a feature of programmes of spectacular schemes that total the colossal sum of £100,000,000. The hon. members responsible for making these statements know they cannot be put into effect, but they think they will go down with the public. When we realise that at the same time as these hundred million pounds are being thrown about this chamber and the State by hon. members opposite, they are appropriating this year for a worthwhile scheme such as this Tully Falls scheme, so urgently needed, the sum of only £330,000 it makes us wonder whether the Government really mean to go on with it. They talk about £15,000,000 for this scheme and £15,000,000 for that scheme and all they appropriate for the Tully scheme this year is £330,000 and that does not indicate any great desire by the Government to get on quickly with the job of picking up the electricity lag that has occurred in North Queensland since 1930.

All these statements about the expenditure of these sums of money are only in keeping with the Governments record in this respect. When we look at the appropriations and expenditure of the last three years, we find that for 1947-48 the Government under-spent their loan appropriation by £4,000,000. In the following year their expenditure was £3,500,000 short of the appropriation and in the year just concluded they under-spent the appropriation by £2,924,000. That is the reason why we are so concerned about ensuring that money is allocated to this scheme and greater energy is put into its construction. We know that the Government have not carried out their promises in connection with constructional work. They have been more concerned with talking about the expenditure of big sums of money and big schemes that never come to fruition.

The capital cost of this project is going to be of paramount importance to the Cairns Regional Electricity Board because it eventually will have to carry the baby, and I endorse the Premier's statement on the introduction of the Bill that every effort should be made to see that the project does not become over-capitalised. The State and Commonwealth Governments should make substantial contributions by way of subsidies to the scheme, in view of the tremendous cost involved in the constructional work, and I hope the Premier will change his attitude in his approaches to the Commonwealth Government and as a result get the help that

the Commonwealth Government should, and I believe will, give to the construction of this scheme.

Mr. Hanlon: Are you saying that they are sacrificing Queensland's interests because they do not like me?

Mr. NICKLIN: Not at all, but I should not imagine for a moment that they would like the attitude the Premier has adopted towards them at times. The Federal Government are bigger than to do what the Premier suggests. They will even overlook the tantrums of the Premier for a worthwhile scheme like this and give it the help it deserves. I am merely giving a little fatherly advice to the Premier and suggesting that he adopt a different attitude in his approaches to the Federal Government, for I believe that if he does he will get better results that he has achieved up to the present.

I shall examine the machinery provisions of the Bill in detail when we are in Committee. If the Government have at last, after 24 years, decided that this project should be transferred from their propaganda department to the department of fair-dinkum projects, if they have any, if they have decided that the necessary labour and materials will be available and that the scheme can be constructed at a capital cost somewhere near what it can carry in normal times, the scheme should be given a priority that would ensure a supply of current for the Cairns district before the zero hour of June, 1953. For that purpose, I cannot see that the appropriation of £330,000 for the year 1950-51, including further surveys and investigations, is anything but an absurd amount to make available for such an important project. It does not seem to indicate much sincerity on the Government's part. Actual results in 1950-51 will probably add to the justifiable scepticism with which the Premier's widespread and spectacular schemes of development are already received.

We regard this project as a very important and desirable one and I conclude by expressing the hope that every endeavour will be made by the Government to put real effort into the scheme and not merely talk about it and carry out further investigations.

Mr. WORDSWORTH (Cook) (11.51 a.m.): As a Queenslanders and particularly a North Queenslanders I welcome the introduction of this Bill, overdue as it may be. I should like to give the House some idea of the background of a similar scheme. The Barron Falls hydro-electricity scheme is Queensland's only white-coal project and if proof is wanted of the efficiency of the scheme we can look at the history of this our first experience in hydro-electricity schemes. The Barron Falls scheme is not yet 20 years old; it was completed about 1935, and I am informed on good authority that before the scheme has been in operation 20 years it will have paid off interest and redemption on the outlay. No other proof is required as to the efficiency of hydro-electricity undertakings. When the Barron Falls scheme was established it cost twice the first estimated

price. A contract was let, but during the work of construction the contractor failed, through no fault of his own but because of the formation of the country. The original plan provided for an outside power-house, but after many attempts had been made to erect an outside power-house the idea had to be abandoned because of continual falls of earth. An underground power-house had to be built, which considerably increased the cost of the scheme. Despite the fact that the scheme cost more than twice the original estimate, it will pay for itself in less than 20 years, and I suggest that there is no evidence that any public scheme in this State has done better than that.

When the Barron Falls scheme began to operate, I can well remember that the Barron Falls Electricity Board went to all sorts of trouble to get people to use electricity; at that time only half the electricity available was being used. The board gave every encouragement to people to buy electric cooking appliances but in 1936-37 still only half of the available current was being used. But, during the peak hours today in the Cairns region—Mossman is not linked to the main centre; there is a separate power unit at Mossman and the Cairns area extends from Mossman to Tully and throughout the Tableland right back to Mt. Garnet—the Barron Falls unit can supply less than half the power required. The result has been that the board has had to install many diesel units to meet requirements. There are several huge diesel generating plants at the Cairns power-house and there are generating plants at Atherton—really at Golden Grove just outside Atherton—and at Innisfail and Mossman. During the sugar season, too, the board buys power from the South Johnstone mill and by arrangement it is buying power from the Tully sugar mill. Tully has not yet been linked with the main reticulation land line, unless it has been done in the last few weeks.

I have mentioned these matters to indicate the urgency of the scheme. At the present time we are dependent entirely upon imported fuel to give us half the power that we must have at peak hours but should the world situation deteriorate we may not be able to get this fuel and we want to be in a position to depend for our electric current on the sources available in the area. The board has a very small steam plant, which could not supply the requirements of a quarter of the city of Cairns alone and the plant has not been used for many months. At the present time the only power being produced by steam is that supplied to the board by the South Johnstone sugar mill during the crushing season and that supplied to the township of Mt. Garnet from the power-house belonging to the tin-dredging company. The Barron Falls plant has done a good job but as time goes on it will supply an even smaller percentage of the total power requirements of the region. Therefore my plea today is for the utmost speed in getting this job under way.

I know the history of the Tully Falls scheme pretty well and I have no desire to be political on the subject. We should be able

to get together and discuss developmental projects of such importance as these, but politics being politics, we are forced to become political. I do not want to see this or any other Government get the credit or all the credit for this great scheme that we are about to embark upon. This scheme emanated from the Barron Falls Hydro-Electricity Board and its engineer-manager who is at the present time the manager of the Cairns Regional Electricity Board. They have been fighting for this scheme for many years and I understand that the manager of the board, Mr. Anthony, has done much of the ground work and that he and his staff have produced most, if not all, of the plans and specifications for the scheme. Last year, about May, when these plans and specifications were complete, I understand they were put before the Government. And so I make this plea for a little more speed, for a larger allotment of money quickly so that we can get on with the job and buy the material required.

Let me refer to two advertisements that were inserted in the "Courier-Mail" on 18 November in anticipation of the passage of this Bill. The first is for steel pipeline and associated works and the tenders close in Brisbane on 2 July, 1951. The second tender is for concrete-lined pressure tunnel and surge tank, specification No. TF/6, and the tenders close on 2 July, 1951.

I feel that the time allowed for the closure of the tenders in the first instance has been too long, especially in view of air mail facilities that will enable things to be sent all over the world in the course of a few days. What will be the position when the time for the lodging of tenders closes and there is no extension beyond 1 July next. Tenders will be received from all over Australia and those whose duty it is to select the best tender will require several months in which to make their decision.

Mr. F. E. Roberts: It will take them several months to be in a position to get materials.

Mr. WORDSWORTH: That is not so; they can get supplies of materials very rapidly.

Mr. F. E. Roberts: The steel position is very hopeless just now.

Mr. WORDSWORTH: Steel is very hopeless at present, but why give them such a long time to go into the matter? The big firms that manufacture this type of machinery are all times in a position to know how they stand with the steel works. If they were not they would not be able to plan from month to month and from year to year. They know very well how they stand. Assuming that when these tenders close it will take the State Electricity Commission several months to consider them, it will be very close to the end of 1951 before one is accepted. The greatest difficulty today, after getting anything made in the machinery line, is delivery. It is easy to concede that some of the tenderers, if not all, will stipulate at least a year for delivery, probably longer.

Taking that fact into consideration, it seems to me that we shall have to look forward to waiting three or four years before the job gets into its swing. A great deal of preparatory work, including excavations, can be done in the meantime, but what is the use of doing it if it is to lie idle for any length of time?

We want to see this work expedited. The growing demand for electricity in this area compels the regional board to install more diesel generating plants, but these increase the cost of producing electricity. The electricity we produce cheaply at the present time is produced by the water turbines at the Barron Falls, and we also get cheap electricity from the sugar mills during the crushing season, but, as I have mentioned, in many areas today where small workshops and sawmills exist, particularly in the Innisfail district, users of power are restricted in the horse-power of their plants. That is, they cannot install more machinery than they have now, for they are using the maximum horse-power of their machinery with the power allowed, and consequently they are not able to expand. I appeal to the technicians and the administrators, who know what they are doing, to try to speed up this phase of the project in order, firstly, to get the job done and thus supply the increasing demand for electricity, and secondly, to prevent costs from going still higher, which must only result in the consumer paying more for electricity or the board's having to seek further subsidies from the Government.

There is one clause in the Bill that interests me.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Farrell): Order! The hon. member may not discuss clauses on the second reading.

Mr. WORDSWORTH: I will put it in another way. In works of this kind sabotage could occur unless strict security measures were taken. That would not apply to the big earth works, but it would apply to the machinery in transit to the works and in storage at the works. I am informed on very good authority that the regional board had much trouble with all its many diesel generating plants now installed at Cairns. In virtually every case there were breakdowns, and serious breakdowns, in the plant after its installation. I am informed that in these breakdowns, with one exception, that exception being in the plant installed at Atherton where a crankshaft broke because of a flaw, there have been indications of sabotage. I saw one machine in operation—it had been in operation for a couple of weeks—but the supercharger that gave it the extra 50 per cent. efficiency had broken down. My informant told me that in all these cases where superchargers have broken down there has been evidence that a foreign object has been put in the very intricate machinery that works the supercharger. Whether that sabotage, if it was sabotage, was carried out in England where the plant was manufactured, in transit, or in Australia, I do not

know. The strictest security measures should be taken to protect the work and the equipment.

In conclusion, I say that, like all other Queenslanders, I am looking forward to some rapid gain in the installation of this scheme, which will mean a great deal to the people in the Cairns regional area and to the people between the Cairns regional area and Townsville. I understand the electricity will go to Townsville and there will be a distinct possibility that when the scheme is complete, with the power available at Townsville, other secondary industries based on the Mount Isa industry will be established in Townsville.

Mr. CROWLEY (Cairns) (12.7 p.m.): I have pleasure in congratulating the Government on going on with the Tully scheme, which will be of great benefit to the people of North Queensland.

I has been said that the Tully scheme has been a political football: if it has, it has been a golden football for North Queensland. The statement that the scheme has been carried on since 1926 is not true. The Kuranda scheme was taken over in 1935 and that is only 15 years ago, and at that time there were not sufficient consumers in sight to absorb the supply from Kuranda.

Mr. Morris interjected.

Mr. CROWLEY: The hon. member should confine himself to something that he knows something about. I happened to be a member of this board from the start. I was amused at some of the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition and other members. They were not correct. Instead of supporting the Government in their effort to do something for the people of the North, and ceasing to be "knockers," they have been acting against the interests of the people. This scheme is supported by all the people of North Queensland, and they will not be pleased with the attitude of hon. members opposite. This scheme will be of great benefit to North Queensland, and I thank the Government on their behalf.

The hon. member for Mulgrave mentioned that he has been looking for a supply for his farm from the Cairns Regional Electricity Board since 1935. That is not correct. In 1935 the electricity undertaking in the Babinda district was under the control of the Babinda Electric Light Co., controlled by the Babinda mill, of which the hon. member was a shareholder; and if he wanted power he could have got it from his own company. The Barron hydro-electric scheme did not take over the Babinda area until December, 1939. The hon. member and his friends are blaming the Government for something they fell down on themselves. As a member of the Babinda mill, the hon. member for Mulgrave could have had that power if he wanted to build the line, but he did not want to do that; he wanted somebody else to do that. The farmers could have had this scheme years ago. They could have had it under their own franchise, but they wanted it only for the town where the

money was, leaving the farmers to fend for themselves, but they now come forward and criticise the Government for the delay.

A previous speaker stated that the Barron hydro-electric scheme is the only such scheme in Queensland. That is not altogether correct because in the hon. member's district of Mossman, which is one of the chief country towns in that electorate, there exists a hydro-electric scheme. Certainly it is very small but it is still operating and doing very good work. Seeing that he has said there is only one hydro-electric scheme in Queensland, I should like him to go to Mossman and have a look at that scheme.

When the Barron hydro-electric scheme was first mooted, only two councils in the North would support it, the Cairns City Council and the Cairns Shire Council, which is now the Mulgrave Shire Council. The Tablelands people would not come into the scheme at all financially. They would not take any financial risk. The scheme had to go through that stage of risk but the council, although giving the needed permission, said, "We will not take any financial risk at all. We will buy our power from the Barron Hydro-Electricity Board." These knockers of the Government are the very people who would not do anything. The Government have guaranteed the scheme to the limit but the country people would not support it.

I have much pleasure in thanking the Government for proceeding with the Tully Falls scheme and I have no doubt it will be a great success.

Mr. WATSON (Mulgrave) (12.13 p.m.): I had not intended to speak on the second reading of the Bill but in view of the statements made by hon. member for Cairns, which implied that I had misstated certain matters in an earlier speech, it is necessary that I should make some reply. The hon. member is quite correct in saying that before the Barron Falls hydro-electric scheme was arranged there was an electricity undertaking in Babinda but the supply was from the mill, and it was only for lighting the town of Babinda and not to supply current to the district. When the Barron Falls scheme was coming into operation, as the hon. member has said, efforts were made to get the people to take hydro-electric power. They canvassed the farmers in the Bartle Frere area and asked them to become guarantors and to have power supplied to them when the opportune time came. I repeat my previous statement that I have a farm in the Bartle Frere area and although I was a guarantor of the Barron hydro-electric scheme I have not yet got the electric power.

I do not want any hon. member in this House even to suggest that I am an opponent to this scheme. I know the Premier will appreciate that. As North Queenslanders we want that power. As I said in my former speech, there are hundreds of farmers to whom we cannot supply power and the only solution is to have the Tully Falls scheme expedited and in operation as soon as possible in order to give those in the rural areas the power they require. I do not want

anybody to suggest that I am against this scheme; I wish to clear that point up. The scheme has been before the people of North Queensland since 1926 and, as I said previously, 24 years is a long time and if this scheme takes as long in fulfilment my children perhaps will have the privilege of using what we are voting for today.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (12.15 p.m.), in reply: The hon. member who has just resumed his seat has proved the accuracy of what my colleague, the hon. member for Cairns, has said. He has admitted that he was a shareholder of a company that had a franchise in his own area for five years. The hon. member went on to say that he hoped he will not be waiting much longer. I only hope he will not be waiting as long as he was for his own company to give him the supply.

I fully understand that the hon. member for Mulgrave, the hon. member for Cook, and other representatives of northern electorates are anxious to get this job going on, but I am not taking it that members of the Country Party in the South are anxious to get it going. I am not taking it that the Leader of the Opposition is anxious to get it going, nor the hon. member for Aubigny, nor the hon. member for Fassifern.

The Leader of the Opposition said a while ago that he went to Canberra to try to undo the damage that had been done by my attitude to the Prime Minister. I want to point out that we have always put our case firmly and fairly. Never have we made a case to the Federal Government that was not sound and accurate in every particular. It is not the habit of Queenslanders—not the Queenslanders that I know, at any rate—to do otherwise. We put up our case honestly. The Leader of the Opposition now says the present Federal Government, the Menzies-Fadden Government, will sacrifice the interests of the people of this State because they have a personal dislike for me.

Mr. Morris: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. HANLON: What else did he say? He said the delay in doing anything for Queensland was due to my attitude to Mr. Menzies. What right has Mr. Menzies to say the development or defence of this country will not go on because any particular individual is offensive to him? That is not the attitude of a Prime Minister or statesman; that is the attitude of a mean little boy. Personally, I deny that on behalf of Mr. Menzies. I do not think he would take the attitude that he would neglect the development or defence of the country because he did not like some individual. They are being pushed by conflicting interests in the Federal Parliament. The Leader of the Opposition knows what is taking place in the present Government party in Canberra. They are getting pushed for all kinds of development everywhere.

The Prime Minister has refused to give us any financial aid to this scheme, but we will carry it on ourselves if he does not come in. I am depending on the approaching

Federal elections to make these Liberal and Country Party members of the Federal Parliament from the North get busy on Mr. Menzies, but we are going on with the job. No-one is going to say that this country was raped by an invader if she ever is invaded, because the people of Queensland neglected their duty. What Mr. Menzies and Mr. Fadden did at the last Premier's Conference was to try to prevent this and every other scheme from going on in Queensland, and they tried deliberately to do that. The whole row between the Premiers, the Prime Minister, and the Treasurer at the Loan Council occurred because the Commonwealth insisted that the State Governments should not go on with developmental works at the present time. Mr. Menzies and Mr. Fadden both told the gathering that the requirements for expenditure on defence of the Commonwealth Government would completely absorb the money available in the loan market for this year. That is what I object to. In the first place, it was untrue. There was no economic or logical basis for saying that the capacity of this country was limited to what they wanted. As long as a Government have the confidence and faith of the people, they will get money. It would be ridiculous for the State Governments to agree that they should abandon all development work because of either Mr. Menzies's own ideas or the stupid advice he was getting from his advisers. Possibly his economic advisers are to blame.

Then the hon. member goes on to say that he went to Canberra to try to break down the unfavourable impression I had made. I do not care whether I have made an unfavourable impression or not with Mr. Menzies. I put up facts and figures and that is all I wanted to do. I put them before his predecessor, Mr. Chifley, too, but I did not get satisfaction. If Press reports are to be believed, the Leader of the Opposition and those who went with him to Canberra did not go to push the barrow for the great northern portion of this State immediately North of Brisbane. They went to push the barrow for the Obi Obi scheme and the draining of the Merrimac swamp—great development in the North, just over the New South Wales border. The Merrimac swamp is a development job of this kind; it is freehold land and is owned by individual electors, represented by hon. members opposite, and if the community is to be called upon to tax itself to drain this swamp the owners of the land will get the benefit. The community at large would not get anything; the owners of the private land would get the lot. Those are the things that the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues went to Canberra about—to develop that part of Queensland in the immediate north of the New South Wales border, not to develop the Northern part of this State at all.

The fact remains that we have not had any subsidy from the Commonwealth Government for any of these schemes. The Burdekin job is under way. This job is under way. The damming or the weiring of the rivers in the Walsh River area is under way and plans

are being prepared for the dams. No encouragement has been given by the Commonwealth Government, notwithstanding the fact that Queensland will be responsible for its share of the cost of the Snowy River project, an amount that will be more than double the cost of the works we have put on our programme here. The Leader of the Opposition said that these were airy-fairy schemes. Of course they are to him, because they are not in the southern portion of the State.

There is another factor I should point out in relation to these schemes out in the country parts of the States. We are taking into the Commonwealth migrants at the rate of 200,000 a year. If there is no developmental work in operation in the various States—and this applies not only to Queensland but to other States—is it not obvious that these 200,000 migrants a year will crowd into the capital cities and further inflate them? There is no encouragement for people to take jobs in the capital cities and if no developmental work was being carried out in the country the effect would be to congregate hundreds of thousands in the capital cities and in a year or two we should reach the stage when the capital cities could not employ them. That would be the opportunity for Liberal members opposite, including the hon. member for Kedron—because he used the phrase, “a pool of unemployment.” They believe that a pool of unemployment is essential for the development of industry. It means masses of hungry unemployed men for the sake of their industries. Let me say that whilst this Government are in office that position will not arise if we can stop it. We will open up works in the country—in the North, the Centre and the West—with the view of taking a big proportion of the migrants out into new callings and occupations where they will not become a pool of unemployment in the city, and by working in the country on projects established there they will become encouraged to become primary producers and go onto the land instead of cluttering up the labour market. That is an important point in the programme of developmental work we have here.

The Leader of the Opposition also criticised the fact that only £300,000 is allocated for expenditure by the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works this year. He also complained that we had under-spent our loan appropriations, but we always estimate that we shall get, say, 20 to 25 per cent. less than the amount authorised by the Loan Council, but if labour and materials should become available and we have the funds we can undertake the work right away without the need to wait for another Loan Council meeting. This year we are appropriating £300,000 for the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works in respect of the scheme, but that is not the limit of the expenditure on the undertaking this year.

In a few weeks' time, I think in about a fortnight, tenders for the first stage of the job will close. We have reached the stage now that we shall be calling tenders for the major job, for the construction of the tunnel and the penstocks. They are major works and they will be paid for out of loan funds,

not out of this £300,000. The sum of £300,000 is expenditure to be incurred by the Co-ordinator-General and his own staff.

Mr. Aikens: On administrative expenses?

Mr. HANLON: Yes. We are probably committed by the Loan Council to an expenditure of £2,000,000 or more in loan funds during this financial year and there are only several months of the financial year to go.

Mr. Pie: Will the amount of £300,000 be spent for administrative purposes only?

Mr. HANLON: That amount has been appropriated. We are not all bright chaps like the hon. member for Kedron—we cannot estimate to the last penny what everything is going to cost. We cannot estimate prices accurately or gauge the supply of material, nor can we say what amount of labour will be available. This £300,000 has been appropriated, and if it is too much, no harm is done. If we do not use it all, then it can be used for some other purpose.

Mr. Pie: Do you say that the whole of the £300,000 will be used for administrative costs and not for the work at all?

Mr. HANLON: Not for the main construction work. It will be used for administrative costs and preparatory work.

Mr. Pie: That is what I wanted to know.

Mr. HANLON: If it is too much, then that is all right, and if it is not enough we can apply to the Governor in Council for more. The point I make is that this vote of £300,000 is not for the construction of the dam and the big electricity undertaking, but is merely for the preparatory work. I said before that tenders will be closing in December for part of the work, and tenders are about to be called for the major engineering job, the construction of the great penstocks and the generating plant. The £300,000 vote is in no way concerned with the major job.

I have nothing further to say on the matter, but I am very happy to think that this job, which has been under consideration for so long, is now getting under way. Hon. members opposite talk airily to the effect that the scheme has been under consideration for a long time and should have been begun 20 years ago. The Leader of the Opposition knows very well that in those days there was no such thing as Government subsidy to local authorities or Commonwealth aid for the States in these things. He knows also that at that time Liberal Party bankers controlled the borrowing policy of Governments in Australia and that no Commonwealth or State Government could borrow a pound without the approval of the private trading banks. And so we had the spectacle of seven Treasurers or Premiers in Australia—the Treasurer of the Commonwealth and the Treasurer or Premier of the six States—going to Canberra in a time of tremendous unemployment, with want and poverty on every hand, seeking permission to get money to provide relief, but as the

finances of the country were controlled by Liberal Party supporters they in turn said, "No durned fear, you do not get that amount of money; you can only have so much, and you can only employ such-and-such a number on a job and not the number you want." That was the condition that we were working under in those days, but on the outbreak of war all those things were stopped. Undertakings under way were stopped. The water supply for Brisbane, which is not completed yet, was started in 1934. It had to be stopped when the war broke out and the plant was transferred to build the graving dock at Cairncross, and when that was finished was transferred to works at other places. Taken by and large, the record of the Labour Party in developing this State is an enviable one. The criticism we get from the Opposition is really based on an inferiority complex from which they suffer when they look at their own incapacity to get anywhere and then look on the other hand at the record of achievements that the Labour Party proudly possesses.

Motion (Mr. Hanlon) agreed to.

COMMITTEE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Farrell, Maryborough, in the chair.)

Clause 1—Short Title and Construction, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—The Tully Falls hydro-electric project defined—

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) (12.32 p.m.): I rise to speak on this clause to reply to the Premier's statement that the Opposition did not back the Tully hydro-electric scheme.

Mr. Hanlon: That is true.

Mr. NICKLIN: If the Premier is a past-master at one thing more than another it is misrepresentation. I must hand it to him for that. He is a most excellent member at misrepresenting, particularly what I said on the second reading of the Bill. One would think, after hearing the Premier deal with the deputation from the Opposition that went to Canberra, that the only developmental works that the deputation made representation to the Prime Minister about were the Obi Obi and Merrimac schemes. They were only two extremely minor projects on which representation was made, and I make no apology for presenting them because they are both desirable and both necessary. The list of projects submitted to the Prime Minister contained developmental works covering every part of this State.

Opposition Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Walsh: It is funny they were not mentioned in the Press.

Mr. NICKLIN: I always give credit to the hon. member for Bundaberg for being able to read, but apparently he reads only what suits him. If he turns up the report in the Press he will see enumerated there ten points, I think, in regard to developmental works covering the whole State, with special mention of the Tully Falls hydro-electric

scheme and the Walsh River-Dimbulah tobacco scheme, plus an immediate and thorough investigation of the possibilities of the Burdekin scheme. I have never heard of such misrepresentation of the facts as we heard from the Premier on this matter.

Clause 2, as read, agreed to.

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

Clause 11—Rules to be applied in determining compensation—

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) (12.35 p.m.): This is a clause dealing with the rules to be applied in determining compensation. There is one point I wish to raise and that is the provision of the clause that says—

"No compensation shall be awarded for any diminution or deterioration of the supply of water to which any person may be entitled."

We appreciate the fact that the construction of this project will mean that a dam will be erected and a diversion weir constructed and these may have a considerable effect on the supply of water that had previously been available to any person adjacent to the river or dam. I believe possibly the clause will cover any reasonable claim by any person who may be deprived of water as a result of the works, but I should like to bring under the notice of the Premier the fact that possibly the clause does not cover all classes of persons who may be entitled to water.

Mr. Aikens: Would it not be a case for determination of riparian rights?

Mr. NICKLIN: That comes into it. We are laying down here very definite principles for rights or rules to be applied in determining compensation. For example, it says—

"No compensation shall be made for the taking or diverting of any water which the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works or a delegate of the said Co-ordinator-General is empowered by or under this Act to take or divert either permanently or temporarily from any river, creek, stream, or water-course, lake, lagoon, swamp, or marsh."

I think that if, as a result of the diversion of water from any of these rivers or streams, a man who may be dependent on irrigation is left without a supply of water, he should be entitled to some compensation. The clause says definitely, "No compensation shall be made for the taking or diverting of any water." I think that some case of hardship may arise. The country is such that a big percentage of the works will be in areas where there is not much settlement and where there is not likely to be much settlement. I take it that in the catchment areas the forests will be preserved in order to preserve the works and prevent siltation. I believe the clause needs full examination in order to see that everybody's right is properly protected. It is rather drastic to say that no compensation shall be made for the complete diversion of the supply of water on which a person operating in that area may be dependent for his livelihood.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (12.39 p.m.): This clause has been very carefully prepared and framed. In a previous paragraph to the one quoted by the hon. member in clause 11 it says—

“No compensation shall be awarded for any diminution or deterioration of the supply of water to which any person may be entitled, unless such diminution or deterioration is such as to deprive the claimant of a supply of water previously legally enjoyed by him, and unless such diminution or deterioration is the direct and will be the permanent result of the completed works.”

There is compensation for that. Riparian rights cover any water he is legally entitled to use up to date, but he cannot claim compensation on the ground that in 50 years there will be a population to the extent that he might be able to get a lot more use out of the water. For water enjoyed up to date there is compensation, if anything interferes with it. It is necessary when framing these clauses not to leave yourself open to sharpshooters who may come in with all sorts of fantastic claims. We know only too well from experience that when these things go to court they are determined on the court's interpretation of the actual law and not on what Parliament meant. Great care has to be taken to ensure that the undertaking cannot be exploited for their own personal profit by unscrupulous persons who have been in no way materially affected. The general compensation clause means that no compensation will be paid to anybody who is not affected by taking water from the stream or lake and is obviously sound. Where any landowner is enjoying the use of water today any interference with the use of that water will be compensated for.

Mr. PIE (Kedron) (12.41 p.m.): I had no intention of speaking on this clause but the Premier has raised quite an important point. I rise not to criticise the Premier but the hon. gentleman said that a person would be restricted to his present use of water. For instance, a person has set up a project and plans his future development 10 or 15 years ahead. This does happen in the development of industry. Assume that that future development depends on a supply of water. The question I ask is: will that project be restricted to the present use of water or will the Government co-operate to the extent that he can have an increased water supply to cope with his future development? Woolscouring, for instance, needs a lot of water. It might be decided to increase the size of a scour and twice the original quantity of water would be required. All I want to ensure is that if people go in for some further development they will not be restricted to their present use of water. I hope they will not be.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (12.43 p.m.): This idea of talking about development in 15 or 30 years' time is the ordinary method of sharp-shooting. If there

is any evidence of development in that direction I have no doubt that sympathetic consideration will be given to it, but, as I have said, the usual method of sharp-shooting is by way of stating that plans have been made to develop at some future date.

Mr. Pie: I am not referring to sharp-shooting.

Mr. HANLON: The wording of the clause means that a person would be compensated for the loss of any water that he presently enjoys use of.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (12.44 p.m.): Any person who knows the Tully district and the watershed of the Tully River above the Tully Falls will realise that the question of irrigation is not likely to arise very seriously. With the high natural rainfall a proposal for the irrigation of the Tully lands in this area would be received with a considerable amount of derision. I believe, however, that there should be some protection for the riparian rights of those who might be affected and I want to know—and I think the Premier can tell us; I believe it is so, although I am only a layman—whether an action at common law lies in respect of any specific Act of Parliament dealing with riparian rights. Riparian rights are things about which more legal opinions have been given than about anything else. I believe action at common law will always lie against any person who interferes with the access of any person to water to which that person is entitled. Irrigation in the Tully area would have to be of either a rice crop or some other crop needing abundant water.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (12.45 p.m.): The clause protects the riparian rights presently enjoyed. It does not allow anyone to come in in future and make a claim for a fantastic sum.

Clause 11, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 12 to 26, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment.

STATE HOUSING ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Debate resumed from 22 November (see page 1456) on Mr. Hilton's motion—

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

Mr. PIE (Kedron) (12.48 p.m.): I spoke the other day for 10 minutes on this Bill. Since then I have had the opportunity of studying it from an industrial viewpoint and it is from that angle that I desire to put certain facts before the Minister.

At the outset I thank him and his Government sincerely for building round our industry at Kedron a marvellous pool of labour. There we have a splendid housing scheme that, for generations to come, will provide us with all the labour we need. The very basis of all

development of industry is the carrying out of housing schemes round them so that people who have families will have within two or three miles of their homes places where their children can get gainful employment. I place on record here my sincere appreciation of what the Government have done for me in my industrial development.

I am sorry, however, that I cannot say that I am happy about the type of houses they have provided for the people in the Stafford area. If the Minister cares to go out there at any time to see the people he will learn exactly what is happening to some of those homes. Again, as I am reminded by the Deputy Leader of our party, in my electorate we have the house erected for Mr. McPhie. We hope that the State Housing Commission will realise, and that the people, particularly the workers of Queensland, will realise that they have the right to hope that the Government will see that decent houses are put up for them.

The scheme as outlined by the Minister can be recommended in many respects.

Mr. Hilton: In all respects.

Mr. PIE: No. I shall try to point out constructively where it will fall down on practical application. The advancement of housing in this State must keep pace with industrial development because what is the use of developing industry if we have not the people and cannot provide homes for the people we bring from other countries of the world who are longing for homes so that they can be gainfully employed? That is the greatest fault in South Australia, not that its industrial development has been retarded but that not sufficient people are properly housed in that State to cope with the industrial development. That is not the position in Queensland and I hope that within the next few years every person will be gainfully employed and that can only be done by providing better housing for the people so that men and women, when they get married, will be able to have children in their homes and provide a future for them in industry.

As you, Mr. Speaker, can understand, I personally would not have anything to do with the scheme. Some years ago I had something to do with Government aid and I have never been able to live it down, and I do not think I shall ever be able to live it down. And so I say, so far as I am concerned, and irrespective of what the scheme is, I will never have anything to do with a Government scheme, because they will say, "The Government have built the houses for you," although I have paid for them. Under the Bill you have to pay for them, and take full responsibility for them. Everybody knows that this Government have told the people of Queensland that they built my business for me, that they started my business. I do not want that to happen again, and irrespective of the value of the scheme, I say to employers, "Watch the position; before long, as in the case of Mt. Isa, you will be told that the Government built your business and not you."

On Wednesday last I was dealing with the power of acquisition and said that it might be a real danger. I should like the Minister to reply on that point, because it is important. The power of acquisition might be exercised in respect of a particular property and half-way through the process the Minister might decide that he did not want all the property and he would leave the dregs to the person who had sold him the property—dregs that might involve continuous drainage, for instance. I want the Minister to say that in a case like that, suitable compensation will be paid to the person concerned in relation to what is left.

I do not like powers of acquisition, and never have. I say that the power of acquisition under this Bill, under the guise of providing for housing, means more than meets the eye. The Government can acquire land not only for housing, but for industrial purposes. There is no question about that. It is possible under a clause of the Bill to compulsorily acquire the land of any owner and hand it over to any person for the purpose of industry, trade or business, without any condition regarding the provision of housing for the employees. That is provided in the Bill.

Mr. Hilton: No, it is not.

Mr. PIE: It is. I cannot refer to clauses in the Bill at this stage, but I refer the Minister to Clause 4, which admits of no other interpretation. That clause gives approval to the acquisition of land for industrial purposes without any need for a housing scheme to be tied to it, and if that is the intention it cannot be justified. I ask the Minister to have another look at the clause and perhaps give us a further clarification of it, but as it stands that power is there.

What would be the result of the exercise of such power? For instance, a man might have 20, 30, 40 or even 50 acres of land and establish an industry on it with the idea of building housing projects round it, but at the will of the Minister the land could be acquired for the purpose of industry and so a competitor could be put down alongside him on land that he had acquired for development purposes later on. Again the Government are asking for a lot for nothing, which is their usual course, I know, but it is more pronounced in the Bill than ever before so far as housing goes.

The Leader of the Opposition has dealt with the increase in the limit of the rate of advance from the Commonwealth from 17s. to 18s., and the reduction of the deposit to 10 per cent. On paper that looks all right, but it really puts a load round the neck of the worker who may buy a house under the scheme. Let us suppose that today a person is fortunate enough to buy a house complete for £1,750, a house that in 1945 would have cost about £1,000. With the reduced deposit of 10 per cent. he would be required to pay £175 as against £200 on the house valued in 1945 at £1,000, in respect of which the deposit was 20 per cent. Although he is to have a reduced deposit limit the Minister cannot disregard the fact that the amount

remaining to be paid under the scheme over a period of 30 years is £1,575 as against £800 in 1945. The reduction in the percentage rate of deposit does not ease the burden for the worker in the years ahead—he has a liability of £1,575 against £800.

Mr. Hilton: It is done in the interests of the home-seeker so that he can pay the deposit and thus not be compelled to pay rent for all time.

Mr. PIE: We are not discussing rental homes, we are discussing the purchase of homes. I do not think that the Minister wants me to be drawn off the track to discuss rental homes, which are not dealt with in the measure. I repeat that the reduction in the percentage rate of deposit will not ease the burden. The housing problem will be one of the most serious problems to be faced in the years ahead. The problem would be no nearer solution if deposits were taken away altogether—there would still remain the liability in the years ahead, which the average worker cannot afford to pay.

Then we come to the question of prefabricated homes. The term “prefabricated” is a misnomer, they are pre-cut homes, and if they are anything like the pre-cut homes or pre-fabricated homes that I saw in Great Britain they will be useless for Queensland conditions.

I repeat that although the percentage deposit has been reduced the problem nevertheless still confronts us of the ultimate payment and how people on a nominal wage are going to pay off their homes. That is the big problem with people who want to build homes. Under present-day costs, no matter what you do, the problem that faces young married people who buy a home costing £2,000 or £3,000 and expect to pay it off and rear a family is very real indeed. That is something all Governments will have to face sooner or later. I mentioned the other day a plan for the subsidising of these homes by employer and Government. That would give them a chance to meet their commitments during the difficult period. I do not intend to elaborate on that system because it is not a provision in the Bill, but the question of prefabricated homes is very important because some of these prefabricated homes may be utilised under these proposals also for housing assisted by industry. That does worry me because the prefabricated homes I saw in Great Britain will not last for more than five to seven years at the most under our tropical conditions. I should hate to think that this Government were committed in any way to an outlay up to anything like £1,800 on homes that will not have a life of 20 or 30 years or more, which is the normal life of a home. I went out to see an Italian home at Kensington constructed on behalf of one of our big sawmills. It is quite a good home but I do not think it will stand up to our conditions, the heat of summer and the tropical downpours of rain that we have. We must be careful that these prefabricated or pre-cut homes will be suitable for our tropical conditions and the heavy downpours of rain we have. For instance, the prefabricated homes brought out to Victoria

would be useless under our conditions, just the same as many of the other homes built down there would be unsuitable in our State. I ask the Minister to be very careful with these prefabricated homes and make certain that he is not “selling a pup” to the worker or the people who have to pay for them. The Minister, in answer to questions, gave an indication that these prefabricated homes would cost approximately £1,859 without the cost of the land. Then you have to allow, say, another £300 for expenses associated with drainage.

Mr. Hilton: No, drainage is included in that cost.

Mr. PIE: And sewerage?

Mr. Hilton: Drainage, but in most places where we can build sewerage is not in existence.

Mr. PIE: I can show the Minister plenty of places where we can build homes where sewerage is in existence. That of course is incidental. Then we have to add to that cost the increase in the basic wage that is coming along.

With increased costs I feel that before these homes are built the increase will amount to roughly 20 per cent. I say that the average cost of these homes, including land, will be about £2,350 by the time they are erected, whether they are prefabricated homes or ready-cut homes.

Mr. Moore: You did not tell us the reason.

Mr. PIE: The Minister has not been here; I do not want to go over it again.

Mr. Moore: You did not tell us the reason; you said they would not be suitable.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. PIE: I do not want to be charged with tedious repetition. I have pointed out to the Minister the costs of the homes.

Mr. Moore: You said they would not be suitable. Explain that.

Mr. PIE: I have already explained it.

Mr. Moore: You did not; you said they would not be suitable but you did not say why.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. PIE: I think the Minister in charge of the Bill is capable of looking after his own Bill without interjections from another Minister on the front bench.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Moore: Be a bit honest.

Mr. PIE: Mr. Speaker, am I to put up with the Minister? Am I to be told I am dishonest by a man like him?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! First of all, I would say to the hon. member that he must address hon. members by their correct title. I would say to all hon. members that they should allow the hon. member to make his speech without interruption.

Mr. PIE: If we think improvements can be effected in the Bill I think it is our duty to suggest what should be done. For instance, everything in relation to this Bill is binding on the borrower and that is the industry; there is no binding of the person who is buying the house from the industry but everything is binding on the borrower, which is the industry; the whole way through it has to be responsible to the Government for anything that goes wrong. In principle that is entirely wrong. I agree that up to the point where the employee takes over the home, it should be the responsibility of the industry, but once he takes over the home he should be responsible direct to the Housing Commission. The Government have all the facilities available in relation to this scheme, which means that if industry finances 100 homes round an industry it would be entirely responsible to the Government and not the person who is buying or occupying the home that industry establishes. Once those homes are sold or even rented, the people who buy or rent them should be responsible to the Government, and not to the industry. That is one way in which the Bill could be improved.

Another clause refers to the leasing of land in perpetuity or for a term of years, and forfeiture for a breach of the lease. That may be right or wrong, but we can examine that clause in the Committee stages. There are some anomalies that should be removed.

Another clause makes it mandatory for an industry receiving any advance from the commission to sell to an eligible employee. What is the definition of an eligible employee? Is an eligible employee one who has worked for the industry for a period of years, or is an eligible employee someone who has been brought from England and who has only been in the employ of the industry for three months? The Government may say, "You have no right to sell to that person; he is not an eligible employee; he has been in your employ for only three months; and you have no right to sell to him till he has been in your employ six, nine or 12 months," as the case may be.

Mr. Hilton: Eligible under the terms and provisions of the Housing Act.

Mr. PIE: It does not say so and we do not want to have our Bills indefinite. They must be clear. That is a fault in much of our legislation: it is not definite enough.

There are no provisions to protect the industry financing these homes from finding that they eventually are occupied by people other than employees of that industry. This is important. The industry may sell to a person who may be eligible to purchase but in two years that person may find a better job or another job. The industry does not mind his leaving but he may remain in occupation of one of the homes that the industry has already financed and for which it is responsible. Eventually the industry may be surrounded by homes the occupants of which do not work for that industry. It

should be made mandatory that while a person occupies a home the industry is financing he shall be an employee of the industry.

Mr. Aikens: Industrial conscription?

Mr. PIE: No, not industrial conscription. I want never to see industrial conscription. I do not want anyone to work for me unless he wants to work for me. That is the attitude every hon. member on this side adopts. If a person is not satisfied, what is the good of employing him? He only causes trouble among the people who are satisfied and this is the greatest cause of trouble than anything I know of. When we get Coms. and others in our industry we say to them, "Get out." They cause industrial unrest. They will not be in our place more than 10 minutes. Industrial conscription is something I do not want to have anything to do with.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. PIE: I am sorry. I was drawn off the line.

Then there is the employee who falls on evil days. The borrower, i.e. the industry, might desire to help that employee to overcome his difficulties.

Mr. Hilton: There is nothing to stop it from doing it.

Mr. PIE: No, there is nothing in the Bill to say that special consideration will be given by the Government if it can be proved that an employee has fallen on evil days.

Mr. Hilton: The employer might want to help him.

Mr. PIE: Yes, but this is the significance of that provision; the employer is liable to the commission for the homes. I take it the Government, for their own protection will take out a first mortgage on the home when they advance money to the employer.

Mr. Hilton: Obviously.

Mr. PIE: But what security has the person who is buying the home from the employer who has given a first mortgage? Does he get a second mortgage? He has no protection. He may have paid £500 to the employer and the employer in turn may have paid £500 to the Government. The Government have a first mortgage on the home and may take over the property; where does the employee stand?

Mr. Jesson: He has his equity.

Mr. PIE: If there is a second mortgage he is protected. I suggest to the Minister that whilst the Government take a first mortgage the employee should have a second mortgage so that if anything does happen he will be protected for the good money he puts in every week.

Mr. Hilton: It is obvious that if he buys a home he must enter into a contract with the employer.

Mr. PIE: But the contract is no protection here, and the Minister should see that he is protected.

All through this measure it is made clear that the employer has the responsibility. There should be some responsibility also on the person buying the home through the employer.

Again, the question of leasing to the employee is important. I suggest that before a person becomes qualified to buy a home he should have been employed in the industry for at least 12 months. I have had experience of people working for six months and being perfectly happy and then in the seventh month going to what they think are better jobs. Twelve months should be the qualifying period, especially for migrants, who should know by the end of that time whether they are going to stay in Australia.

If the employee falls into arrears with his payments to the employer, the employer is still responsible to the Government. We are not always going to have the good times that are with us today and the time may come when there is a recession, when industry will have to tell the Government it cannot meet the cost of the houses because it cannot afford to pay the worker enough to enable him to meet his commitments to the selling employer. There is too much responsibility on the employer.

Mr. Aikens: What will happen to the employee of the employer who goes bankrupt?

Mr. PIE: I take it the Government would take over the mortgage, but they would then have a business that is not producing enough income to pay these employees enough to enable them to meet their commitments.

(Time expired.)

Dr. NOBLE (Yeronga) (2.34 p.m.): I look upon housing as perhaps the most vital social question confronting all Governments in Australia today. The general principle of the Bill, as I see it, is to facilitate the acquisition of land by the Housing Commission and by corporations and firms for the purpose of creating housing areas round their factories and to ease the financial burden on the employee and the people in the lower income brackets who intend to buy these homes, to make it easy for them to buy if possible, to increase the amount of loan, and to reduce to 10 per cent. the deposit required on a home.

When we look at a question such as this, in which the people in the lower income brackets are concerned, we have to ask ourselves whether those people are capable of meeting their commitments if they once enter a contract to buy. Is this financial burden they are undertaking one that they can carry?

Let us look at the financial side of the purchasing of homes from the commission. These houses today cost up to £2,000 and allowing for the £300 subsidy in the case of the prefabricated homes the price is brought down to £1,700. On that figure the buyer has to deposit 10 per cent. Before a person can enter into a contract with the commission the price is brought down

to £1,530, a sum that the buyer has to meet. The buyer would have to pay interest on that money at the rate of £3 12s. 6d. per centum per annum, which amounts to approximately 25s. a week, and 25s. every week. People in the lower income brackets have to meet that interest payment when they enter into contracts to buy such homes and, Mr. Speaker, you will agree that it is desirable, if the community is to be built on sound lines, that the people of the community should own their own homes, and that in buying their own homes they shall not commit themselves to a burden they cannot carry. If they do it will not encourage them to have families. I say, very definitely, that the Australian-born and the children of Australians are our best migrants and every Government in Australia should go into ways and means by which the people of our community can buy their own homes.

I think that most people will agree with me that no man in the lower income brackets can afford to pay more than 30s. a week in rental or as interest and redemption on a mortgage. It would be impossible for a man on a wage up to £10, £11 or £12 a week to pay more than that sum and at the same time provide his family with clothes, food and education and the other things a man likes to supply for his family. On the 30s. he has to pay 25s. interest and if he pays at the rate of 30s. a week he will be paying only 5s. a week towards redemption of the capital.

Mr. Hilton: In the early stages.

Dr. NOBLE: That would continue for a long while. It is essential that the Government should look for ways and means of reducing the interest burden. At the present time the private banks have to invest with the Commonwealth Bank large sums of money and there is standing to the credit of private banks within the Commonwealth Bank approximately £400,000,000. The Commonwealth Bank borrows from the private banks at $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. interest per annum. This money could be used for the vital need of housing; it could be lent back to the Government at perhaps $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. interest.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I point out to the hon. member that the rate of interest is fixed, and it has not been suggested that it should be altered. I suggest that the hon. member keep to the rate of interest in the Bill.

Dr. NOBLE: I am dealing with ways and means of providing homes and I was pointing out that buyers would have to pay 25s. a week interest at the present time and I was trying to find means of reducing the interest rate.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! It is already laid down that a certain rate of interest has to be paid.

Dr. NOBLE: I am trying to reduce the rate. I believe the Minister mentioned a reduction in interest. The Commonwealth Bank could lend the money to the States at a lower rate of interest and the States could

make it available to the home-purchaser at perhaps $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. per annum. That would reduce his interest burden considerably and instead of, as now, paying 25s. a week in interest he would pay say 10s. to 12s. a week in interest and perhaps £1 in redemption of the capital sum, which would help him to the ownership of his home in a shorter time than otherwise.

Mr. Jesson: A very good idea.

Dr. NOBLE: He would be able to reduce his capital sum and at the same time reduce the interest in respect of it and ultimately become the owner of the home in perhaps 25 years, which seems a very good idea to me. The Government should get in touch with the Federal Government and endeavour to have such a scheme introduced.

There are other things besides interest rates that make houses dear today and I have in mind now the labour costs. I understand that the award rate for a carpenter is £9 10s. a week but many carpenters are getting up to £15 a week and I cannot blame them for accepting that amount. The high cost of housing is due largely to the high cost of labour although of course there is the cost of material too. Perhaps some contractors are doing a little profiteering in the building of homes and although I have not got the figures to prove my statements I have heard it said that some contractors make £200, £300 and even £400 on the building of every home—and that seems quite a lot to me.

I have put forward these two or three suggestions relating to interest payments for the purpose of helping the people to obtain the ownership of their homes but before resuming my seat I desire to pay a tribute to the permanent head of the Housing Commission. I have had a good deal to do with him since I entered political life, in attending to matters concerning my electorate, and I want to say that at all times he has been very willing and able in his endeavours to help me.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (2.42 p.m.) (Speaking from the second Government cross bench): The only two principles in the Bill—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I should like to remind the hon. member that he must either speak from his usual place in the House or come right forward and speak from the rostrum provided.

Mr. AIKENS: Mr. Speaker, if you will take the trouble to keep the men in the corner quiet I will return to and speak from my usual seat in the House.

The only two principles in the Bill that I want to speak about relate to the acquisition of land and particularly, to the power given to the Housing Commission to take only the suitable land from the area owned by a person or corporation. I should like the Minister to give the House the assurance that these powers will be exercised with

proper caution. I can remember the time when these powers vested in the local authority in Townsville were grossly abused. The result is there for anyone to see it today. There was an area of land between the Masonic Hall and the A.M.L. & F. Building in Walker street, Townsville, on which there was a house belonging to a family. The house itself was in the hands of an executor under a will. Before we took control of the Townsville City Council in 1939 the council had decided to do just what the Housing Commission will have power to do, that is, resume a certain part of that land for the purpose of erecting an electricity sub-station. Instead of taking a small part of the land in one of the corners of the allotment at the back or the front the council, because it suited it, took a piece 33 feet square right in the very middle of the allotment abutting on the footpath so spoiling the whole area. The owner of the land had no power of appeal except to the council, which rejected the appeal.

I again want to stress we were not in control of the council at the time. Anyone who cares to go to Townsville now will see a fine piece of land in one of the best parts of Townsville absolutely ruined because the Townsville City Council sub-station is on a 33-foot square of land right in the front and very middle of that allotment. The same condition may arise under the Bill. Some of it may be low-lying or swampy or be traversed with a gully, but a small part of it may be suitable for building. This power will give the commission the right to go in and survey all that land and then pick the eyes out of it and leave the remainder to the owner. The Minister can, of course, give us the assurance, an assurance that binds only himself, that the power vested in this Bill will be exercised with the greatest caution.

The only other principle I wish to deal with is the principle of giving the commission the right to enter into an agreement with an employer, or groups of employers or corporations, so that these employers may build houses for their employees. It is well known to those who have any grounding in industrial unionism that there are three things that vitally affect the worker. First of all, there is his wage, secondly, there are his working conditions, and thirdly, there are his living conditions. It is abundantly true that you, Mr. Speaker, and I who have been in the western parts of Northern Queensland, know the difference that his living conditions can make in the contentment of the worker. I and many other hon. members who have been away out in the Cloncurry area can give many examples of this fact. We saw there three big copper fields and smelters in operation at Mt. Cuthbert, Kuridala, and Selwyn. At Mt. Cuthbert the company made absolutely no provision whatever to house its workers. They lived in tents and kerosene-tin humpies on the hillside. In fact, they lived like myalls. In consequence, hardly a week went past without an industrial strike or occurrence. Selwyn was very little better off. Selwyn did have a few houses but still many of the men who worked in the mines

and at the smelter lived in box and kerosene-tin humpies, and some of them even lived in the kangaroo caves on the hillside and became covered with kangaroo lice.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I would suggest to the hon. member that he confine himself to the principles contained in the Bill.

Mr. AIKENS: I am endeavouring to do so. In Selwyn industrial disturbances occurred, although not so frequently or on the same scale as at Mt. Cuthbert, but in Kuridala, where the employers provided their employees with a semblance of housing conditions, there was very little disturbance at all.

I will now get right back to my original intention, and that is that where employers attempt to make some provision to tackle the housing conditions of employees they reduce the risk of industrial disturbances. Many points have been raised, and very wisely raised, by the hon. member for Kedron, and by interjection just at the conclusion of his speech I asked him what would happen to an employee of an employer who had gone bankrupt. Let us take the hon. member for Kedron for example. He has a thriving business. He has told us that he has no intention of availing himself of the principle contained in this Bill, which provides that employers may enter into an agreement with the commission to build houses for his employees, but suppose he did so and he built a large number of houses for his employees and after he entered into an agreement with them what would happen if he and his firm went bankrupt? What an awful tangle would ensue!

Mr. Hilton: No, no awful tangle.

Mr. AIKENS: That interjection indicates that I have very little knowledge of the business I am talking about. I appeal to the Minister, who appears to know much more about it, to explain why an awful tangle would not ensue. The Minister can assume that everyone has the same knowledge of the matter that he has, but I am simply playing the role, as I have done both in this House and on the public platform, of being a simple seeker after truth and facts.

Mr. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha) (2.50 p.m.): I am much in accord with the principle in the Bill that provides for advancing money to employers to enable them to erect homes for their employees. I believe it will contribute something towards achieving the object of the Bill, which is to provide better housing for the people of Queensland. I think, in order to thoroughly understand and appreciate the housing position in Queensland today, we should endeavour not to address ourselves to the immediate present but go back over a period of years in order to see what the position was in the past. The Leader of the Opposition quoted a number of figures on Wednesday during the course of his second-reading speech in regard to the houses built in Brisbane in pre-war days, and I should like to make passing reference to that point. In this House in

1945, on 16 October, I produced a paper from the year 1937 out of which I read an extract to the House. As it is very pertinent to this question, I propose to read it again for the benefit of members:

"The large crowd that waited today in the hope of being included in this year's allocation of funds for home-building advances emphasises the housing shortage that exists in Brisbane.

"This shortage is realised by the Minister for Works, Mr. Bruce, who decided when applications were open there would be a £700 maximum so as to make the funds serve the greatest number."

That proved conclusively that we had a very real and serious housing problem in 1937 before the war at all. Here is an even more pertinent paragraph—

"Later the Minister proceeded to say that in March of that year calling for tenders had to be suspended as the value of plans for dwellings released up to that time had absorbed the funds available for home-building in 1936-37."

The only funds available were £300,000, and those applications for homes by the people in those days were receivable for only one day in the whole 12 months. When the applications were opened there was a huge rush to build homes, even back in the pre-war days, 1937.

Mr. Moore: Was there anything wrong with private enterprise building a few in those days?

Mr. MORRIS: I am interested in that question of the Minister's because in this Bill there is provision that money may be advanced to enable employers to build homes for their employees. That is an excellent provision. Let me go back to 1937, in order to reply to the Minister. The position was so acute then that timber merchants waited on the Minister and suggested to him that the Government should supply an additional source of finance to enable more homes to be built and the Minister was impressed with the argument advanced.

Mr. Moore: That still did not stop private builders from building them.

Mr. MORRIS: The argument advanced is obviously absurd. The very fact that that principle is being introduced today is an acknowledgment of the fact that funds and finance must be made available so that the people can buy their homes on a low deposit. People in those days or in these days will find it difficult to put down in cash the amount required for the building of a home.

Builders, small builders in particular, were in the same position then as they are today: they could not finance a large number of homes over a long term. That is elementary. Surely the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs must be able to see the logic of that statement.

I would show quite conclusively that this problem was not tackled by Labour and has never been tackled by Labour over the years they have been in office. With the permission of the Leader of the Opposition I will

re-quote some of the figures he gave to the House, and give some additional figures. In the pre-Labour days of 1912-13 1,195 homes were built by the Government. In 1913-14 1,879 homes were built by the Government, who were not a Labour Government. Never since that date have this Labour Government approached the figures I have quoted.

Mr. Moore: The Moore Government took workers' dwellings off in that period.

Mr. MORRIS: I never advance an argument but the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs tries to drag out the old skeleton of the Moore Government. Let me give him some figures: in 1929-30, the year the Labour Government talk so much about, the Moore Government built 771 homes for the people.

Mr. Jesson: That is finishing off the homes started in 1928.

Mr. MORRIS: Supposing the hon. member is right?

Mr. Jesson: Give us 1930-31.

Mr. MORRIS: In 1930-31, 282 homes were built and in the following year 251 homes. That was in the midst of the depression. That is not very good, is it, for hon. members opposite? But it was a marvellous performance, when we realise the conditions operating here at a time when we were in the midst of a world-wide depression. The depression lifted and a Labour Government came back into power. I think they assumed office in 1932, and one would expect that within three or four years of their return to power, if they felt the performance of the Moore Government was poor, they would have put up a better one. Did they do so?

Mr. Moore: The Moore Government gave the money away.

Mr. MORRIS: This is the usual red herring that the Minister is trying to drag across the trail; let me return to my argument. In 1935-36, when the Labour Government had been back in power for three or four years, and when, according to the talk we hear on the Government benches, we should be justified in expecting something, we find that the houses built for the people numbered 236, the lowest number built since 1912. But they still prate about what they have done for the people.

Mr. Jesson: Do you know why that was? There were no apprentices in 1932, consequently there were no tradesmen.

Mr. MORRIS: The hon. member wants to know the reason why the Labour Government did not build people houses. Of course, he knows the reason.

The reason was simply that the Government were too parsimonious to make the money available. I remind hon. members of the words of a former Secretary for Public Works, Mr. Bruce, who said that only approximately £300,000 was made available by the Government for building houses and for that reason they could not build any more.

Mr. Jesson: We did not want to infringe on private enterprise in those days but we are forced to do it now because private enterprise has fallen down on the job.

Mr. MORRIS: I cannot let that comment go by, because I have already quoted from page 843 of Volume 185 of "Hansard," where it is reported that the timber merchants and the builders approached the Government and asked them to make available money for the building of homes for the people, and the Government did nothing about it. I have quoted facts and given the true position as it existed prior to 1939 and subsequently, and I say without hesitation that the whole of the responsibility for the shortage of homes today lies to a major extent at the door of the present Government.

Let us look at how America is facing up to the housing problem. There they are doing a great deal by up-to-date methods in different spheres, including housing. A man named Levitt believed that he could produce houses cheaper and in greater numbers than anybody else. He went to the Government and obtained an advance and a guarantee of a very large amount of money, to be given in proportion to the number of homes he built, and the result is that between 1945 and 1951 he will have erected 7,000 in one area. The full story of that will be found in the current issue of the "Reader's Digest." He employs only 400 workers, plus sub-contractors. If this Government had accepted the offer that was made by the timber merchants and builders back in 1937 we should have had a similar scheme in operation here today instead of being faced with the tragic shortage of homes now obtaining.

There is operating in New South Wales another scheme that is receiving very great aid from the New South Wales Government. I refer to a co-operative building society that has received from the Government a guarantee of £50,000,000 on condition that it builds a certain number of homes.

What is the effect of that? It means that a young man, before he marries, can make early arrangements by entering this co-operative society and thus put money away to get a home for himself and his wife. On the other hand, if a man desires to buy a home, he can do so from the co-operative society, which is building many thousands of homes a year. This is the principal thing I want to point out to the Minister: on an advance of £1,508 to be repaid in 30 years with interest and redemption the total weekly repayment is only £1 16s. 3d.

Mr. Hilton: That is more than it is here.

Mr. MORRIS: I know there are people in Housing Commission houses in my area who are paying infinitely more than that.

Mr. Hilton: Would you mind repeating the figures?

Mr. MORRIS: I will do better, and submit the pamphlet to the Minister, as it will give him an opportunity of seeing the basis. The point I make is: in New South Wales there is an advance of £50,000,000

available to people who will build homes. In America the same principle is being adopted. It is not the duty of the Government of themselves to build homes but it is their duty to see that homes are built and it is for that reason that I find myself in agreement with one of the clauses of this Bill. That clause provides for the necessary finance, which can only be provided by a Government institution. I commend the Minister for that part of the Bill and I hope he will see his way clear to extend that principle so that advances might be made to large organisations, such as this co-operative society, and to any other large builder who is prepared to go ahead and build homes for the people as is being done in America and New South Wales.

Mr. HILEY (Coorparoo) (3.8 p.m.): There has been a sufficient measure of agreement with the principles of this Bill to dispel any suggestion that we shall do anything but support it.

Let us look at the stage at which our housing development has reached in our suburbs. Some of the principles of the Bill are connected with the breaking up into housing settlements of some of the newer estates on the fringes of the city and I particularly want the Minister to observe how one or two of the existing projects have been handled to see that we avoid mistakes made in the past. At the outset I draw the attention of the House to the fact that within the last month we had a member of the Cabinet, the Secretary for Public Lands and Irrigation, making a very fine plea for the preservation of the tree life and the wooded areas in this State. The hon. gentleman made a suggestion to local authorities, to homeowners, to farmers and all people of how essential it is to preserve the trees of this State. I am going to say that every capital in Australia has its varying characteristics and I should say that one of the prevailing characteristics of the city of Brisbane is its finely wooded suburbs. I think it would be a sorry thing if Brisbane lost that essential characteristic and if these timbered hills of ours were completely denuded of timber and we were left simply with the sort of thing you cannot help if you build a city on a treeless plain but which you can avoid if you do not denude your city of its timber. I ask the Minister to spare the time on some occasion to slip out and have a look at a new estate at Ekibin where an area of some 15 to 20 acres carrying a medium growth of timber was acquired by his department.

Mr. Hilton: I have been out there.

Mr. HILEY: Then the Minister will appreciate the point I am about to make. It was not timber of a millable quality but it was of medium dimensions, hardwood that I should say was 20 to 30 years old, quite substantial trees. On one part of the land there were some minor slopes, slopes that could not be regarded in any way as being steep—the whole area sloped very gently to the west. There were two minor gullies on it. I know every inch of the land as well as I know the back of my hand. I have ridden over it and walked over it repeatedly.

It was nothing like steeply sloping land but was quite favourable territory. The commission in its wisdom put the bulldozer into it and simply took the very surface from the area, taking every piece of vegetable matter, and by the time it had finished not one blade of grass remained and not one solitary tree. It simply skinned the surface of the land as if a giant planing machine had gone across the country. In addition, those responsible for laying out and planning the estate, not content to move every scrap of timber, set about improving on nature by flattening out the minor curves on the site. There were two very minor holes on the area and if the Minister makes a survey of the report on the contouring that took place he will agree that the original slope that nature provided was a very gentle one indeed. The bulldozer has been working there for months and there has been an expenditure of at least £100 an acre and they have proceeded to take off the good soil from the top of the slopes, leaving bare clay exposed, and have pushed the good soil and the top clay into the cavities. By the time they had finished they had taken what was a gentle curving suburban stretch and made a plain surface of it almost as if a great planing machine had slipped over the area. I doubt whether that was ever necessary, and I cannot be convinced that the project was improved. It simply meant the expenditure of a good deal of money, no improvement made, but the outlook infinitely worse.

We all know that in the suburban areas of Brisbane there is no great depth of good soil, unless you happen to live in a hollow. Apart from the hollows the average depth of suburban soil is not more than a spade and when you get below that you come to unsuitable clay, schist, and the like. I believe that the commission committed a grave error of judgment in tampering unnecessarily with an area like that, in scraping the top soil away and putting it into hollows and covering it with clay. It has merely destroyed that area for years to come because the people who go to live there will not be able to make gardens for some time; it will certainly take them much longer now than if the surface or top soil had been left available to them. On top of that it will take at least a generation before any tree-planting that takes place there can restore the wooded nature of what was once a lovely timbered slope. It will take 20 years before any tree-planting will be able to repair that damage. That is one of the results of the commission's having extended its activities to the timbered fringes round Brisbane and if it is its purpose to destroy the essentially timber character of the Brisbane countryside, it will have done a dis-service to the community—created a loss rather than a gain.

Heaven knows, I should like to see every possible blue gum, tallowwood and other native tree in Queensland preserved that good estate planning can manage to preserve, every one of them. If we are going to make it possible for our native birds not to find any harbourage in the city area we shall destroy much of the beauty now associated with it.

The youngsters will not have the pleasure, when they get up in the morning, of seeing the honeysuckers on whatever shrub or tree is in flower, for it will not find any harbourage, and at the same time we shall not preserve the pleasurable characteristics of the countryside. I do make this plea to the Minister, because I believe he is a man who would have an appreciation of the things that really make the spirit of the Queensland countryside and because I believe he will have a regard for the need to preserve the lovely things nature has provided for us. It is not a difficult task for an estate-planner with imagination to capitalise on the beauties of our countryside instead of destroying them. There is no need for him to sit down at his table with a ruler and plan a road in these areas with the exactness that would be employed in planning a narrow country lane. A road should curve round the countryside and preserve its natural beauties. That is not what we are doing. We are taking machines and destroying all the contours, all the curves, all the trees and all the beautiful things that nature gave us and making the sort of horror we see if you go and have a look at that settlement at Ekibin. I knew that countryside, I knew it well, and I am sorry to see that in a commendable effort to provide houses a beautiful stretch of countryside has been spoilt for a long period. I make the plea that the Minister, in exercising the powers of this provision, will see whether it is not possible to avoid destroying the beauties of nature, but that they should rather be capitalised on and improved.

Opposition Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LUCKINS (Norman) (3.18 p.m.): There is one part of this Bill against which I wish to enter my protest, that is, the power vested in the commission to resume people's land other than under the Public Works Land Resumption Acts. One deep-rooted principle in our laws that is treasured by every Britisher is that a man's home is his castle. This Bill vests in the Housing Commissioner power to go onto a man's land, pick the eyes out of it as it were, and leave him with the residue of comparatively little value. If we have power to resume land, and I think we have under the Public Works Land Resumption Acts, we should exercise that power rather than vest in this commission additional powers that probably are greater than under the Act I have mentioned. I wish to enter my protest on behalf of the peaceful holders of titles granted by the Crown under the Real Property Act of 1861.

I draw attention to the fact that by various Acts being passed through this Chamber we are gradually filching the liberty of the subject away from him. These powers are disguised in a way that will help such bodies as the commission. I make a strong protest against this Bill, as this principle is not in accordance with the British ideals of justice. The commission should work, as it has been working, under the Public Works Land Resumption Acts under which the Government have sufficient power to obtain the land required by the commission in the public good. I want the Minister to give

me an assurance that this provision will not in any way give greater power to the Government or enlarge the powers vested in the Government under the Public Works Land Resumption Acts.

Hon. P. J. R. HILTON (Carnarvon—Secretary for Public Works, Housing and Local Government) (3.20 p.m.), in reply: I should like to make some observations on the various contributions to the second-reading debate on the Bill. I am pleased that in the main the principles contained in it have been received favourably by all members. However, there has been much loose talk about acquisition and the powers of resumption. I want to inform hon. members that this power is nothing new in our Act; we have had the power to resume land for a long time. As I indicated on the introductory stage, we are merely amending the Act to permit of a speedier acquisition of land. I pointed out that the motive behind it was to facilitate resumptions and thereby make conditions better for the land-owners whose lands we were resuming. No new principle is involved, except that we can discontinue a resumption over the whole of an area and in lieu of taking the whole take part thereof.

Mr. Luckins: Probably the best part, and leave the rubbish.

Mr. HILTON: On that point I again emphasise that when I introduced the measure I pointed out up to date no land-owner had lodged an appeal with the Land Appeal Court on the question of compensation. I think that is a splendid record for the commission to have, and it reveals very clearly indeed that the commission has dealt fairly with land-owners in the matter of resumptions and compensations up to date.

Mr. Luckins: Why not work under that Act now?

Mr. HILTON: If the hon. member could only appreciate what I explained to the House on the Committee stage he would know that in certain cases we do not want to take the whole of an area because someone might have a farmlet or some other land on which he was pursuing some calling, and if this area had to be surveyed from the total area, there would be delay, and in many cases that would prolong the process of acquiring the land.

Mr. Luckins: It could be done by negotiation.

Mr. HILTON: Of course it will be done by negotiation. There has always been a policy of negotiation and it has met with the general approval of the people from whom land has been resumed. In order to make sure, however, that it is clear and definite that the land required may be acquired at an earlier date than would otherwise be possible, we are hastening the procedure of acquiring land. As I said before, the commission always had the power to acquire land.

The hon. member for Kedron, in his usual form, struck an alarmist note that we would

take land from somebody who was already conducting an industry and give it to a competitor.

Mr. Pie: I said you had the power.

Mr. HILTON: Our power is to resume land for housing purposes. Everyone agrees that the principle is a good one and that the commission should have power to grant leases to people engaged in industry or business. That is only a wise precaution and a wise policy. Members who have read the Act will find that that part of it has to be read with the provision in the Land Acts referring to the granting of leases, which will be followed in these matters.

I wish to make some reference to the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition, which were ill-considered and most ungenerous. First of all, he said the pre-fabricated houses coming from overseas were inferior in type. None of these houses has arrived in this State up to date, and for any man to stand and tell the public that they are inferior houses before he knows anything about them at all is a very foolish and irresponsible policy to adopt. I assure hon. members and the people of Queensland that these houses are being constructed to the design of the Housing Commission. We have arranged for inspection at the place of their pre-fabrication. As I have already informed the House, the price quoted does include fencing, drainage, water and electric services, and these amenities: electric bath-heaters, stoves, and wash-boilers, and all the other modern appliances that any woman could wish to have in her home. For the Leader of the Opposition to say that homes averaging in area from 917 to 1170 square feet and containing these modern appliances are inferior homes—well, I do not know what the word "inferior" means. The Leader of the Opposition was a little premature in his condemnation of the pre-fabricated houses.

The hon. gentleman struck another alarmist note when he stated that the average cost of a house, exclusive of land cost and after deduction of the Commonwealth subsidy of £300, was £1,859. He said that the contract was signed in March and since then there had been an 8s. a week increase in the basic wage and a further increase of 20s. a week was expected, making a wage increase in all of 28s. He said that would add another 22 per cent. to the cost of the houses and would bring the average price, exclusive of the land, to £2,270, an increase of over £400. Assuming that the wage increase will be 28s. a week, that amount, related to the wage of £9 11s. a week, which obtained in March last, when the contract was signed, is 14.66 per cent. The cost of wages in the contract price of these houses was 40 per cent. of the contract price and 40 per cent. of the average cost of £2,159, that is, inclusive of Commonwealth subsidies, equals £863 12s.; 14.66 per cent. of £863 12s. equals £126 12s.; therefore the estimated increase in the cost is not 22 per cent., as the Leader of the Opposition claimed, but only 5.8 per cent.

Mr. Pie: Has not your original cost advanced?

Mr. HILTON: The contract provided for a rise and fall, as all contracts do at the present time. I quoted the basic wage for carpenters obtaining when the contract was signed. There has been an increase of 8s. a week since then, and assuming that wage is further increased by £1 a week, the wages for the cost of the building in relation to the wages of the whole contract would work out as I have said, at 5.8 per cent. and not 22 per cent. or over £400, as the Leader of the Opposition contended.

Mr. Pie: What about f.o.b.?

Mr. HILTON: All these things are provided for. That is the extra cost we shall be up for in respect of these houses.

There has also been a great deal of loose talk about the lack of advantage to home-purchasers under the improved terms set out in this Bill. Everybody knows that the cost of homes has increased and it is right that the Government should endeavour to help people buy their own homes rather than condemn them to paying rent for the rest of their lives.

A very illogical attitude is adopted by the hon. member for Kedron and other hon. members opposite when they say that the new terms of lower deposits and increase in the advances that may be made to borrowers are of no advantage to home-purchasers. If we continued with the deposit of 15 per cent. or 20 per cent., it is obvious that the average wage-earner would not be in a position to afford the deposit on a home at present costs. That being so, he would be condemned to paying rent for the rest of his life and would have no opportunity of acquiring his own home. I only wish that under these improved terms we had ready to offer to every one of the numerous applicants who apply every day a house of his own. I have no doubt whatsoever that under the new very advantageous terms many thousands of people will take the opportunity of acquiring their own homes, and it is absurd for hon. members to say there is no advantage to the home-purchaser in these improved conditions.

I was very interested indeed to hear the comment by the hon. member for Yeronga on the interest factor as it applies to the cost of homes. I made passing reference to this question when introducing the Bill. It is true that the New Zealand Government did make available from bank reserves £5,000,000 at 1 per cent. Anything in excess of £5,000,000 was made available at 1½ per cent. and I agree with the suggestion that the Commonwealth Government should examine that policy with a view to seeing how far it would be possible to apply it in Australia to make money available to all the States at the same low rate as applies in New Zealand. Such a scheme would do much to reduce both the cost of a new home to the purchaser and the rent to be charged on rental homes.

Mr. Kerr: The previous Federal Government did not do anything about it.

Mr. HILTON: Did I say they did? We all agree that housing is a major social problem. Irrespective of party politics,

everybody worth a grain of salt should give serious consideration to the question of housing our people because the more people we have happily housed the greater will be our standard of social conditions and general satisfaction of the people in the country. It would be very wise for the Commonwealth Government to make available from that vast reserve of £400,000,00 held by the Commonwealth Bank money to finance home construction throughout Australia. I repeat that it is very interesting to hear those observations from an hon. member of the Opposition in support of the passing reference I made to that phase of housing when introducing the measure.

The hon. member for Mundingburra seems to be in a dither as to what would happen in respect of an employee buying a home from an employer, assuming a person or body corporate had taken advantage of the provisions of the Bill and established a housing estate for his or its employees.

Mr. Aikens: And then had gone bankrupt.

Mr. HILTON: In the first instance, the Government, in deciding to render this measure of help to industry if it decides to embark upon a housing scheme, insist that no employee should be disadvantaged because the Government lend money to industry for that purpose. We have insisted that any company or person obtaining advances under the provisions of the Bill should be compelled to sell a home to any employee if he decides to buy. The employee, however, must be eligible to buy the home. Under the provisions of the Bill no employee who already owns a home in Queensland or half a dozen homes is entitled to buy a home. The Government, when they make money available, will hold a first mortgage over the house and the land on which it is erected, and any employee buying a home from the organisation by which he is employed will, of course, buy under a legal contract in which there will be a covenant giving sufficient protection to the employee, and in the event of the employer's going bankrupt, the Government, having the first mortgage, will have the first claim on the house and the land. The Government have seen to it that the employee must not be disadvantaged in buying a home from an employer and obviously they would merely allow the employee to carry on and pay off his house by way of rent.

Mr. Aikens: Would not the house go into the bankrupt estate?

Mr. HILTON: No, the Government would have the first mortgage.

Mr. Hiley: That only protects the debt to you but does not remove the house from the estate of the bankrupt.

Mr. HILTON: It protects the debt to the Crown and we have first claim on these debts and if the house has been sold to an employee has not the employee a claim also?

Mr. Aikens: I suggest that you look at the law of bankruptcy.

Mr. Hiley: I think it merits the most careful examination.

Mr. HILTON: I do not profess to be a lawyer but I have given consideration to that aspect of the matter and whilst I am open to correction I think the provisions in the Bill are sufficient to meet a contingency such as that. However, I will examine that matter further and if necessary the Bill can be amended. I do not think at this stage that the Bill needs amendment in that direction.

Mr. Aikens: You will be guided by your legal officers, of course.

Mr. HILTON: Obviously one must be guided by one's legal men in these matters but I do not expect any tangle in that direction.

Mr. Pie: You will have it.

Mr. HILTON: The hon. member for Kedron is one of the greatest pessimists and one who creates the most suspicion and trouble I have ever met.

I want to make some corrections concerning the remarks made by the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha. I do not want to go over all the erroneous expressions in his contribution but merely to correct him on this point: he said that it was a non-Labour Government who held the record for house construction in this State in any year since the formation of the State Advances Corporation, which of course is now the State Housing Commission.

I give a direct denial to that, because the record in any one year was in 1926-27 when the Labour Government were in power and in that year 1,145 workers' dwellings and 471 workers' homes, a total of 1,616 houses, were completed. The hon. member said also that in 1935-36 only 336 houses were erected by the Labour Government and again his statement is incorrect, because the number erected in that year was 564, not 336.

Then he made reference to something that he alleges took place in America and I want to tell hon. members that as one interested in housing in other countries of the world I looked up the housing position in America and I want to say briefly that since May, 1940, provision has been made for only two-thirds of the families requiring single-family dwellings in that country and since then new dwellings have only just been sufficient to balance the deterioration and meanwhile population has increased by 15 per cent., so that the housing position in America has deteriorated since the war rather than improved. That is a shocking commentary on a rich industrial country like the U.S.A. where the industrial potential is so great. There has been a determined drive there in the last 12 months to improve the housing position. We have nothing to learn from that country so far as the solution of the housing problem is concerned.

Then the hon. member referred to the activities of the co-operative society in New South Wales. I am a firm believer in

co-operative societies and I do not think there is anything to stop a co-operative society from embarking upon a housing scheme in this State. I can assure hon. members opposite that the Government of this State, having co-operation as one of the major planks of their platform, would be very happy indeed to help a co-operative society in this State in launching a housing scheme.

Mr. Morris: And provide the finance.

Mr. HILTON: We are providing for finance under this Bill in the case of industries that are prepared to house their employees and obviously we should do our very best, as we have always done in the past, so far as co-operative societies are concerned.

Then the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha said that in the case of an advance of £1,500 a borrower in New South Wales was obliged to repay only £1 16s. a week. I reminded the hon. member that under the Bill a borrower in Queensland over the same period of 30 years would be obliged to repay only £1 11s. 3d. a week in respect of an advance of £1,500. The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha knows very little about the financial terms of the Housing Commission because when he said that a borrower in New South Wales would be required to pay only £1 16s. a week in respect of an advance of £1,500 he really thought that a borrower in Queensland would be required to pay more than that, whereas he is required to repay only £1 11s. 3d. in respect of an advance of £1,500. I hope that the hon. member has gained a little more information than he previously had about the financial terms of the Housing Commission.

The hon. member for Logan made a plea for the saving of trees and the preservation of natural beauty as far as possible on Housing Commission estates. I should like very much to see that policy carried out, if it were practicable. I have discussed the matter with officers of the Commissioner and at one stage the commission did leave certain trees on estates but unfortunately it was compelled subsequently to remove them. In most instances, the natural timber was faulty in growth inasmuch as there were hollows in the trunks and deterioration set in. In a few instances, again, storms blew down some of the trees that were left in isolated positions. The people complained of the danger and they had to be removed. We have to prepare these housing areas with all speed. The work has had to be done by contractors and as they do the work with bulldozers it is impossible for them to arrange to by-pass certain trees. I regret that it has been necessary, and that it has not been possible hitherto to survey the land in such a way as to instruct the contractor to leave certain trees standing. I had a look at the Ekibin estate referred to by the hon. member for Logan. From memory, the excavation carried out there was for the purpose of filling up a hollow in the land in order to provide building allotments.

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Mr. Hiley: You are thinking of the other one at the pound; I am thinking of the one on the western slopes near the reservoir hill.

Mr. HILTON: I do not know which one the hon. member referred to. The only possible solution, seeing we have of necessity to remove all the timber, is to encourage people to plant trees and shrubs as soon as settlement takes place. In New Zealand people are encouraged to plant gardens, particularly where estates have been cleared of trees, and the commission itself plants ornamental shrubs. I pointed out in this House some time ago that there has been a fierce campaign against the commission. It is alleged that these estates are surveyed and houses erected without any regard to artistic planning and as a result they present a deadly monotony. That is incorrect. Hon. members will remember that at one stage we were blamed for building a long row of houses on 16-perch allotments, but these were erected by a contractor. I disproved that statement and the paper that was at fault then searched the whole of Brisbane to take the most unfavourable photograph of backyards and published it as a typical scene of a commission's estate. I cannot understand the attitude of a journal that tries to decry a commission in its own State that is doing an effective job. I have travelled through all the commission's estates, and in appearance, where certain progress has been made, they compare very favourably indeed with housing estates in any other part of Australia or New Zealand. Full advantage is being taken of the natural features in the layout of the settlement, and after a number of years, when shrubs have been planted, and when the ordinary enthusiastic home-gardener gets to work, these estates will present a very pleasing appearance indeed. In New Zealand nearly every town is sewered, and consequently that Dominion is not faced with the problem of erecting outhouses, as we have to do in Brisbane. Until Brisbane is sewered it will be necessary to have outhouses, but at present the disfigurement of allotments in that way is reduced to a minimum.

I think I have made reasonable observations on all the comments and objections made by hon. members opposite. I repeat that I believe the provisions in this Bill will mean a great deal for the speeding up of housing in Queensland, and greatly help the average wage-earner who wants to buy his own home.

Motion (Mr. Hilton) agreed to.

COMMITTEE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Farrell, Maryborough, in the chair.)

Clauses 1 to 9, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment.

The House adjourned at 3.53 p.m.