

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 27 MARCH 1952

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

QUESTIONS.

BUS TRANSPORT TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

Mr. LOW (Coorooora) asked the Secretary for Public Instruction—

"1. Will he give favourable consideration to the granting of free bus passes to scholarship-holders who have to travel by bus to attend secondary schools in Queensland where no rail facilities exist, particularly in the case of country schools where daily passenger services operate to and from the centres where they are established?"

"2. If not, what is the reason for the discrimination between children who travel by rail and receive free rail passes and those compelled to travel by bus and pay their own fares?"

Hon. G. H. DEVRIES (Gregory) replied—

"1. A State-wide census is being made of pupils who use public road transport vehicles to travel daily to secondary schools and of the daily or weekly fares paid by them. A pro-forma was prepared and a copy sent to every secondary school, State and non-State, for early completion and return. Although a few replies are still arriving, those received are now being collated. When the information has been reviewed, any conclusion which might have a bearing on the question of free road transport to secondary schools will then be submitted to Cabinet.

"2. The Queensland railways are State owned. Hence the granting of free rail transport to school children demands only inter-Departmental debits and credits, but no actual disbursement of Government funds."

SCHOOL BUS SERVICES, COUNTRY ROADS.

Mr. LOW (Coorooora) asked the Treasurer—

"In view of the fact that school transport operators in Queensland are finding it most difficult to carry on under increased costs and heavy wear and tear on their vehicles caused by the bad condition of many country roads, will he give favourable consideration to the gazettal under the Main Roads Acts of all shire roads on which school transport services operate, in order that they may be improved and maintained in better condition than at present?"

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg) replied—

"In making recommendations for declarations of roads under 'The Main Roads Acts, 1920 to 1943,' the Commissioner takes into consideration all relevant

matters. The honourable member's reference to the bad condition of country roads is a reflection on the local authorities concerned."

QUEENSLAND-BRITISH FOOD CORPORATION; PIG OUTPUT.

Mr. SPARKES (Aubigny), for Mr. V. E. JONES (Callide), asked the Premier—

"1. In reference to the 739 pigs sold in 1951 by the Queensland-British Food Corporation, how many came from (a) Moura, (b) Bajool, and (c) Peak Downs?"

"2. What were the total weights, respectively?"

"3. Where any pigs were sold in that year, what was the cost of production per lb., respectively?"

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane) replied—

"1. (a) 507; (b) 181; (c) 51.

"2. (a) 68,939 lb. dressed weight; (b) 30,137 lb. dressed weight; (c) 6,168 lb. dressed weight.

"3. The average number of pigs held at all piggeries during the year was 2,428, and the average annual cost per pig, including depreciation of assets, was £11 15s."

ESCAPING GAS, WAROOBY OIL BORE.

Mr. EWAN (Roma) asked the Secretary for Mines and Immigration—

"In reference to the steps being taken to seal the gas escape from the Warooby bore—

"1. Has the Government Geologist taken samples of the escaping gas?"

"2. If so, have such samples been analysed and with what results?"

Hon. E. J. RIORDAN (Flinders) replied—

"1. Yes.

"2. Results of analysis are not yet available."

QUEENSLAND-BRITISH FOOD CORPORATION; PIG ASSETS.

Mr. V. E. JONES (Callide): I desire to ask the Premier whether he has a further answer to the following question which I addressed to him yesterday—

"In reference to the statement of live-stock on hand at 1 October, 1950, and at 30 September, 1951, in the pig-raising trading account of the Queensland-British Food Corporation, is there any minimum age at which pigs were taken into account, and, if so, what is that age?"

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane) replied—

"Yes. Pigs which survive twenty-four hours after birth are taken into account in livestock figures."

CHARGES TO CABINET MINISTERS IN
REFRESHMENT ROOMS.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra): I desire to ask you, Mr. Speaker, as officer in charge of this House and Chairman of the Parliamentary Rooms Committee, this question—

“Do Cabinet Ministers pay for meals and morning and afternoon teas partaken of in the dining room and visitors’ room by themselves and their guests, and do they pay the same prices as are charged to other members of this House?”

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes.

GIFT DUTY ACTS AND OTHER ACTS
AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg—Treasurer): I move—

“That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Gift Duty Acts, 1926 to 1948, the Succession and Probate Duties Acts, 1892 to 1948, and the Income Tax and Succession and Probate Duties (Sailors, Soldiers, and Members of the Air Force) Exemption Acts, 1940 to 1944, each in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

WORKERS’ COMPENSATION ACTS
AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg—Treasurer): I move—

“That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Workers’ Compensation Acts, 1916 to 1951, in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

LABOUR AND INDUSTRY ACT
AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

Hon. A. JONES (Charters Towers—Secretary for Labour and Industry): I move—

“That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Labour and Industry Act of 1946 in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

SUGAR EXPERIMENT STATIONS ACTS
AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Debate resumed from 26 March (see p. 1991) on Mr. Collins’s motion—

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

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) (11.12 a.m.): I should like to make a brief comment or two on this Bill. Like other speakers I appreciate and should like to join with them in paying a tribute to the great work that is done by the bureau, particularly in the breeding programme and the investigations that it makes into the cultural needs of the industry and methods of pest control. As the result of the wonderful work the bureau has done, it has made a material contribution not only to the economy of the sugar industry but also to the economy of this State, because after all the economy of the State is bound up very largely with that of the sugar industry. As a matter of fact, the economic condition of the sugar industry has national significance, because as the result of the establishment of the industry in the northern parts of the State we have built up a virile population in the tropical areas that is a valuable asset not only to Queensland, but to the whole of Australia. In enabling those engaged in the sugar industry to carry on on an economic basis, the bureau has made a material contribution over the years to the economy of the State.

The sugar industry cannot remain static; it must continue to progress.

Mr. Collins: That applies to all industries.

Mr. NICKLIN: That is so, but I am dealing at the moment particularly with the sugar industry. It must continue to progress and at all times must be prepared to carry out investigations and experiments to improve the quality of cane and introduce new varieties. It must also tackle the problem of disease and the cultural problems that are peculiar to the industry. I should like to mention particularly the problem of monoculture, which this industry is compelled to adopt because of the assignment system that we have applied to it. That system is responsible for many cultural problems that would not arise if the industry was permitted to rotate its lands and to carry out the practices that are normally followed in other agricultural industries. As the Minister has pointed out, at times cultural principles that are laid down as sound do not always work out in practice. He mentioned particularly the returning of trash to the soil. As another illustration I should like to refer to an experiment that I saw conducted in Victoria in rotational grazing as against ordinary grazing. Although it is generally understood that rotational grazing has advantages over ordinary grazing, in this instance it was shown over a period of four years that sheep grazed on a rotational basis did not show any weight increase over sheep that were grazed ordinarily on comparable pastures.

Mr. Collins: That would be rather light-carrying country, would it not?

Mr. NICKLIN: No. As a matter of fact, it was very heavily stocked. It was on irrigated pastures. I mention that to show that in some instances ordinarily accepted agricultural principles can be negated by

actual results. These things all emphasise the value of the work of the bureau to the industry over the years and the contribution that it has made in keeping the sugar industry in Queensland one of the most efficient industries in the world.

The necessity for the introduction of this Bill has been caused by the increased expenditure of the board following the passing by this House of an amending Bill in 1951, which took the bureau's employees away from the control of the Public Service Commissioner and placed them under the control of the board. That was something that the industry asked for, and something that it was prepared to pay for. It was felt that that would be of great advantage to the industry because it would help in retaining the services of the officers of the bureau, and I believe it has been of great advantage to its operations.

The contributions to the fund this year will be £90,000, being £83,000 by the industry and £7,000 by the Government. I agree with the Minister in regard to the industry's spirit of self-help in this connection. That spirit is, indeed, so great that the other partner, the Government, are virtually only a sleeping partner although they still retain control of the bureau. It seems to me that the sleeping partner might with advantage be eliminated altogether. It is not a usual practice for an 8½ per cent. interest to exercise complete control. At the moment I do not object to this control because it is a benevolent control exercised by the Minister. I take this opportunity to pay him a tribute for the interest he has shown in the industry and for the way in which he has tackled its problems on its behalf and so long as he continues to exercise that benevolent control I shall have no personal objection to it. It must be remembered nevertheless that the Government are contributing only 8 per cent. of the total money required to keep the bureau going. However, I repeat that the Minister has shown a great interest in the industry and has kept in closer touch with its problems than any other previous Minister who has been in charge of the bureau over very many years. I commend him for that, and I am sure that the industry does, too. I am sure also that it appreciates his efforts on its behalf.

Mr. Sparkes: Do not embarrass him.

Mr. NICKLIN: I always believe in giving credit where credit is due, and the Minister deserves credit for the part he has played in regard to assistance to the industry. If in the course of time I believe that he is deserving of a little bit of censure I shall not hesitate to give it to him.

I further emphasise the point that the industry is prepared to help itself by tackling its problems on the cultural side. All industries that are prepared to do that deserve all possible help from the Government. The Government have followed that policy with other industries. When the pineapple industry required some investigational work its representatives went to the Government and said, "We will provide a portion of the cost if the Government will help." The Government came in and helped the pineapple

industry and the work that was done was an advantage to the industry and the State as a whole. All industries that are prepared to make contributions of this kind should have the sympathetic consideration of the Government.

Although the sugar industry makes a contribution of £83,000 per annum to the bureau, it has also its own research institute at Mackay where the director is paid a salary of £3,000 per annum, which is considerably more than would be paid if the institute was under the public service. However, the industry has the man that it wants, it is paying him well, and it will get good results. It has always been prepared to pay for improved services, particularly in research, which has an important bearing on its success.

The industry approves of the increases contained in the Bill because it appreciates the need for having good work carried out under the Act.

As a side issue, really, on this question of work by the sugar experiment stations, I should like to make reference to the suggestion by the hon. member for Hinchinbrook yesterday that an experiment station be established at Abergowrie where there is some new development in the sugar industry. I do not think that is necessary. We have established stations in strategic places throughout the State that can deal with the various conditions obtaining in the industry as a whole. If we were going to have stations all over the country side, we shall, instead of helping the work of the bureau, be handicapping it in carrying out the work at the established stations, where all the work necessary to guide the Abergowrie farmers can be carried out.

It has been reported that in order to establish a new sugar farm of 50 acres in that area it would cost £10,000, which is a tremendous amount; and as a consequence men who have received assignments are pulling out. This is a sinister indication of the present trend in primary industry where costs have risen to such an extent that it is impossible for a new man setting out to establish himself.

Mr. Walsh: Apparently the Federal Government do not take that view.

Mr. NICKLIN: The Treasurer cannot put it on the Federal Government. His cry is, "If anything is wrong go to the Federal Government; get it out of the Federal Government." The State Government have responsibilities and they have to accept them; and the Minister should accept his. What have the Federal Government to do with the fact that a man cannot get sufficient capital to start a new farm on account of the high capital cost?

Mr. Walsh: The Federal Government had a lot to do with it.

Mr. NICKLIN: Nothing at all.

Mr. Walsh: What about credit restriction and the 2d. increase?

Mr. NICKLIN: The fact is undisputed that at the present time high costs are

preventing the development of our primary industries. A few years ago, if a man got an assignment in the sugar industry it was equivalent to winning the Casket, but now when he gets an assignment at Abergowrie he has to forfeit it because he cannot find money to meet the tremendous costs involved in developing his farm. I quote that to show that the costs involved in this Bill are infinitesimal when you consider the costs involved in establishing a new farm under the present high prices that are current in our community.

Besides providing for increased levies, the Bill also provides that levies in future shall be fixed by order in council, which is a very wise provision. Now it will not be necessary to introduce a new Bill whenever money is required to carry on the operations of the grower. It is a principle that meets with the approval of this side of the House and the industry.

Another principle involved is that levies collected by the millers for pest control must be paid to the Pest Control Boards not later than 28 February each year.

In conclusion, may I say again that I commend the operations of the bureau and the legislation we have before us? I hope the bureau will continue to make the same very valuable contribution in the future as it has done in the past to the development of this great sugar industry of ours.

Motion (Mr. Collins) agreed to.

COMMITTEE.

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

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

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING.

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

COAL MINING ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

Hon. E. J. RIORDAN (Flinders—Secretary for Mines and Immigration) (11.31 a.m.): I move—

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

There is little that I can add to the remarks I made when introducing this measure when I explained its provisions and outlined what we seek to do. The Bill meets with the general approval of both employers and employees in the industry. It gives greater scope to employers by enabling them to seek the services of outside electricians for the checking of electrical equipment in the mine and I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. KERR (Sherwood) (11.32 a.m.): What the Minister has said is true. The Bill will allow the owners of electrically equipped

mines to seek the services of outside electricians whenever that is necessary. It will apply to certain electrically equipped mines or groups of mines owned by the one owner.

In these days, when a great number of coal-mines are electrically operated, it is only right that every precaution should be taken for their safe working and the safety of the men engaged in them. The use of electricity in the industry is spreading and I hope that during his tenure of office the Minister will see still greater use made of this power in coal-mines throughout the State. The physical hazards in coal-mining are many. There are dangers from water and so on, and dangers from lighting, all of which have contributed to fatal accidents and will continue to do so if there is no proper supervision, including supervision by fully qualified electricians to guard against possible defects in electrical equipment.

I can assure the Minister that this Bill has the whole-hearted support of hon. members on this side. We approve of it and we think it is necessary in the interests of both the safety of the men engaged in the industry and the safe working of the mines.

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) (11.34 a.m.): I agree with the hon. member for Sherwood that we support the Bill, and at this stage I take the opportunity of congratulating the Minister upon his elevation to his present office.

When framing coal-mining legislation, especially that dealing with safety precautions, it is always wise to do as the Minister has done in this case—to ascertain the views of all sections of the industry before bringing down his Bill. After all, if the proposed legislation meets with the approval of all the people interested, it is more likely to be accepted than if the Minister adopted a Hitler-like attitude and, without consulting them, said they had to accept it whether they liked it or not. Of course, I know that such an attitude is foreign to his nature and I commend him for having discussed this legislation with all parties concerned and obtaining their support before introducing it.

There is a shortage of certified mining electricians and something has to be done to overcome the difficulty without in any way breaking down precautions that are essential to the protection of workers in the mines. This Bill does that. It makes provision that where a full-time certificated mine electrician is not available an outside electrician may take periodic inspections in his place and the section will now apply to all coal-mines or groups of mines where the supply is other than low or extra low as defined in the schedule.

The hon. member for Sherwood mentioned that mining practices and methods are altering and becoming more up to date from day to day and that means that there will be a greater use of electricity in mines in the future. It is only right that we should keep abreast of these developments and see that the various regulations for the proper use of electricity are complied with and that

installations are of the highest standard. It is necessary that this should be so because no risk should be taken in coal-mines especially. We know the damage that can be wrought by faulty electrical installations, even in a house for example. A faulty installation can cause fire and the loss of a building, and one can imagine what similar damage could be caused in a mine containing inflammable gases. It might even cause a major disaster involving the loss of life. One of the greatest sources of danger in a coal-mine is as a result of the explosion of gases. When one casts one's mind back, one remembers that it is not so many years ago that only naked lights were available in mines; and in those days miners took tremendous risks. As the result of legislation introduced from time to time we have provided that only electric lights shall be used in mines and during the early part of this session an amendment was introduced providing that no matches should be in the possession of anybody in the underground portion of a coal-mine, instead of only in any part where safety-lamps were required. I quote these facts to point out the progressive steps taken to ensure maximum safety in the working conditions of our mines and I emphasise that faulty electrical equipment could be a source of serious danger and could cause a major disaster. Every care must be taken to see that electrical installations are up to a high standard and that all risks are obviated.

The other provisions the Minister has written into the Bill are of a machinery nature to serve the general purpose of effective control. As I said before, this is a legislative complement to a previous enactment providing for the maximum possible safety in coal-mines and for the protection of the men working in them.

Mr. BROSAN (Fortitude Valley) (11.40 a.m.): I rise to support the Bill before the House as I am one who was and is still interested in the matter and was one of the committee called together in 1948 for the purpose of obtaining the co-operation of all parties concerned in promulgating rules and regulations to govern the use of electricity in mines. It is from the work of that committee that this Bill has flowed.

The original conference was called in accordance with this Government's policy in all matters—conciliation and co-operation—and it was nothing more than the present Minister would adopt. It was not a Hitler-like attitude and could not be construed as such. The committee consisted of representatives not only of coal-mines but of metaliferous mines, not only was the appropriate trade union represented but the electricians in mines were represented, and so too were the employers through their electrical engineers, the State Electricity Commission, and the Supervisor of State Coal-mines. It was a very comprehensive gathering and since it met in April, 1948, there have been many negotiations and many matters have been discussed and remedied, and finally promulgated by way of regulation; and as a consequence we have this Bill before the House today.

The use of electricity in mines—and I do not want to be misunderstood when I say this—can be more dangerous than its use in homes and factories. That is not only because of the gassy conditions that are found in some mines, but because of the ever-present moisture. Wet conditions underfoot and moisture generally are very bad conditions in which to be either working with electrical appliances or installing them. The modern trend in coal-mines is towards the use of electric drills, electric hoists, electric mules, &c., and as a consequence every precaution must be taken. For example, the Government in their wisdom have decreed that those precautions must be observed to the extent that when repairs or alterations or additions are to be made, they must be made on a non-productive shift, thus reducing to a minimum any danger that may arise from the work that is being done.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the Electrical Trades Union and its members, and particularly those members who are employed as mine electricians or as electricians in coal-mines, are deeply grateful to the Government for the opportunity extended to them at all times to confer and to voice their views and opinions of the regulations, the definition of "mine electrician" and the exemptions that may be granted to mine-owners. I give the assurance that at all times they will act in the best interests of the industry and will help the Government in their policy of safety first.

Mr. DONALD (Bremer) (11.44 a.m.): I rise primarily to express my appreciation of the attitude of the Leader of the Opposition and of the hon. member for Sherwood in their contributions to this debate. It is very pleasing indeed to know that members of the Opposition are beginning to appreciate the work of the miners and to support the elimination as far as possible of the risks they must run every day.

The tendency in the mining industry is towards the use of electricity rather than steam; steam plants are being superseded by electrical equipment in almost every colliery in the State. Many collieries used to generate their own electric power—it was D.C. current—and use it extensively, but the present tendency is to do away with their own generating plants and buy their electricity in bulk from the various electric authorities. That current, of course, is A.C. and calls for greater care in its use, as it is more dangerous.

The mechanisation that has taken place in this industry has also created a greater demand for the use of direct electrical current, and even in the haulage plants the electric motor is superseding steam. The reason for that, of course, is that the capital cost of an electric haulage plant is not nearly as great as that of steam, and it is not nearly as difficult for a man to obtain a winding ticket under a system of electric haulage.

What this legislation is doing in the main is to legalise a practice that is already in operation in some collieries. As the Minister has said, there are not enough certified mine

electricians to go round, and it is the practice at present for those companies that cannot employ a full-time electrician to join with other companies in employing a man who is outside the mining industry altogether. So far that practice has been quite satisfactory, and it has given the various companies an assurance that their electrical equipment will be installed in accordance with the legislation covering the use of electricity.

I again emphasise the every-day danger that is associated with coal-mining, and I cannot stress too strongly the additional danger that goes with the installation of electrical equipment in collieries throughout the State. In addition to the danger that ordinarily attaches to the use of electricity in a mine, there is additional danger from faulty installation and faulty cables. An electrical spark can cause an explosion which may result not only in considerable damage to property, but in appalling loss of life.

In conclusion, I assure the House that the men engaged in this industry will appreciate to the full what the Minister is attempting to do in this legislation.

Motion (Mr. Riordan) agreed to.

COMMITTEE.

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

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING.

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

COAL INDUSTRY (CONTROL) ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

Hon. E. J. RIORDAN (Flinders—Secretary for Mines and Immigration) (11.52 a.m.): I move—

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

I gave a full outline of the measure on the introductory stage and I do not propose to cover that ground again. I pointed out that it was intended to remove any obstacle in the way of the enforcement of the intentions of the Act. There is no alteration in the Act in any material particular but as it now stands there is some doubt whether it can be enforced at law to give effect to the intentions of this Legislature.

The two respects in which it is proposed that the Coal Board shall have certain jurisdictional doubts removed are—

(a) The power to regulate the opening of new coal-mines, the conduct of such mines during their operational stages (including the development work preparatory to actual coal winning operations) and the closing or abandonment of established mines and

(b) The power to require that coal-mines shall conform to modern industry practice and that their owners shall mechanise their workings to the extent warranted in each particular instance, including the installation of essential units to adequately prepare the product of the mines for market.

I am sure hon. members will readily approve of that form of legislative control.

I explained the other day, too, that it was only a small minority who were hindering the carrying out of this important legislation and that they should be placed on the same level as everyone else in competing on the open market or in selling coal to any particular authority. I specially mentioned that certain coal-owners had refused to install coal-cleansing machines and as a consequence they were being paid for foreign matter in the coal and this had the effect of imposing charges on the public that they were not entitled to bear. These are dishonest and improper practices and no hon. member whether on this side of the House, or on the other side, desires that such practices should continue. It was suggested in certain quarters that they were carried on only by small shows but we have it from the hon. member for Bremer, who represents a coal-mining area, that a number of small companies in his area have had the coal-washing or cleansing machines in operation on the surface at the mines for some years, whereas some of the bigger owners are reluctant to install this equipment.

I could go on to point out the possibilities in connection with the extraneous or foreign matter, as it may be termed, which could lead to a greater and greater increase in the cost of electric power to the consumer, if it is not eliminated. At the present time mines are down on seams containing foreign matter, and some mine-owners contend that it is the duty of the miner to remove the foreign matter before the coal is sent to the surface, and that there is no necessity for a coal-cleansing machine to be established on the surface. That is one of the doubts that exist and which it is desired to clear up by giving the board specific powers to prosecute.

The provision in the Bill in connection with the closing and abandoning of mines was in the original Act, but again there was some vagueness and doubt whether the provision could be enforced. There is no new principle in the Bill; the only thing it does is to tighten up the Act and give the Coal Board powers and authority to prosecute and enforce its decisions.

Mr. Aikens: Will this Act clear up the legal problem arising as a result of the recent High Court decision?

Mr. RIORDAN: This Bill has nothing to do with High Court decisions at all.

At a later date I will give the Committee some figures to show the increase that has occurred in dirt in coal over the years, if hon. members would like to hear them. As I said, with the exception of the provisions I mentioned, there is nothing new

in the Bill, which merely aims at strengthening the powers of the board to enforce its decisions under the original Act and give it the security it needs.

Mr. KERR (Sherwood) (11.57 a.m.): When the Act was introduced in 1948 we gave it our blessing, on the ground that its purpose was to give us better mining knowledge, conduct and usage. The Bill will put beyond all doubt what the Act means and remove any possibility of evasion of its provisions, and in that respect it is justified.

I think the provision as to the opening and closing or abandoning of coal-mines without the permission of the board is a sound one, but I do raise this point: experts will be available for the guidance of people about to engage in the coal-mining industry, particularly in the opening up of a new mine, but in regard to closing down a mine, I hope that a little latitude will be given and that no hasty decision will be arrived at. I am not suggesting that the Coal Board wants to reduce the output of coal in this State, but there is a little danger there and we want to be on guard against anything like that.

Mr. Riordan: I can assure you no drastic action is proposed.

Mr. KERR: Those powers should not be abused in any way; that would amount to a restriction of output and it would be unfair to the prospective coal-owner.

I do not think we are doing enough to develop the output of the West Moreton coal-field. In the metropolitan area our big electrical and gas undertakings have to bring coal from as far as Blair Athol. Imagine the effect on people living in the metropolitan area of having to pay twice as much for Blair Athol coal for the production of electricity or gas. We should take some action to induce people to open up more coal-mines in the West Moreton and Rosewood areas, where the reserves of coal are immense.

It must be remembered too that in the past the eyes were picked out of the mines there and we now have thousands of tons of pillar coal in those old workings. The time will come when the Minister will have to tackle that problem also.

Mr. Aikens: Have you a problem with pillar coal in the West Moreton mines?

Mr. KERR: Yes, but probably not so much in the West Moreton area as in the New South Wales fields. Every consumer of gas or electricity is adversely affected through our having to bring coal from Blair Athol or Callide for use here. I feel that the Minister will have to find some way of accelerating and increasing output from areas that are nearer.

As to the cleaning of coal, the hon. member for Bremer, whose knowledge and experience of coalfields in Southern Queensland in particular are appreciated by all hon. members here, has told us of the many mines at which coal-washing is in operation. The

Minister says that many of the bigger mine-owners will not put such plants into operation, and the result of this lack of washing on their part has meant that on many occasions the consumers are buying half coal and half rock. I have had trouble on many occasions with the steamers running up and down Moreton Bay because the firemen have gone on strike as a result of having to use inferior coal, which means more shifting of ash, more clinker, and entails a great deal more work for firemen generally. If the Minister sees to it that washing is carried out wherever practicable, a great improvement should be effected, and there is no scarcity of water for that purpose in the West Moreton area.

In Pittsburgh in America they have several community washing plants to which coal is taken from the various mines and washed on behalf of different owners. I do not suggest that such a system is necessary here at the moment, but the question might have to be looked into in the future. There is no doubt that the washing of coal will be of great advantage to gas companies in that they will have less ash to dispose of and very little if any clinker.

Mr. Aikens: Washing will not stop the coal from clinkering.

Mr. KERR: I do not suggest it will be a complete remedy, but it will help to a considerable extent in that it will mean an increase in furnace efficiency, and an increase in the output of retorts, and therefore an all-round saving. In my view it is a good forward step to insist on the washing and cleaning of coal.

In these days we find that electricity undertakings are spraying oil on coal in order to get a bigger B.T.U. return. If coal is cleansed there is no need to spray oil on it for that purpose. Here again the supply of better coal will mean lower costs to the consumer together with a possible alleviation of blackouts and gas shortages in the winter-time.

Mr. Donald: Do not put that on the mines.

Mr. KERR: It will give us more output.

Mr. Donald: You have more output than you ever had. It is simply because you will not take the coal that you have the blackouts.

Mr. KERR: We shall have blackouts because we have not got the coal. We could get plenty in this area but it is not of the right quality. We can also get ample coal from Callide and Blair Athol, but the cost is double what it would be if the coal was supplied from nearer centres. Here within 25 miles of Brisbane, virtually at our back-door, we have a huge field that is not being developed to its fullest extent.

Before we had a price differential nobody took any notice of the washing provisions in the Act. This amendment will tighten up the matter and I hope the Minister administers it vigorously in order to ensure that we get a better coal, which must mean that

our domestic and industrial affairs generally throughout the State will benefit. Here right at our back-door we have a huge reserve of coal that is not being developed to its fullest extent, and when you have that state of affairs something must be radically wrong.

I think the Bill will provide for a better coal supply, and that it will mean more efficient and more economic working. If we have to go on year by year with the prospect that the output from the West Moreton field will deteriorate more and more, we shall not get out of the mess we have found ourselves in by getting coal from Blair Athol and other fields hundreds of miles away. I am sure the Minister appreciates the position. Generally speaking, the Bill is a good one, and I wish the Minister and the Coal Board well in the implementation of its provisions. I think he will find that most hon. members on this side will be behind him.

Mr. SPARKES (Aubigny) (12.7 p.m.): I am only sorry that the hon. member for Sherwood has not been able to deal with the two mines within my electorate, for they are worked by the best set of coal-miners in Queensland. I am sure the hon. member for Bremer will grant me that.

Both sides of the House are agreed that we want cleaner coal. Railway men have told me, "Give us decent coal and we will give you a decent job on the trains. Look at this—we cannot get steam up with half dirt." Perhaps there are hon. members who are better acquainted with the driving of trains than I am, but I appreciate the position such men are in.

Mr. Walsh: They get it from private mines.

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. gentleman has a one-track mind. It is a wonder to me he does not fall down a mine and stay there altogether, because his mind is wandering the one way all the time. He cannot see anything at all with his one-track mind—if it is a mind. Private enterprise has done more for this country than any Government in Australia. Let the hon. gentleman get that into his head. Private enterprise does not lose £500,000 on an enterprise like the hon. gentleman's Government have in Central Queensland. Why, it is were not for private enterprise the hon. gentleman would not have a shirt to his back.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Clark): Order!

Mr. SPARKES: Let us get on with the job. The Treasurer should know, from his period as Minister for Transport, of all the trouble caused by dirty coal.

Mr. Walsh: Thirty-five per cent. foreign matter.

Mr. SPARKES: It was stated by the Minister in charge of the Bill that it is proposed to see that where practicable all coal is washed. I have the greatest respect for the coal-miner and the shearer. They know that the more work they do the more

they get. That is the type of man I like to get behind, and God forbid that the day will ever come in the shearing industry—and I know that my old friend, the hon. member for Barcoo, will agree with me—when they will get down to a weekly rate instead of so much a hundred. That is what has made the industry the great one it is today. There is an incentive to do a job and do it well and quickly. I am sure that my old friend will agree with me when I say that I hope we shall never be saddled in that industry with go-slow practices and being paid so much a week. I understand from my friend, the hon. member for Bremer, that the coal-mining industry is on the same basis—that you are paid so much for every ton of coal hewed. But if that it so—and here again I am sure the hon. member for Bremer will agree with me—there is a grave possibility of a miner's not caring how much dirt he puts in his load. I take it that the coal is to be washed when it reaches the grass level. There is the chap who will be careful in his mining but what about the fellow who does not care how much dirt he puts in? Is he going to be paid so much a ton for that dirt?

Mr. Walsh: He has been.

Mr. SPARKES: The Minister handling this Bill has a different view. He wants the coal to be clean. It would be unfair to the mine owner if the coal brought up contained 50 per cent. of dirt. That is the point that needs clarifying, and I am sure the hon. member for Bremer would be the first to say that he does not support the miner who wants to be paid for as much dirt as he can put in with his coal. The coal has to be clean, and surely you do not expect the mine-owner to pay for the whole when only a quarter is clean?

Mr. Walsh interjected.

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. gentleman has a one-track mind and cannot realise that this coal will be clean when it is sold to the consumer. We want to eliminate payment for dirt; we do not want the dirt to go to the consumer. Payment should be made on the basis of clean coal. I ask the Minister to look into this matter. I am sure that not even the Treasurer would say that the owner should pay for dirt if he cannot sell it.

Mr. Walsh interjected.

Mr. SPARKES: The employers are never of any value to the Treasurer, except when he wants money. Wait till he floats a loan; then he will be after private enterprise, which he is condemning today. He will be running round saying, "Gimme, gimme, gimme!" None of us would be getting our salaries as politicians if it were not for private enterprise. The hon. gentleman is introducing a Bill into this House so that he will be able to borrow from private enterprise. Every tax that he imposes is imposed on private enterprise.

Mr. Aikens: How much of the loan will you take up?

Mr. SPARKES: That is my business.

I appeal to the Minister to look into the point that I have raised. It was brought before my notice, and I ask the Minister to look into it.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (12.14 p.m.): An erroneous idea exists in the minds of certain people that if a man gets a mining lease, whether it is a mineral lease or a coal-mining lease, he should be at complete liberty to exploit it as he thinks best in the interests of his own pocket. However, I am glad to see that this Bill—and previous legislation—disabuses the minds of certain people of that idea. The mineral wealth of this country belongs to the people of the country, and it belongs to them in perpetuity. It is quite true that under the present system certain people are getting mining leases and that they can exploit them, but this legislation and preceding legislation, endeavours to prevent them from ruining the assets of the country in the interests of their own bank balances.

I do not know very much about the way in which coal-mining leases have been exploited and ruined, but I know a fair amount of the way in which mineral mining leases have been exploited and ruined. Anyone who has been in the far north-western areas of this State can see for himself the tragic position that has arisen in such big copper-mines as Mount Oxide, Dobbyn, and Duchess, and other places, where there were huge lodes of copper ore. Because the people who exploited those mines were actuated only by the desire to make as much profit as possible, they delved into them, picked the eyes out of them, took away the high-grade ore, and left huge deposits of low-grade ore that could not be economically worked now, because it would be impossible to work those mines economically without the high-grade ore that was once there.

Mr. Walsh: Copper is not dealt with in this Bill.

Mr. AIKENS: I was merely mentioning that as an analogy. As I have said, I know nothing about the exploitation of coal-mines but I thought that perhaps owners might have exploited coal-mines in the same way as many owners of copper-mines have exploited and ruined copper-mines. In introducing the Bill the Minister spoke about the way in which many gold-mines were ruined.

We have heard a lot of irresponsible balderdash about coal and its uses, and about the way in which it is mined and sold. The hon. member for Aubigny excelled himself in irresponsible nonsense this morning when he spoke about the way in which coal was hewn at a tonnage rate and sold at a tonnage rate. If I had one shilling for every ton of coal that I have thrown into a furnace, I should not be in Parliament; I should not be bothering about a rise in politicians' salaries. I should be living in retirement in a palatial mansion, perhaps in Spring Hill or some other salubrious suburb of Brisbane. It is quite true that miners are paid at a tonnage rate for hewing coal in the mine, but it is equally true

that there are as many varieties of coal, differing in quality and structure, as there are standards and varieties of intelligence among politicians.

Mine, of course, would be the highest and those of some members of the Opposition would be the lowest. Go down one coal-mine and you will find a big, broad, easy-workable face with perhaps coal of high quality. The next coal-mine might have a big broad easy-workable face of low-quality coal and running through that face of coal may be a stratum of rock or dirt, or, as is the Styx River coal, what they call a bird-lime seam. Another coal-mine may have a narrow seam, particularly difficult to work, and it may be of high quality, or low quality or of mediocre quality. The only fair way in which a miner can be paid for digging the coal is on the basis of broad tonnage payment. The hon. member for Aubigny suggests that not only should a miner working perhaps 800 feet underground in a confined space, in Stygian darkness, with only the feeble ray of his headlamp, hew the coal from the face but that he should then sit down on his haunches, sort out the rubbish in the coal, then sort out the good coal from the bad coal and go still further and sort out the lumpy coal from the fine coal, shovel it all into separate skips and send it to the surface. That is the hon. member for Aubigny's interpretation or idea of how a miner should work underground.

Mr. Morris: It is your interpretation of his idea.

Mr. AIKENS: No-one can ever accuse the hon. member for Aubigny of what the hon. member for Mt. Cooth-tha is so frequently guilty of, and that is lack of lucidity in his utterances. At least we do know what the hon. member for Aubigny is talking about but I'm hanged if we ever know what the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha is talking about. It is easy to understand what the hon. member for Aubigny is saying and that was his idea of how a miner should work at the coal face.

There are problems that have to be taken into consideration. With the exception of locomotives and very small steam generating plants, the days of the hand-fired boiler are gone. If they are not completely gone, at least they are going. There is a degree of skill or ability in firing a boiler and that is why, if you have two firemen on the same locomotive on the same train with the same class of coal, one will get an abundance of steam whereas the other fireman will not get very much steam at all. It is purely a question of ability, because the human element enters into the matter of the production of heat that can be got from the coal they are using.

Mr. Sparkes: Then however did you get a train to go at all?

Mr. AIKENS: It is the considered opinion of my friends who are competent to judge that I was at least as good a fireman and as good a driver as the hon. member is a grazier. So that he can make the best out of that!

When we consider the production of coal and steam from coal we have to have in the forefront of our minds the way in which coal is used in the big power-houses today. The big modernised power-houses use the coal on the chain-grate system or the plunger system. The coal comes down the chute to the hoppers at the boiler doors and this coal then falls down gradually on the chain grate or in the pusher system, is pushed in onto the chain grate as it gradually moves forward and is ignited from the front firebox end and burns from the front end towards the back. A considerable quantity of coal in the furnaces down at the New Farm power-house, for instance, and at other power-houses, is not even alight—it is only alight from the front end and a draft keeps the fire burning. The chain grate moves slowly forward and the coal ignites at the front end of the fire-box and the clinker and ash tipples off the chain grate into the hoppers down below.

Therefore, we have to consider the consumption of coal from the mass-usage viewpoint. Even if many big users of coal today are undoubtedly buying dirty coal from many mines throughout the State it has to be remembered that the State mine at Collinsville is not entirely free in this respect because it sells run-of-mine coal which means that as the coal comes up from below it goes into the hoppers and from the hoppers it goes to the various consumers. They merely grade or screen the coal as the consumer orders. It would pay large consumers to install washing or cleansing plants, even at the point of consumption. Anyone who goes into the economics of heat or steam production will realise that it will often pay the coal consumer to cleanse and wash his own coal before using it rather than fire his boilers with dirty coal and have a low level of steam production and excessive ash and dirt content.

Mr. Nicklin: It means carting a terrible lot of dirt from the mines.

Mr. AIKENS: That is an aspect. The coal carried to the point of consumption would contain a large portion of foreign matter. In the big mines in America and England the coal is washed at the pit-head.

Mr. Kerr: Not in all.

Mr. AIKENS: At many mines. When the hon. member for Bremer was speaking yesterday I asked him whether it would be possible to wash and sort the coal at the pit-head, and I understand that some mines are too small to allow that to be done. Let us remember this: if we are going to aim for the highest possible steam production from coal by mass-usage methods, that is, by the chain-grate system in the big boilers, we have to aim not so much at clean coal as at coal with a high calorific value. In all locomotive or hand-fired boilers the question of a high volatility comes into it. The term means that it catches alight quickly. Bowen coal has a particularly low volatility whereas Blair Athol has a particularly high volatility; that is, Bowen coal takes longer to catch

alight, and Blair Athol coal catches alight quickly; you can almost throw it onto the hot bare bars and it will ignite from them. I understand that Tannymoree coal has a higher volatility than Blair Athol coal. Whereas volatility does come into the question for hand-firing locomotives or boilers volatility is not such an important matter in a big chain-grate system, where huge quantities are fed in a heap onto the chain-grate.

Mr. Kerr: That is a disability.

Mr. AIKENS: High volatility could be a disability. The thing to aim at in the case of the big power stations is the calorific value, that is, the heat content once it is ignited. I have used all classes of coal, from the old Tivoli rubbish supplied to the North Queensland railways in the old Tory days, with 2,100 lb. of road-metal to the ton, to the best coal we sometimes got from the Maitland fields. As a locomotive fireman of considerable experience and outstanding ability (laughter) I contend that the lumpy Bowen coal is the best coal that we have ever used in North Queensland, taking everything into consideration. Blair Athol coal is a lazy fireman's coal; it is a coal to save the fireman any mental effort and that is why I never liked using it. (Laughter.) With Blair Athol coal you wait till the fire has burnt down to a few embers and you stand and use your hands more than the shovel—because the lumps are big—and fill the box up to the top over the brick arch and put every bit you can get in, and the fire-box is one black mass. You then close the door, wipe the sweat off your brow and sit there for the next 20 or 30 miles. That is why I never liked handling Blair Athol coal—because it was a lazy fireman's coal. I maintain that we have to aim not so much at quantity as at high calorific value. It would pay the big consumer of coal on the chain-grate system to give the highest price for coal with a high calorific value than a low price for a coal of a low calorific value. The hon. member for Sherwood, who appears to have some smattering of knowledge of coal consumption and usage and who is probably the only other hon. member of this Assembly with the exception of the hon. member for Bremer and myself who does know anything about it, nods in agreement.

I know that we have had a fair amount of levity during this debate and that a considerable amount of humour has been introduced into it, but let us be serious for a moment and remember that if we are going to do anything for the establishment of new industries or the retention of existing industries in Queensland, we have to aim not only at getting clean coal from the mines but, especially, at seeing that it is directed by the board to those places where it can be used most economically. For instance, coal of the highest calorific value, irrespective of volatility or anything else, should be directed to those power stations that use coal in big quantities in the chain-grate or similar system. Coal of other quality—to forget all about cleanliness for the moment—should be directed to those industries that can use

it most economically. I speak on the question of coal consumption with some degree of experience. Whether the Coal Board is responsible for it, I do not know, but apparently when coal comes out of the mine the board simply says, "The coal from this mine goes to such-and-such an industry," and that coal might not be suitable in quality for that industry. The board should first ensure that coal of good quality comes out of all mines with as little rubbish, stone, formation, foreign matter or anything else, as possible, and leaves the pithead or central washing or distributor point in a clean condition. Wash the coal by all means. Every industry would welcome that, because, as the Leader of the Opposition interjected, it is the acme of stupidity for railway trucks and road transport vehicles to be running from the coal-mine to the point of consumption loaded with up to 35 per cent of dirt or road metal. By all means let us avoid that. Let us ease the strain on our transport system and on the financial resources of the people who use the coal. Above all, let us take into consideration the best use to which the coal that is produced in this State can be put, and let the Coal Board set itself out to direct to each consumer the coal most suited for use in the particular industry.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (12.34 p.m.): I spoke at a previous stage of the Bill and the remarks I made were prompted chiefly by what the Minister said when introducing it. I indicated then that until the last few years there has been no occasion for me to take any real interest in the coal-mining industry, but since I have represented a territory in which several coal-mines are situated I have been amazed at the many problems confronting the industry.

Mr. Aikens: Do you say you waited until you got an electorate with coal-mines in it before you become interested in the coal-mining industry?

Mr. MULLER: Any speech I make is sincere, not a lot of claptrap such as we hear from the hon. member for Mundingburra from time to time.

Whilst I approve of the Bill I feel that the Minister will need to be as big in outlook as he is in stature if he is to overcome many of the problems in the coal-mining industry. Many of us are inclined, before coming into intimate contact with the industry, to blame one section of the community for mistakes that are made perhaps by many other sections.

First let me say that I believe that board control is a good thing in the coal-mining and many of our other primary industries. I know some people take exception to board control, but it has many decided advantages, and whilst I believe that in this instance the board should have further control, I do not believe that any board should have absolute control.

I should like to emphasise that point. I have had an experience within the last year of a coal mining problem at Rosewood. Whilst I have the greatest regard for the

experts in any industry, a set of circumstances arose at Rosewood that seemed to warrant the setting aside of expert opinion and experience. A serious subsidence occurred and if sound mining practice had been carried out it might not have occurred. It is difficult for me to say that the regulations had been carried out to the letter. Subsidence had taken place and miners and the owners of coal-mines asked me to make an inspection on the spot. There was no doubt as to what took place. According to safe mining practice pillars are supposed to be left in coal-mines but whether they were left or not I do not know. Some of the miners told me that the pillars were not left. The fact remains that subsidence took place. An application was made for permission to undermine the town of Rosewood. Evidence was submitted to the Warden's Court but it did not influence the mining warden to refuse the application. As the representative of the district I made an appeal to the Minister and the Queensland Coal Board. Members of the board made a personal inspection and after seeing what had been done decided against the granting of the application to undermine the town.

The Coal Board must be clothed with very wide powers, but on the other hand I believe it is imperative that the Minister retain the right to override a decision of the board wherever he thinks it necessary. We endeavoured in this case to carry out the letter of the law. We proceeded along the proper channels and without any unpleasantness. What was done was to the satisfaction of the people. Nevertheless, mining is still carried on in the residential section of the town and I am greatly perturbed about it. Leases have been approved of and mining is actually taking place under the homes of miners and residents of the town. We are told by the Coal Board that there is no danger at all so long as they keep lower than 60 or 70 feet below the surface. Some of the miners are very close to that depth now and everyone about the place is concerned about it, because their homes will be undermined and there will be a danger of subsidence and their buildings will get out of plumb. Whilst the Coal Board must have wide powers the Minister should go a little further to prevent the undermining of the homes of people. There are seams round Ipswich also where residential areas are being undermined. The people have been convinced that if safe mining practices are followed there is no danger to their homes.

Whilst the Coal Board will be possessed of a wide knowledge in respect of the industry I am sure that as an intelligent body of men it will be guided by experiences of the past and will watch the interests of the owners of property, and the interests of mine-owners as well as the workers.

So far as I can see the coal-mining industry in Queensland is really in its infancy. The hon. member for Bremer admitted that the amenities provided in mining districts were so few that it seems we took little interest in the industry in the past. We should endeavour to provide greater benefits for the people who work in mines and particularly

those coming from areas round the mining centres. Access to mines is unquestionably bad. I have already mentioned telephone communication and roads.

The question of clean coal is one that concerns everybody. I have been rather critical in the past and have been inclined to blame the miner for all the dirty coal we have to buy. In his speech the Minister said he had some figures he would present to the House to show the increase in waste and rubbish contained in coal as compared with the position 10 years ago. Our experience as users of coal is that some years ago we had no reason to complain about dirty coal, but in recent years we have found that we are paying for a lot of dirt and stone and rubbish. It is my opinion that the quantity of dirty coal has increased considerably in recent years. I heard the argument put forward today by the hon. member for Aubigny that that is due entirely to the fact that miners are paid on a tonnage basis, with the result that they do not care two hoots whether they mine coal or dirt. I should like the Minister, in the course of his reply, to tell the House the cause of all this dirty coal. It has been said that it is due to the fact that seams are now being worked that were not worked in the early days. If it is necessary to work dirty seams, however, I certainly think that provision should be made to clean the coal from them either before or after it is brought to the surface. It is not fair to sell as coal something that is not coal and to charge the same price for it. Further, trade in coal is increasing considerably but our transport facilities have not increased to anything like the same extent. We are therefore carrying round the country a great deal of dirt that is taking up much valuable transport space. The time has now arrived when something should be done about cleaning the coal either in the mine or at the pit-head.

There must be some controlling authority in all these things, and I know of no better way of controlling this industry than by a board. However, the board should exercise its powers with discretion. I have no complaint to make about the board personally, but in my district it has been very unpopular with both miners and mine-owners although, of course, there are many people in the district who are appreciative of what the board has done. If we have a grievance it should be our first duty to submit that grievance to the board. However, if the board is not prepared to listen to the case that is put before it, in a democracy we should have the right to appeal to a higher authority when we think that the board is not giving every section of the community a fair deal. Whilst I approve of board control I do not approve of absolute control. I think the Minister should be the highest authority.

Although I have comparatively little knowledge of the coal industry, I realise fully its importance and we should endeavour to become as conversant as possible with it. Anything that the Minister can do to develop

the industry will be well worth while. We shall be using large quantities of coal in the future, and although mining costs in the Ipswich district are high compared with those under the open-cut method, nevertheless there are larger deposits of coal there within easy reach of Brisbane. Although the cost of production may be high, I believe that with the right type of legislation and control the industry can be greatly developed.

I notice that under this Bill the board will have power to decide whether a mine shall be opened or closed, and I have received one or two complaints in that connection. One gentleman has informed me that he has a mine that has been tested, and that the board has refused to allow him to open and work it. I do not know the circumstances, but I take it that in such a case the board would make full investigations. There may be reasons for the board's decision, but unless we have some systematic control there will be chaos within the industry.

That is all I have to say about the Bill. Unless you have a body of competent men to examine the circumstances of each case from time to time things will be even more chaotic than they are. I think the Minister should retain greater power than he has under the measure but apart from that I commend the Bill.

Mr. LUCKINS (Norman) (12.49 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister in his elevation to Cabinet rank. He is well versed in matters relating to mining, he understands the welfare of the industry and the mining community will be in good hands.

We have heard a good deal about the production of bad coal. I am wondering why it is being put on the market. Has it escaped the scrutiny of the Coal Board? Is the Coal Board concerned about the repercussions it will cause in industry, about the economic loss it will cause, especially in the metropolitan area? We have heard quite a number of complaints from the Tramways Department, from municipalities and power-houses generally, about the terrific loss caused by bad coal. The Government have sovereign powers, they have the greatest power in the land, and they should be able to deal with the matter. Has the Coal Board failed and is not adulterated coal to be regarded in the same way as an other adulterated article that is offered for sale? That is an important question and I hope we shall soon see the end of this dirty filthy coal for which the taxpayers have had to pay. They have had to pay dearly for it in the electricity that they have had to buy. We have vast resources of coal and the time will come when we shall be able to build up an export trade, as we did in 1910 and 1911. In those days we had trade with the Far East but because of unsatisfactory conditions, particularly in relation to delivery, it was lost to Australia. In Queensland, we have vast resources of coal, as I have said. At Blair Athol we have the greatest seam, 90 feet thick, whereas in the West Moreton area it is about three feet thick and in some cases very difficult to find.

The Coal Board has power to direct the distribution of coal to consumers. There are

times when some of the consumers express a desire to buy coal from a certain mine because it suits their particular class of trade. At times they are compelled to buy coal that is not suitable to them. I should like the Minister to go fully into that matter so that we shall have a contented Coal Board, contented consumers, and contented miners, and so that we shall have all the coal that we require. Then we shall be able to export coal and so increase our revenue.

Perhaps we can so arrange our production in the West Moreton area as to be able to supply satisfactory coal to the metropolitan area. At the present time we have to get coal from Blair Athol and Callide, which increases the cost of manufacture. I believe that if a reasonable proposal was submitted to the coal-owners in the West Moreton area we should be able to get satisfactory supplies from there, thus reducing costs and bringing down the cost of living.

Mr. DONALD (Bremer) (12.53 p.m.): This is the first time in my association with the coal-mining industry that I have heard reference to adulterated coal. You may be able to adulterate milk or beer but it is impossible to adulterate coal. The criticism levelled at the industry that it is not able to give consumers clean coal as it did years ago, is in some respects not fully justified. Perhaps hon. members have forgotten or are ignorant of the fact that the seams that were worked some years ago and from which clean coal was obtained are now almost worked out and it is almost impossible to produce clean coal from an inferior seam.

There has been some criticism of the lack of development of the industry, particularly in the West Moreton district. Whose responsibility is it to see that the industry is developed in the West Moreton district or elsewhere? Under our present social system it is the responsibility of private enterprise. On every occasion on which this or any other Government have helped society by working in with industry they have met with opposition from the people of the same political opinion as hon. members opposite, but it is significant that if the Government spend hundreds of thousands of pounds in helping private enterprise, they do not mind that form of Socialism, or State assistance.

I believe there has been a certain amount of development in the coal industry of this State. Criticism has been levelled at the men who hew the coal for not keeping it reasonably clean. Let me remind hon. members that the hewing rate or the piece rate for hewers of coal was fixed on seams that I have spoken about—clean seams—and not on the dirty seams that are being exploited today.

Let me remind hon. members also that a miner, like any other tradesman, takes pride in his work, and derives satisfaction from a job well done. That applies also to the number of other activities carried out in the mines that make the winning of coal possible. The miner does his work in a tradesmanlike manner. No-one will support the miner who deliberately fills dirty coal, any more than anyone will support the colliery proprietor

who sells dirty coal. I could quote instances of the selling of dirty coal by proprietors, but I think it would have a detrimental effect on the industry if I did so and therefore I refrain from mentioning it.

I have already said that it would be impossible to fill clean coal from some of the seams that are being worked. These seams are not being worked by choice, but by compulsion. Although the production of coal has increased tremendously, so has the consumption of coal; and because of that factor those in the industry have been compelled to work seams that would not have been worked years ago. They have been compelled to get coal from seams that are impregnated with stone, and because of that, and for no other reason, we are getting dirty coal.

While supporting the Bill, Opposition members implied that the department was not developing the industry or encouraging it as it should. Anyone who has made a trip at night by rail or motor from Brisbane to Ipswich or beyond must have noticed a structure on which there is erected several electric lights. This is where the boring plants are operating. The department has a staff working round the clock in an endeavour to prove seams in the West Moreton district. The cost of this scheme, undertaken by the department, runs into hundreds of thousands of pounds and it is for the benefit of colliery proprietors in the West Moreton district and the State generally. It is something we should be doing, but when the department is rendering a service to the community it should receive credit for it. There is a large camp of the department's workers at Redbank, where they have been engaged for some months under expert direction, trying to prove the locality: they are looking for new seams and seams that have not been proven in order to aid the industry. It has been said that they have discovered new seams, but according to the people who have been in the industry for years these are seams that have been in existence for a long while and they go to such a depth that the people whose money is invested in coal-mines feel that they cannot be worked economically and return a profit on the capital invested.

I think the hon. member for Sherwood complained that industry in Brisbane has to buy coal from Blair Athol and Callide. The largest consumer of coal in this State is the Railway Department, and for years it has been buying Blair Athol coal in order not to accentuate the already heavy demand by private enterprise for coal from areas in proximity to Brisbane. The heavy expenditure incurred by the Railway Department in bringing coal from Blair Athol in order to relieve the heavy demands made on West Moreton coal by private enterprise is not appreciated as it should be, and for this service the Railway Department receives little if any thanks.

It has been said that the Department of Mines is not doing what it should to encourage the coal-mining industry in Queensland, that of the West Moreton district in particular. I remind hon. members that at the

moment it has four drills operating in the West Moreton district and has put down approximately 30 bores, some to a depth of 1,400 feet. This is costing the department, in wages and material alone, and ignoring capital cost altogether, £100,000 a year, and all this is being done for the benefit of private enterprise. I feel that this record alone will disprove any accusation that the department is indifferent to the future welfare of the industry.

I come now to the blackout issue. One hon. member opposite said blackouts such as they have in the south might happen in Queensland, and if it did it would be because insufficient coal was being supplied by the coal-mining industry of this State. Let me draw that hon. member's attention to a speech I delivered in this Chamber some years ago at the time when the miners of New South Wales were being attacked for not producing enough coal and so were being responsible for blackouts in that State. I pointed out then, as I do now, that the miners were not to blame for that dislocation. It was due entirely to lack of foresight on the part of the people responsible for the generation of electricity to meet the needs of the people. On that occasion, several years ago, I warned hon. members that it could happen in Queensland if the people who controlled the electricity generating stations did not learn a lesson from the position in which the New South Wales people found themselves. Blackouts are not due to any lessening of production of coal by the men engaged in the coal mining industry. Indeed, the record of production by the coal-miners is one of record after record, year in and year out, both in the aggregate and per man, and one that could well be followed by other industries with great benefit to the nation.

What is the alternative to the buying of coal from Blair Athol and the Callide open-cut for use in the metropolitan area? The increasing demand for coal has made its use necessary, and this difficulty in meeting the demands of consumers is not peculiar to Queensland; it is common throughout the world, in spite of the fact that it is not so many years now since the coal-mining industry was popularly believed to be a dying one that could not give half-time employment to those engaged in it. It has been suggested that we might take the power-houses to the coalfields instead of hauling great quantities of coal to the city power-houses. That might overcome the difficulty to some extent, although I understand from the experts that there are some difficulties in the way of doing this.

We all remember the creation of this Coal Board. On that occasion we preferred having our own Coal Board to becoming part and parcel of the New South Wales-Commonwealth Coal Board. That decision, as well as the creation of the board, received the unanimous support of this Chamber. Whether it was right or wrong, I do not propose to argue, but I feel that it was a

step in the right direction and we were prepared to take that step to keep the management of our coal mining industry in the hands of Queenslanders.

Some hon. members were concerned this morning at the powers that were given to the board. They felt that it might exercise its powers in such a way as perhaps to refuse to open a mine or to order that a mine to be closed unfairly. They expressed the opinion that the board might abuse its powers. I think that we can trust the board because the Government took extra care to see that the men who were appointed to it knew the industry. They paid handsome salaries to attract the best men and I am not going to say that the board will prevent a mine from being opened or close a mine just to show its power. If the board closes a mine the closure will be justified and justified perhaps on a number of grounds; similarly, if the board refuses to open a mine, that refusal will be justified. The interests of the industry are of paramount importance; the board will have to see that the interests of the employees as well as those of employers are taken into consideration, and if this is done the interests of the industry will be preserved.

The nature of coal seams now being worked demands the operation of washing and cleaning plant. As I said before, poorer seams are now being worked by compulsion. As to the great proportion of foreign matter contained in present coal supplies, it is impossible to expect the miner to give the consumer clean coal or expect the coal to be hand-picked. The obligation to supply clean coal to the consumer rests on everyone in the mining industry but the difficulty in doing this must be recognised by the consumer and the community generally.

I think the hon. member for Mundingburra when speaking about the direction of supply expressed some fear that the board might supply a type of coal to an industry for which it was not suitable. That was an unjustified accusation because members of the Coal Board are there to see that the greatest advantage is given to the nation and the best use made of the coal won. If the board directs coal to a particular consumer that direction may be against the coal-owner but it will be in the interests of that consumer because the coal so delivered will be the coal that his industry needs. I cannot see how the board would direct a gas coal to be supplied where a steam coal was required or, conversely, a steam coal where a gas coal was required. It might surprise hon. members to know that not so many years ago there was such an outcry against dirty coal being supplied to the Railway Department that the department sent out coal-viewers whose duty it was to go to the various collieries from which railway coal was coming and see that the coal being supplied was what the department was paying for.

I believe that the relationship between the Minister and the Miners' Federation will be a happy one; the Minister's knowledge and

experience in the industrial movement will be of help to him in his dealings with the industry and the union.

The hon. member for Fassifern expressed concern—and rightly so—as to subsidence taking place in the Rosewood area and the fear that it would become general throughout that area. Subsidence are not peculiar to Rosewood or Queensland and the following paragraph of an article taken from “Coal,” the official organ of the National Coal Board of Great Britain, is very interesting—

“Millions of tons of high-grade coking coal will be extracted from under built-up areas in No. 6 area, Durham Division, if experiments to be started there early next summer prove successful.

“Hitherto, this coal has been unworkable because it has been supporting surface installations. By means of pneumatic stowing, it is estimated that something like 11 million tons will be extracted. Most of it lies under an N.C.B. farm at Crookhall and the work will be done at the experimental station at Crookhall Colliery.

“To replace the coal, iron work slag will be crushed in a crushing plant on the surface and blown down a bore hole at a fairly low pressure in close proximity to the actual workings.

“Similar experiments are to take place at Donisthorpe Colliery, East Midlands Division, about the same time where it is proposed to use the pit heap as a source of stowing material and to take from it something like 500 tons a day. The primary object is to save transport costs.”

The Miners' Federation is agitating for the institution of a similar system in this country in order to save a big proportion of this national asset that is at present being wasted. In the past, the coal industry in Queensland has carried out its job of supplying the nation's needs, great as they were, so well that until comparatively recently, many people did not know where coal came from. A typical example of that is the admission of the hon. member for Fassifern. Changes in the nation's economic structure and technological development, accelerated greatly in times of war, are urgently demanding the progress of the industry from the old pick-and-shovel concept to a highly mechanised complexity with a radical departure from generally accepted methods and practices. This necessitates the employment in coal-mining, as well as in industries in general, of energetic, courageous and visionary young men to plan for the future, and steps have been taken to ensure that that will be done in Queensland. After a search throughout Australia and Great Britain, the Department of Mines has succeeded in bringing to Queensland a capable young tutor-organiser who will lecture to those employees who are desirous of improving their status in and knowledge of the industry, to qualify as deputy under-managers and managers, and in winning the diploma. This gentleman—I think his name is Jones—will lecture principally in Ipswich, but in other centres as well, to enable these young men to acquire the desired knowledge,

which is something that both the employer and the employee in this industry have been seeking for a long while. Their wish has now been granted, and I sincerely hope that those whom it is intended to help will grasp the opportunity that is now within their reach.

I should like to offer some criticism of the board, but I shall content myself with saying that generally speaking it is looked upon by the colliery proprietors of Queensland as just another Government department, whilst the employees generally hold the opinion that it has not lived up to expectations. They have expressed disappointment because, according to the mine-workers' criticism, it has not been of as much help to them as they thought it would be. I feel that the board could still do a great deal towards stabilising the industry in Queensland, and improving working conditions.

I have here in my hand another issue of “Coal” containing a chart showing the improvement that has taken place in the coal-mining industry in Britain since it was nationalised and brought under the control of the National Coal Board. That chart shows that production of coal in Britain increased from 187,200,000 tons in 1947 to 202,700,000 in 1949. Whilst the chart does not deal with production in 1950, it was an increase on that or the previous year. The most satisfactory feature of the chart, however, is that it shows that the output per man-shift at the face increased from 21.4 cwt. in 1947 to 23.2 cwt. in 1949, and the total production per man-year from 263 tons to 282 tons. The men employed in the industry rose from 711,400 in 1947 to 719,500 in 1949.

As the Opposition like to gauge the success of an undertaking not so much on the useful service it gives to the community as on the profit it returns on the investment, I add that this chart shows that the nationalisation of the coal industry in Britain has been very successful. In 1949 the profit was 2s. 11d. a ton, and on the total output it was £29.4 million. Although this chart does not deal with the period after 1949, the report of the National Coal Board of Britain shows that 1950 was again a year of record production when a substantial profit running into millions of pounds was earned.

Mr. Aikens: The former opponents of the nationalisation of the coal industry in Britain now admit that it has been a success.

Mr. DONALD: That is so. The coal-mining industry in Britain was saved by its being nationalised, and I feel that that is the only successful way in which the coal industry of this State can be managed. It is not sufficient that we should set an example such as we have in the State mine at Collinsville, which was referred to by the representative of Powell, Duffryn as the only colliery in the State that resembled a colliery. When he came back to Brisbane he said he was compelled to make that statement, though it hurt him tremendously to do so.

In conclusion, I want to say that if we are willing to make the industry an efficient one for the community we must not nationalise piecemeal but should take it over as a whole and work it as it should be, in the interests of the community generally.

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) (2.34 p.m.): This Bill deals with the powers and functions of the Queensland Coal Board. Consequently they deserve careful examination to see exactly whether they are justified or not. The board was established in 1948. Its main purpose was to increase coal production, to ensure that coal resources are worked to the best advantage in the public interests, and to promote harmonious relationships between management and workers. Let us examine the record of the board on those specific questions.

We have had increased coal production in this State, but most of it has come not from underground mining but from the open-cut mines, and it was got not from that part of the State where it was most desired but in those parts where it was difficult to market the product economically. It is questionable whether the operations of the board had any effect whatever in increasing coal production or whether the increased output came from the open-cut method of mining. I think that it is largely the result of operations by companies and individuals who have developed the open-cut mines.

I believe, too, that the board has to a certain extent not discharged its functions in regard to the development of coal in those parts of the State where it is most required, that is, on the West Moreton fields. I shall deal with that matter as I go along.

The Coal Board has done something in regard to ensuring that our coal resources are worked to the best advantage. If it has not done as much as it might have done at least it made an attempt to improve the production of coal in our various collieries.

I remarked upon the harmonious relationship between management and workers. We have been particularly free, thank goodness, from the big industrial upheavals that have marked the southern coal areas. Possibly the board has made some contribution towards that.

Much has been said during the debate about the powers of the board. It was given enormous powers under the original Act, virtually absolute powers to carry out the functions for which it was established. It was given power even to acquire and to operate any coal-mine or assume control over any coal-mine—but leaving the responsibility of paying the employees with the owner. It could do anything it liked, it could order anything it liked in regard to the operations or working of the mine without having to accept any financial responsibility in carrying out its orders in this respect. That was the power that the Coal Board had under the original Act. Coal is a national asset and that national asset could be severely damaged by wrong or irresponsible methods

of mining, and therefore such powers of interference as I have mentioned, are justified, but they could be abused. That was the position taken by the hon. member for Sherwood today when he was referring to the powers of the board—that they could be abused—and so they could be. However, I give credit to the present board in that up to the present it has used its big powers with discretion and restraint. That is how they should be used. It deserves commendation for the way in which it has exercised those absolute powers that were written into the Act in 1948.

In his criticism of the board the hon. member for Bremer said that it satisfied neither the mine-owners nor the mine workers. I should say that if that is so the board must be doing a pretty good job. I should regard its operations with a considerable amount of suspicion if, for example, the coal-miners said it was wonderful and the coal-owners said it was a flop, or vice versa. If both parties are apparently not satisfied with the workings of the board it is an indication it cannot be doing too badly.

There are three directions in which the board could do a wonderful amount of good and they are in connection with the breaking down of prejudices that exist against the installation of modern machinery, the taking out of pillar coal, and some improvement in the dargs that operate in most coal-mines, in many of them to an unreasonable extent. Existing practices are certainly contrary to public interest, which the board is directed always to consider and to serve. One of the main directions given to the board is that it must place public interest first and serve public interest to the best advantage.

The installation of modern machinery in mines has met with opposition from mine-owners and coal-miners themselves. There is no doubt, when we look at the practice in other parts of the world, particularly in America, that we must realise the tremendous production achieved per man, with the aid of modern machinery. We in this State have to do something about developing mines that are capable of development, by the use of every possible modern coal-mining machine. So I hope the efforts of the board in endeavouring to get modern coal-handling machinery installed in our coal-mines will meet with support from the miners and the coal-owners. The future of the underground coal-mining industry particularly in this State is bound up with their development by modern methods. The day of the old pick and shovel has gone; we must now adopt modern methods if we are to achieve success. The efforts made by the board to introduce modern mining methods and machinery must be approved.

I notice that the State Government intend to install machinery in the Collinsville mine, which the hon. member for Bremer referred to as the only real colliery in the State. I do not know whether an essential qualification of a real colliery is to make a substantial loss in operations every year, but Collinsville

certainly does that. That should not be so because Collinsville undoubtedly has the best seam of coal in the State and should be making a profit. That is bound up with the point I made in regard to dargs. There is no doubt the darg operates there and the miners are not permitted to produce what they could produce if they had a free and open go.

Mr. Aikens: They fix their own darg.

Mr. NICKLIN: We know who fixes their darg. It is not in the interest of the miners or the State to have these dargs. We have only to compare what happens in the American mines with our Australian mines, where they are operating dargs. The American miner is three times better off than the Australian miner because he can produce to his capacity and get paid for what he produces.

Mr. Aikens: He is overworked and underpaid.

Mr. NICKLIN: I should like the hon. member to tell that to some of the American miners and try to get them to accept the darg. They would not have it. They have also the advantage of modern machinery to help them in their operations.

The second point I mentioned was the taking out of pillar coal. We are aware of the trouble in the mining industry in regard to that. All modern mining practice shows that pillar coal can be taken out under certain conditions.

I believe the board will never allow pillar coal to be taken out of our mines unless conditions are such as to ensure that the miners engaged in the industry are amply protected and that the future working of the mine is not prejudiced. These are all prejudices now and I admit quite readily that the board will have difficulty in overcoming them, but we cannot overcome prejudices by legislation, no matter what we write into it. The only way of overcoming them is by education, common sense, and sane discussions between owners, miners and the board.

Let us consider the new provisions in the Bill relating to the board's powers. They appear merely to particularise the existing powers of the board. Paragraph (n) deals with the opening, closing or abandonment of a coal-mine, but this is covered already in Paragraph (b) of the existing Act. Apparently there is some legislative weakness there and the opportunity is taken to tighten it. We find the same thing in connection with the provisions dealing with the control of the working of coal-mines. That is covered in paragraph (a) of the original legislation. There is an amplification of the present provision in that it is specifically stated that control shall include developmental work preparatory to the mining of coal. That is something we have not at present. It is proposed to extend the control of the board to the preparatory work that takes place before a mine goes into production.

Mr. Clark: That is important.

Mr. NICKLIN: It is important, and we are not objecting to it. I am comparing the provisions of the Bill with those already in the original legislation. I believe that the new provision giving the board power over the developmental work that is done prior to the opening of the mine is desirable.

That brings me to the need for the development of the West Moreton field. Right here, near the city where we have the two major power-houses of the State and where, unfortunately, we have the majority of our industries, we have the great West Moreton coal-fields, yet we are required to drag coal for hundreds of miles at an uneconomic price to keep those power-houses and industries going.

Mr. Aikens: Where does the West Moreton coal go?

Mr. NICKLIN: It comes to Brisbane, but not in sufficient quantities. It needs developing and bringing out of the ground and brought to our power-houses and industries in greater quantities. Why are our electricity charges jumping up from time to time? The main reason is that the power-houses are finding it necessary to bring coal from Blair Athol and Callide at over £6 10s. a ton when we could get coal more suitable for power-generating purposes than the Callide coal from the West Moreton field for about £2 a ton.

Mr. F. E. Roberts: Are you suggesting subsidising the West Moreton coal-owners?

Mr. NICKLIN: I am suggesting developing the resources we have in the West Moreton area.

Mr. Aikens: By opening a State mine?

Mr. NICKLIN: I would not suggest for a moment that we should open a State mine at West Moreton, especially when we consider the record of the Collinsville State mine. My point is that there is work for the Coal Board to do right at its door. It is doing a certain amount of work but I believe it could accelerate and amplify the work already being done in order to promote the proper development of the West Moreton coalfields so that we in this city could get all the coal we need. I am sure the aspiring Lord Mayor, the hon. member for Nundah would be only too pleased to be able to tell the people of Brisbane he was going to cut electricity charges for them by getting from the West Moreton field all the coal Brisbane needs.

Mr. F. E. Roberts: That is why I was looking for some suggestions.

Mr. NICKLIN: We will give the hon. member suggestions for his policy speech because he will jolly well need them. (Laughter.) However, this is the common-sense approach to the coal problem here. I suggest that we should make the most of the West Moreton field for local requirements and use Blair Athol and Callide coal for export and other requirements.

Mr. Aikens: Are there sufficient deposits in the field to be worked?

Mr. NICKLIN: Yes, there are. New mines are being opened up there and I understand that they are being opened in a way that will ensure the maximum production from the area to be worked; they will be opened under the latest mining practices and no doubt the Coal Board is helping in that direction. I emphasise the need for the proper direction of the Coal Board's energies to doing the things that should be done first and I say that the first thing to be done is to get the most we can out of the West Moreton field.

There is another provision in the Bill dealing with the classification, grading, washing and cleansing of coal. If the Minister thinks these new paragraphs are necessary—and no doubt he does or he would not have included them—no harm is being done.

I do not want to reiterate what other hon. members have said on the question of classification, grading, washing, etc., but I emphasise in regard to the sale of coal that the customer has some rights. In the past he appeared to have no rights at all but that has not quite been so since the introduction of the Coal Industry (Control) Act. Prior to its introduction he had to take the coal given to him and had to pay for the dirt, rock, and stone in it whether he liked it or not.

Mr. Brown: The coal-owners were getting a royalty on it.

Mr. NICKLIN: The whole thing was wrong. The coal-owners were not entirely to blame. The losses of our Railway Department were added to considerably by the fact that it had to take this rotten coal containing up to 35 per cent. foreign matter. We found that gas coal was being directed to power-houses when suitable power-house coal was going to gas companies. We do not want things like that to happen again. There has been a cleaning up of those undesirable practices since the creation of the Coal Board and I hope we shall not see again the position where the customer had no rights and had to take what was given to him.

The new subsection 2 (a) appears to fit in with the general totalitarian power of the board, which could be used wisely and justly or with prejudice and favouritism. However, the democratic system of government affords some safeguards against abuses and the actions of the board will come up from time to time for review by the Minister and by this House.

This legislation, streamlining as it does the already absolute powers of the Coal Board, will help that board in some of the functions it has been created to carry out. We have given absolute powers to the board and the way it has been employing them up to the present time shows that it has not exercised them unwisely but with advantage to the coal industry.

In conclusion, I say that I trust that this legislation will be of further assistance in the development of the coal industry in our State.

Hon. E. J. RIORDAN (Flinders—Secretary for Mines and Immigration) (2.57 p.m.) in reply: At the outset, let me say that it is not the intention of the board to adopt drastic measures, except where there is a flagrant disregard of its decisions. As far as the West Moreton field is concerned, I assure the Leader of the Opposition that everything will be done to increase output. It has increased since the appointment of the board, and if the board can get the co-operation it is seeking, it will still further increase.

The remarks of the hon. member for Bremer about the dissatisfaction with the board that exists is perhaps something in favour of the board. During my short association with the Department of Mines, I should say, on the figures placed before me, that an excellent job has been done. It has been said that no help has been given to the West Moreton field, or that the help has not been extensive enough. However, we must not forget that the West Moreton coal-mines are mainly privately owned and controlled, and over the years there has been no great desire on the part of the owners to expand the field. On the other hand, the Coal Board has tried to help in bringing about greater production on the West Moreton field, because it realises the importance of the field as it is so close to Brisbane. The Government made available the sum of £125,000 during its first year for advances to mine-owners for mechanisation, but so far they have used only a very small proportion of that amount. Evidently they are reluctant to accept the help that has been offered to them.

Mr. Kerr: Is it not a matter of collaboration between the miners and the mine-owners? Does not that enter into it?

Mr. RIORDAN: Of course it does. I am not suggesting that there should not be co-operation between the employer and the employee. From the figures I have seen, I should say that there has been co-operation between the employer and the employee in this industry, particularly on the West Moreton field. Since the formation of the Coal Board, there has been an increase in production from underground mines of approximately 20 per cent., that is to say, from 1,508,000 tons in 1948 to 1,886,000 tons in 1951. Dealing with West Moreton, the output in 1948, which was prior to the appointment of the Coal Board, was 902,411 tons. Production for the three following years was as follows—

Year.	Tons.
1949	941,199
1950	1,149,140
1951	1,664,470

In other words the increase in the three years has been about 250,000 tons a year and it is expanding by 10 per cent. each year. The increase has been due largely to the adoption of improved methods of mining since the Coal Board came into operation.

The Leader of the Opposition can rest assured that the Coal Board has no more desire than the Government to place restrictions or control on anybody. It aims at

bringing about co-operation between the employer and the employee and the board itself, and it will continue to do that.

In my introductory speech I might have been overcome a little by the importance of the occasion and my position as a new Minister, but I intended to point out that it was absolutely necessary that the powers contained in the Bill should be taken so as to remove any weakness that had been found in the Act. The purpose of the Bill is simply to tighten up the existing provisions of the Act.

The hon. member for Fassifern can rest assured that every applicant for permission to open a coal-mine in this State will, as in the past, have the closest technical investigation by the members of the Coal Board. If an applicant can show that he has adequate coal resources, sufficient finance, and technical capacity to develop a coal-mine to a proper standard, and that there is a demand for the type of coal that he intends to produce, his application will receive favourable consideration. That has been the practice in the past. The Coal Board has been set up to rehabilitate the industry but if people are to be permitted to open coal-mines and produce coal for which there is no demand, they will only add to the existing difficulties in the industry and so bring about a state of chaos. This happened in the past. The board has been given the proper powers and as a result it has done a mighty job for the coal proprietors of this State. It hopes that as a result of having done that it will also have done a good job for the men hewing the coal. If it does that, it will have achieved one of the purposes for which it was established. Criticism has been levelled against the board after its first three years of operation. It has not yet got properly into its stride but ultimately it will bring about even greater benefit to the people and the State than it has been responsible for up to the present time.

The hon. member for Sandgate referred to the allocation of coal. Ever since the inception of the board it has concerned itself with the economic and efficient distribution of available coal and at all times it has been prepared to reconsider its allocations at the request of consumers. Its expert fuel technologists are in constant touch with consumers, investigating their plants and requirements, and the board has made frequent variations in its allocations so as to meet consumers' desires more adequately. The services of the two technical members of the board are being constantly made available to coal consumers and producers in an endeavour to rationalise coal distribution. That must be of considerable advantage to the industry. These things were never done before.

Mr. Kerr: That matter was raised by the hon. member for Norman.

Mr. RIORDAN: Yes, I think it was the hon. member for Norman. In the past no advice was tendered either. People had to take the coal or leave it—that was the attitude

of the industry. It was dished up to them and they had to take it whether it suited their requirements or not.

I should like to tell the hon. member for Sherwood that the advice of the technical members and staff of the board is at all times available. Applicants for permission to open mines have had the advice of the board in the past, which has been to the benefit of the applicant and the State as a whole. If we do not have some control over the opening of coal-mines difficulties will occur. Some people will be bound to take the short cut. We should have the difficulties that occurred in the opening up of metalliferous mines and a repetition of the difficulties that occurred because of the haphazard opening of coal-mines. Unless these things are properly controlled in the early stages, we shall reach a position when it will be impossible to repair the economic loss than will occur. The Bill merely requires all applicants and operators to take advantage of the technical facilities provided under the existing legislation.

The hon. member for Sherwood raised the question of the closing of mines. I assure him that the attitude in the past has not been harsh, nor will it be so in the future, as the board is fully appreciative of the urgent necessity for the maintenance of full supplies of suitable coal in all districts.

Mr. Kerr: Some have been closed; the closures may have been justified.

Mr. RIORDAN: If they were closed then it was not without serious consideration. There may have been a question of safety, and that would be a good reason. If there is any question of safety they should be closed till they comply with the regulations.

Mr. Kerr: And they could reopen under your conditions

Mr. RIORDAN: If they comply with all the conditions I feel sure they will be reopened.

The matter of subsidence in coal-mining areas was referred to. The leases in question have been granted subject to such safeguards as in the opinion of all experts should ensure the protection of residences concerned. I feel sure the men who are charged with this duty would not act lightly; they would not allow certain mining practices to be used when they could see that subsidence was likely to occur. Subsidence in the past were mainly due to lack of interest on the part of the owners or the rapacious greed of some colliery employers, who went after the coal right up to the surface. There may have been other factors. Hon. members can rest assured that precautions will be taken to safeguard residences in this respect. Any departure from the safeguarding conditions laid down in the lease will render a lease liable to cancellation and all efforts will be made to see that those conditions are strictly adhered to. That is the board's attitude in these matters.

The economic distribution of coal has been carefully regulated by the Coal Board and

will continue to be so regulated, subject to local availability of coal and the transport of coal. These are questions that are continually cropping up. I must say that they have been raised very fairly. There has been no real opposition to the Bill and members are entitled to know what has been done.

We have been talking about the cleaning of coal, and one of the provisions in the Bill deals with that matter. There has been some doubt whether the States could enforce the installation of cleansing machines at the collieries here. It has been said that the miner should clean the coal before it comes to the surface and then there would be no need for a cleansing machine. The miner is required to clean the coal in certain respects but he cannot clean it in the way required by the Coal Board; he can only take out stones and rubbish that is obvious. This is a matter between the employer and the employee and has nothing to do with the Coal Board. When it reaches the surface and is ready for transport it becomes a matter for the Coal Board to see that the coal is properly cleaned and that all this extraneous matter is cleaned out so that the people buying the coal will not be "stung" for something for which they should not be paying.

In regard to the washing plants, the Coal Board has given consideration to plants in respect of groups of collieries. The problem of the various types and grades must be taken into consideration. That is a matter that everyone will agree is very technical and requires serious consideration before these plants can be established on a group system.

I promised the hon. member for Fassifern that I would give him some figures in connection with ash and other matters. As the hon. member seems to want the information, and as other hon. members may be interested, because they have mentioned ash content, I propose reading the following notes by Mr. Norman, field technologist, on this question—

“Notes on Need For Cleaning Queensland’s Coals.

1. Ash content of coal.

“Coal as won from a colliery contains an appreciable amount of inert mineral matter which not only has no heating value but also may be positively harmful when utilising the coal. The mineral matter blinds the true coal substance so that it cannot be burnt efficiently, it may melt at a low temperature, causing trouble in the furnace or boiler, and it may so reduce the capacity of the plant that the load cannot be met.

“Mineral matter intimately associated with the coal and mainly derived from the original coal forming plants is termed ‘inherent’ mineral matter, and cannot be separated from the coal substance by physical means since it is evenly dispersed throughout the coal.

“Other mineral matters such as shale, clay, pyrites, ankerites, &c., occur in the seams as bands of various thickness ranging from thin ‘penny bands’ to ‘boulders’ which may be two feet or more thick. In addition

fragments of the roof and floor may also be filled with the coal. All this material is termed ‘extraneous’ mineral matter and is that portion with which coal cleaning is concerned.

“The determination of ‘mineral matter’ in the laboratory is difficult so that in practice the ‘ash content’—that is, the part of the coal which remains behind after burning in air—is always measured in preference. Since in any combustion appliance the coal is burnt in air it is obvious that the ash content is a good measure of the performance of a coal in practice.

“The ash content is normally measured in a laboratory by taking the coal sample, grinding it to a fine powder and completely burning a small quantity of it in air at a red heat. For various chemical reasons the ash content is less than the original mineral matter by about one-tenth.

“Combustion on a commercial scale is never 100 per cent efficient so that some unburnt coal is thrown out with the ashes, increasing their weight accordingly. For this reason the amount of ashes collected from a boiler or furnace is normally at least 25 per cent. and possibly as much as 75 per cent. more than the theoretical ash content determined in the laboratory.

2. Ash Content of Queensland Coals.

“Several of the major coal consumers in Brisbane carry out separate regular tests on all coals delivered to them and send copies of these tests to the board monthly. These include the metropolitan powerhouses and gasworks and two major factories. The Queensland Railways also send copies of their locomotive tests on various coals. Further data also becomes available from samples taken by the board’s officers and the Mines Department.

“Typical ash contents of Queensland coals as marketed are as follows—

District.	Per cent. ash.
Ipswich	27
Rosewood	23
Darling Downs’	23
Burrum	15
Selene	23
Callide	14
Bluff	14
Styx	16
Blair Athol	9
Collinsville	16
Mt. Mulligan	27

These ash contents vary from mine to mine within a district and from time to time, but the above may be considered typical.

Trend in ash contents.

“Information available to the board on the ash contents of West Moreton coals is far more complete and reliable than that of any other district. The following table has therefore been prepared showing the average ash content of West Moreton coals delivered to the Metropolitan powerhouses and gasworks for each year 1940 to 1951.

The values represent the quality of over 60 per cent. of the coal produced in the West Moreton district.

Year.	Average ash content per cent.	
1940	..	16.0
1941	..	17.2
1942	..	18.2
1943	..	18.8
1944	..	20.5
1945	..	22.3
1946	..	23.9
1947	..	23.7
1948	..	25.5
1949	..	24.3
1950	..	25.9
1951	..	25.8

“Railway tests which cover the whole of Queensland over a large period of years indicate a similar deterioration in quality for the majority of Queensland coals.

“This deterioration may be attributed to two main causes: the better seams have been exploited, leaving the inferior coal to be worked now, and less care appears to be exercised by the present day miner in filling coal.

4. A ‘reasonable’ ash content.

“Ideas as to what constitutes a ‘reasonable’ grade of coal varies all over the world and these ideas are usually dependent on the quality of the fuels locally available.

“For instance, pre-war in England, consumers frequently demanded coals of 5 per cent. ash or less and imposed penalties on coal exceeding this specification. Under such conditions combustion appliances are designed to very rigid specifications to give high efficiencies and would be rendered completely worthless by inferior coals.

“However, within definite limits, appliances may be designed for any quality of fuel so that what constitutes a ‘reasonable’ grade of fuel could be determined by

(a) The fuel for which the average existing combustion appliances are designed or may be modified to use;

(b) The quality of the locally available fuels with especial reference to their ‘inherent’ ash contents since extraneous mineral matter is removable at the source.

5. Immediate Aims in Cleaning.

“The ash contents (both total and inherent) of coals from different mines within a district vary considerably, but the following general observations may be made.”

“(i) Ipswich coals—the average ash content as sold to consumers was 27.3 per cent. in 1951 whilst the inherent ash content averages 17 per cent. Screening and handpicking will not remove all the stone but the immediate aim should be to reduce the ash content of coal from all collieries to between 20 and 25 per cent. The powerhouses could manage with these fuels.

“(ii) Rosewood coals—the average ash content as sold to consumers was 22.8 per cent. in 1951 whilst the inherent ash content averages 14 per cent. The immediate aim should be to reduce the ash content of coal from all collieries to between 15 and 20 per cent. which would make them more suitable for the gasworks and railways.”

That shows the need for power to install machines for the washing and cleaning of coal.

The statement goes on to deal with the variations in the various districts, but as we have been talking about the West Moreton district I will read what it says about that district—

“Ash contents as high as 40 per cent. have been reported by the power companies for certain coals on occasions, and there is a considerable variation between collieries due to different seam qualities and different standards of mining and coal preparation.

“The following are the average ash contents of all the Ipswich coals for 1951. Many of these represent averages of tests returned by two or more consumers. The district average was 27.3 per cent.”

It then sets out the various collieries and the ash content. I think it is only necessary to say that if dirty coal is due to lack of proper washing machines, the quicker we get specific power to introduce them the better.

I content myself with those remarks and say that if at any time anyone has any impression that harsh action is being taken by the board he can go to the board and find out its point of view and if he does not feel satisfied he can come to me. I have faith and trust in the personnel of the board and I feel that no drastic action in any respect will be taken.

Motion (Mr. Riordan) agreed to.

COMMITTEE.

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

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING.

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

STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION ACTS AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

Hon. E. J. RIORDAN (Flinders—Secretary for Mines and Immigration) (3.26 p.m.): I move—

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

I gave details of the principles of the Bill at the introductory stage and I said that the object was to empower the State Electricity Commission to go onto the open market to

borrow money. There are, of course, other provisions in the measure of a machinery nature.

This Bill will, I know, be recognised as a very important one because the future expansion of this State, particularly in the rural and country areas, will be bound up with the success of the borrowings of the commission. For that reason, I hope it will meet with the whole-hearted support of every member of the House. From the way in which the Bill was received on its introduction, I have no doubt that will be so.

On the introductory stage of the Bill, hon. members took the opportunity of discussing various matters affecting the State Electricity Commission and the various regional boards. It is a very good thing that we should have sound, constructive criticism in any Parliament. It is in that way that we get good legislation.

Mr. Sparkes: You will not listen to it when we give it to you.

Mr. RIORDAN: The hon. member will find that I shall always listen to constructive criticism. Sometimes, however, it is merely destructive.

The hon. member for Aubigny has mentioned work that is being undertaken by the Dalby Town Council in extending transmission lines to Jandowae and Chinchilla. He suggested that the work of connecting consumers between those centres was being neglected. This is a matter for the Dalby Town Council, but I want to make it quite clear that the extension of transmission lines from Dalby through Jandowae and Chinchilla has now been completed almost to Miles, and the linking up of these places has been a first essential step in the plan of electrification in that part of the State.

Without the load offering in the principal centres of Jandowae, Chinchilla and Miles, consumers between these townships would never have any prospect of receiving a supply. It is a case of first things first, and the main transmission network must come first. The hon. member may be assured that the distribution works referred to by him have also received attention. Extensions to rural groups in the Dalby Town Council's area of supply, to a total estimated cost of £195,200, have already been approved by the State Electricity Commission, and will be undertaken by the Dalby Town Council as funds and materials are available. I might add that special assistance has been given by the commission in obtaining materials for this area. I want to make it clear also to hon. members that all of these works are being subsidised by the State Government to the extent of 50 per cent. of the capital cost. I desire to add, too, that the Dalby Town Council, in collaboration with the State Electricity Commission, has done an excellent job in the electrification of this part of the State.

Mr. Sparkes: I did not say anything to the contrary.

Mr. RIORDAN: I do not think the hon. member suggested that was not so. On the contrary, I think he gave high praise to the Dalby Town Council.

The hon. member for Mundingburra has once again assailed our ears with many wild statements aimed at the work of the Townsville Regional Electricity Board and the State Electricity Commission. From what I have learned since the hon. member made those statements, I should say they were extravagant in every detail. Of course, that is in keeping with the hon. member's approach to all matters in this House. For some peculiar reason, he has a very strong dislike for the Townsville Regional Electricity Board. Although that may be because of some neglect by the board, or of something that the hon. member does not quite agree with, when he comes into this House he must be able to substantiate everything he says. Both the hon. member for Townsville and the hon. member for Fortitude Valley replied very effectively the other night to the criticism of the hon. member for Mundingburra, who amongst other things set himself up as an engineer. The hon. member has set himself up on previous occasions as the best fireman and the best judge in the State, so I suppose on this occasion he regards himself as the best engineer ever to grace this State.

It appears to be the hon. member's belief that if he repeats his criticisms often enough, irrespective of whether they contain any truth, somebody will eventually begin to believe them. The hon. member for Mundingburra would have us believe that the undertaking of the Townsville City Council, before it was taken over by the regional board, was perfect in all respects and was making profits. This, however, is a very idealistic picture. The fact is that prior to the board's taking control there was a shortage of supply, and consumers were restricted in the quality of electricity. This, mark you, was at a time when only the City of Townsville had to be supplied, and the hon. member had no regard for other periods. If hon. members will listen patiently for a few minutes while I tell them what the council did when it was handing over this authority to the regional board I think they will have grave doubts about the honesty of the hon. member.

It is certainly true that the council had made substantial profits during the war years and had accumulated a reserve fund amounting to £63,000. This had been made possible principally from the revenue from the armed services and Commonwealth departments that established themselves there at the time. The revenue was received for very little capital expenditure by the council and actually the generating plant was loaded absolutely to capacity during the war period. There were frequent blackouts and there was much dissatisfaction, particularly on the part of the armed services, at the poor quality of the supply. In fact, many service establishments installed their own plant and the plant at Hubert Wells was augmented. When the board

took over the undertaking, it was found that the council had transferred the £63 000, which previously had stood to the credit of the electric authority, to the council's general fund and the board got nothing of it. Actually the board took over a deficit of £3,256 when it took control of the Townsville undertaking.

The board took over also the assets and liabilities of the Townsville undertaking. The liabilities included over £100,000 still owing on loans, as well as all other outstanding debts, a power-house in relatively poor condition, and a few dilapidated motor-vehicles, on which, I am informed, relatively good tyres had been replaced at the last moment by the oldest tyres in the possession of the council. Much of the plant in the Townsville power-house was secondhand when it was installed and even under the council's control had neared the end of its useful life. The fact that this station had been kept in operation without serious difficulty until recent months is a tribute to the board and its staff, particularly when it is realised that the number of units generated in the region have increased from 25,834,526 to 53,652,522, or by 107.6 per cent., since the board took over.

Blackouts have been occurring recently while boilers and other plant have been laid up for annual overhaul, but these will be kept to a minimum until the new station is operating. They do emphasise the extreme importance of the completion of the new station.

The hon. member implied that the board had treated the existing power-house at Townsville with disdain and had reclaimed acres elsewhere to build a new one, which he appears to think was not necessary. The fact is that the existing power-house site was not capable of being developed to meet the increasing needs of the region. There is not sufficient water available for condensing purposes, the area is limited for building and storage, and the plant is old and relatively inefficient. A new site had to be found and all the expert opinion that was available in Queensland was utilised, a number of sites were investigated, and the present site was finally selected as the most suitable from both practical and economic viewpoints.

Now, the hon. member has said, as if it were some black mark against the board and the commission, that 2,055 piles and 167,000 cubic yards of filling were used in the foundations for the new power station on this site. Certainly they were used in the foundations. He might have added that 1,560 tons of cement and 2,000 tons of steel are being used in the building, excluding foundations. This power station is to supply a rich and important part of Queensland—not just the city of Townsville and other towns but a large rural population and important industries as well, including the North Queensland Cement Company and important irrigation works on the Burdekin River. Those foundations are to carry machinery generating 52,500 k.w., which is five times that at Hubert Wells, and all the ancillary equipment. That building is to house this plant and without this

plant the Townsville region would be without electricity for its existing consumers, and quite incapable of meeting the vital developmental needs of the area. It is worth spending money on, and hon. members may be assured that the money is being spent well and wisely.

As pledge of this, the Government are meeting one third of the loan charges on the construction of this station. The Government are giving the board help to make all this possible.

I am not going to set myself up as a technical expert on the location of power stations. I do not suppose the hon. member for Mundingburra, although he tells us he is the best at everything, is going to set himself up as an electrical expert who will differ with the views of the leading technicians in Queensland as to the right site for the power-house. The first point in my statement is that the site of the power station, which he condemns, was selected after an exhaustive investigation by our foremost engineers. The second is that pumping of circulating water is inherent in any scheme as the water must be forced through pipes to obtain volume and flow for cooling purposes. Pumps are essential for this purpose, wherever the station is located. Also, the inlets and outlets for circulating water must be as widely separated as possible to prevent the discharged warm water from affecting the temperature of water at the intake. The arrangement at Townsville is ideal in this respect.

Mr. Nicholson interjected.

Mr. RIORDAN: The hon. member for Fortitude Valley dealt effectively with that the other night. I assure the hon. member for Murrumba that when I am dealing with technical things I will be advised by experts and not by the hon. member for Mundingburra or the hon. member for Murrumba.

I should like to correct any impression that there has been any wholesale failure by the regional board to connect new houses in Townsville because of shortage of loan funds. The facts supplied to me by the State Electricity Commission reveal that of a total of 234 applications for supply received during the current financial year no fewer than 220 have already been connected. Some connections involving an extension of mains were, I believe, temporarily deferred so that funds available would be used to connect the greatest number, but these deferrals are being regularly reviewed by the board. Is it not better that somebody should have electricity connected to his home than that extensions should be made to homes already supplied with electricity? The board decided that these latter cases would be deferred until the new connections were made.

With respect to the statement by the hon. member that the board is approaching householders to lend it money to put the electricity in their houses and the board can repay them in God's good time, I can only say that I sincerely trust that householders will recognise the twofold value of investing their savings in the State Electricity Commission loan, i.e., of making a good investment and ensuring that they will get supply.

As to the allegation of bungling by the Townsville Regional Electricity Board, I do not say that this board has not made mistakes, but I maintain when allegations of that kind are made they should at least be substantiated. Characteristically enough, these allegations by the hon. member for Mundingburra are not supported in any way, and I should like to say to the hon. member that similar unsupported accusations by him have been answered before in this House, that I have seen the last report of the Auditor-General on the operations of the Townsville board and it is one of the most excellent audit reports I have seen and reflects a high degree of efficiency within the organisation. Despite the magnitude of the work being undertaken by the board not one single item is mentioned in the report on which correction is required or adverse comment is made.

The hon. member's statement on tariffs is misleading. He compares the special rate charged by the Townsville City Council for power where a 4kw stove is installed with the general rate of the Townsville board for all domestic purposes. Actually, if supply to electric stoves is considered, the Townsville board's charge today would be 1.7d. a unit compared with the charge of 1.3d. quote of the council. There is an increase of about 30 per cent. and when it is realised that the basic wage has increased 105 per cent. since the board took over, that does not reflect in any way to the disadvantage of the board. As a matter of fact, if the hon. member took time to study the tariff position he would realise that despite very heavy increases in coal costs, increases to the tariffs at Townsville have been about the same as in the densely populated area of South-Eastern Queensland.

Mr. Aikens: Do not try and tell that to the people of Townsville.

Mr. RIORDAN: The hon. member can tell them what he likes. For the time being, I am telling him.

The hon. member asks why regional boards have not been formed in Brisbane, Ipswich and Toowoomba. He knows very well that even if the Government desired to do so they could not be established in those areas, as they are covered by existing franchises. While those franchises are in existence, it is not possible for boards to be formed. In any case, both the City Electric Light Company and the Toowoomba Electric Light and Power Company are carrying out development work in accordance with the programme agreed to between the State Electricity Commission and the electric authorities concerned.

The hon. member referred to the Home Hill farmers. He took me outside and showed me a cutting he quoted from the Townsville "Daily Bulletin." Having spent some time in the Home Hill district, I did fear that something radically wrong was taking place, and I asked for some information in connection with it. I find now that it is not believed that discontent exists amongst the farmers who take real stock of the position. I am told also that no decision has been made to install diesel engines. In any case, that

is entirely a matter for the persons concerned. If they want to install them they are at perfect liberty to do so.

The facts are that prior to the board's taking over the price of electricity to Home Hill was 2d. a unit plus a watering rate of between £4 and £5 an acre per annum. No domestic supply was made available, and the use of electric power for pumping was restricted even during the day-time. The power station closed down at night.

The present price of electricity charged by the board for most of the electricity consumed in the area is 3.1d. a unit with no watering charge by the board. Most important of all, the board is giving a full supply for domestic purposes, including all types of appliances, and a continuous supply of power for pumping over 24 hours if required. Hon. members will appreciate what a boon this has been to farmers in the Home Hill area. Production figures and the income of the area increased substantially as a result of the improved electricity supply. The advantage will, of course, be even more marked when the new power station at Townsville is commissioned.

Mr. Hiley: Did you say it went up to 3s. 1d. a unit?

Mr. RIORDAN: I meant to say that it went up to 3.1d. a unit. If it had gone up to 3.1d. a unit the farmers would have had some reason to squeal. Perhaps the person who wrote the article quoted by the hon. member for Mundingburra got his figures mixed, as I did.

Certainly there has been an increase in the price charged, but there has also been a marked improvement in the service given and, having regard to the fact that the price of coal over the same period has increased by very nearly 200 per cent., the price increase, however regrettable, must be regarded as very reasonable. No-one will suggest, I am sure, that a business could carry on without increasing prices when its costs increase, and coal is the predominant element of cost in the generation of electricity.

The hon. member referred also to the very large increases in the accounts of consumers at Home Hill recently rendered by the Townsville board. I have had that position checked, and the State Electricity Commissioner tells me that a check of 15 typical consumers in the Home Hill area has been made by comparing the consumption of electricity for the six months ending 31 December, 1950, with that for the six months ending 31 December, 1951. It has been found that the actual consumption for the latter period has been from twice to five times as great in the cases tested as it was for the earlier period. It is obvious that if people use more of a commodity they can expect to pay more in total, even though there may have been no increase in price. Actually there was also a price increase by the Townsville board last September. The very much greater consumption is obviously due to the increased use of water for irrigation during

the drought. I am beginning to think that the hon. member must have had his leg pulled by some well-wisher in the Townsville area.

Other matters were raised by other hon. members. The hon. member for Cook spoke about an account and he said members of the board were running along with two men in a motor lorry to install a power point, and demanding payment before the point was put in. This is the accepted practice in most districts if there is any doubt that the person concerned will pay, or if there are other reasons. One of the principal reasons why this action was taken by the board was that it has more work on hand than it can undertake at the present time and it does not encourage people to come to it for the purpose of installing points. It is trying to have all that work go to private business so that it can save its staff for more essential work.

Mr. Hiley: It is a very unusual thing to demand cash from a householder for the installation of a point.

Mr. RIORDAN: It is only done, as I have said, if it is thought that the person concerned might not pay or is not well known or if there is some doubt about him. In the case referred to by the hon. member for Cook it was done to discourage householders, and others for that matter, from asking for such work to be done. It was thought that that work should go to local business people.

One hon. member mentioned the question of transport, which is always a fruitful source of generalities. I am informed that a specific complaint of this kind was investigated by my predecessor and was found to be entirely groundless. The State Electricity Commission informs me that transport is well organised and its use is personally supervised by the manager of the board himself. Under these circumstances I am unable to accept the hon. member's suggestion, unless specific instances of lack of co-ordination and waste can be placed before me. I think that is only fair. If the hon. member has a specific case to mention I will have the matter investigated through the State Electricity Commission.

I want to correct any misapprehension that exists in the mind of the hon. member who raised this question as to the position at Innisfail with respect to office accommodation for the board's staff. The board has had an arrangement with the Johnstone Shire Council that the council will act as collecting agent for the board in that area, for which the council has been paid 3 per cent. on all moneys collected. The board has also occupied one room in the council offices, subdivided by a partition. It also wanted accommodation for displaying and handling electrical appliances but was unable to make satisfactory arrangements for this purpose. In 1947 the board found that it would be more economical for it to establish its own office in Innisfail and that it would also be able to give a better

service to consumers in that area, which is a very important one, and a decision was made to proceed accordingly as soon as circumstances permitted. Because of the shortage of labour and materials, construction of the building was deferred from time to time and a contract was not let until the beginning of 1951. However, before work began a shortage of loan funds developed and the contract was terminated by mutual agreement. A new building is therefore not being constructed at present. The board has been able to rent satisfactory premises, which it has been occupying since the beginning of February this year. Apart from an improved service to consumers in the area, the saving to the board by having its own office is estimated by the board to be at least £800 a year. Actually, the board has been forced into the position of having to rent premises to tide it over till it can build its own premises.

With regard to subsidies, the Government subsidy scheme was applied to publicly-owned electric authorities during the year, and under this heading an amount of £9,606 was paid. This is a helpful contribution to development, but it cannot by any means be considered to make possible the introduction of uniform tariffs throughout the State, or even within any area of supply. The commission's analysis shows that, to reduce the tariffs throughout the State to the level of those operating in Brisbane, an annual subsidy of £500,000 would be necessary.

If the tariffs in the Capricornia region were to be made uniform on the basis of those in Rockhampton, a contribution from some source of £17,000 a year for that area alone would have to be found. This is typical of what the position would be in other regions. The commission cannot visualise consumers in Brisbane or in the base-load centres in the various regions, who are already contributing substantially towards electrical development, being asked to meet the increased charges necessary to equalise urban and rural tariffs. The commission is firmly of the opinion that uniform tariffs are impracticable at this stage of the development of electricity supply in Queensland and, in the interests of such development, would not recommend any action along such lines at present. Even without this additional burden upon the industry, rising costs and extension of supply into less closely settled areas are imposing severe economic burdens, which can be relieved only by a liberal application of the subsidy scheme and by increased tariffs.

I think these were the principal matters raised by hon. members, and I have tried to give the best answers possible. Other questions were asked by various members, but they virtually answered those questions themselves.

Mr. Lloyd Roberts: I referred to the Mackay City Council and similar local authorities that are not regional boards. Are they able to participate in any loan funds?

Mr. RIORDAN: I have been informed that only regional boards will be able to participate in the loan funds.

Mr. Lloyd Roberts: That will not be much encouragement to people in areas not controlled by regional boards to contribute to the loan.

Mr. RIORDAN: It may not be long before it is necessary for such areas to come under the control of a regional board. Despite the statement of the hon. member for Mundiburra that regional boards are not operating in the best interests of the people, there are many areas that are desirous of coming under the control of a regional board as soon as possible.

Mr. Lloyd Roberts: This is not something for you to answer, but the Mackay City Council and similar local authorities may or may not have power themselves to raise funds.

Mr. RIORDAN: All I can say is that at present the only people who will be able to participate in the loan funds are the regional boards and the State Electricity Commission.

I outlined the provisions of the Bill on the introductory stage. The main provision empowers the State Electricity Commission to go onto the open market and borrow money. At the present stage I do not want to go into all the reasons for doing that. It has been found necessary, however, to go onto the open loan market because of the set of circumstances which are existing in Australia today, and I hope this meets with the blessing of every worth-while Queenslander. If Queenslanders supply this loan money they will not do so under any adverse circumstances; they will get the same return as they would from the Melbourne City Council, the Brisbane City Council, or the various other organisations that from time to time have been on our loan market here, and have met with great success.

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) (4.1 p.m.): The hon. gentleman said in introducing this Bill that it did not contain many principles apart from the provision for a deputy chairman of each regional electricity board and the postponement of the regional board elections this year. Apart from that the Bill is confined almost exclusively to giving authority to the State Electricity Commission and the regional boards to raise public loans and to the machinery provisions relating thereto.

I think, however, we should examine this new principle that is being written into the Bill. The present Act provides only for loans from the Treasurer, bank overdrafts, and the sale of debentures. The public loans that will be raised after the passing of this legislation will be guaranteed by the Government and will be trustee investments under the Trustees and Executors Act of 1897.

This is the second major alteration in financial policy affecting State instrumentalities made by Labour Governments. We look back to 1922 and we find that the Queensland Labour Government instituted the

practice of authorising State instrumentalities and local authorities to borrow money outside the Treasury, that is, from financial institutions. That practice became more general and more widespread after 1932.

The contingent liabilities of the Government on account of guaranteed loans were—

At 30/6/32 (for 10 years) .. £10,241,000

At 30/6/51 (for 29 years) .. £51,281,000

I bring this matter up because in 1922 Labour Governments instituted this policy with the idea of separating their own State loan requirements from the loan requirements of these instrumentalities. This method was used to enable the Government to get a greater share of loan money from the funds that were controlled by the loan council. We can see how this practice has grown over the years from the figures I have quoted. The average Government guarantee per annum for the first 10 years was £1,241,000 and for the second 19 years £2,200,000.

Mr. Walsh: There is no reason why that should have been included on our ordinary loan programme.

Mr. NICKLIN: The other States do it—South Australia.

Mr. Walsh: One of the mendicant States well looked after by the Federal Government and one that gets a big hand-out at our expense.

Mr. NICKLIN: The reason why this debenture method has now failed is that the financial institutions upon which the Government largely relied, such as insurance companies, have become unable to lend because of increased interest rates and the consequent fall in the value of Government bonds. They have got to hold onto their present bonds until maturity, as they would lose heavily by selling them at the present time. This practice of the Government of keeping the loan requirements of semi-governmental authorities separate from their own loan requirements is now causing a situation that has made it necessary to introduce this legislation to give the State Electricity Commission power to go on the public market to raise loans.

Mr. Walsh: The Brisbane City Council loan was very well over-subscribed.

Mr. NICKLIN: I am not denying that but I am discussing the State Electricity Commission and what is involved in the changed financial policy of the Government.

There are three main aspects of this new policy of public loans for electricity undertakings—

1. Is it really essential?
2. Can it be confined to electricity undertakings?
3. What effect would a general application of such method have on Government borrowing under the Loan Council?

I propose to examine those points one by one.

First of all, is it really essential? It is essential that the electricity undertaking should have enough money to carry on its work. The question I ask is: is it really

essential now that the Government should ask these authorities to go onto the public loan market when the Government themselves have funds available with which to finance the undertakings at the present time? Unfortunately, the Treasurer has endeavoured to make a good deal of political capital out of what has happened in regard to the State Electricity Commission and boards not by blaming himself or his Government but by passing the buck to the Federal Government. When we get down to tin-tacks we find that there is no lack of financial accommodation for electricity undertakings, but the Government have endeavoured to gain a political advantage and the Attorney-General and the Treasurer have put up all sorts of projects that were entirely unnecessary in order to disrupt the workings of the electricity undertakings. In fact, the State Electricity Commissioner was sent on a special trip north to close down the electricity undertakings, when the Treasurer had funds all the time.

Mr. POWER: I rise to a point of order. The hon. member is not saying what is true when he says the Electricity Commissioner was sent North to close down electricity undertakings. I was the Minister in charge at the time and the Commissioner was never sent North to close down undertakings, but he was sent South to try to get money to keep them open.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. gentleman to accept the denial of the Attorney-General.

Mr. NICKLIN: I accept the hon. gentleman's statement. Will he deny that the Electricity Commissioner went North?

Mr. Power: No.

Mr. NICKLIN: He knows well why he went North.

Mr. Power: Why?

Mr. NICKLIN: To tell the electricity undertakings to cut down operations.

Mr. Power: Nothing of the kind, and you know it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney-General has denied it as Minister in charge at the time, and I ask the hon. gentleman to accept his denial.

Mr. NICKLIN: I accept his denial but I challenge him as to the correctness of what he said. He knows only too well what happened.

Mr. Power: I know that you are not speaking the truth.

Mr. NICKLIN: I will quote something to bear out my contention and at the same time show that the Government, in an endeavour to gain a political advantage over the Commonwealth Government, took action that was entirely unnecessary in regard to the workings of the electricity undertakings in this State.

Let us have a look at the Government's financial position. In the past four years

the Government had underspent loan allocation by £12,000,000. For the first eight months of 1951-52 they spent only £12,762,000 out of an allocation of £23,321,000; yet according to them they have no loan money to help these undertakings.

Mr. Walsh: Why waste time on this?

Mr. NICKLIN: It refers to loan money in connection with the operations of these electrical undertakings. I know the Treasurer does not like to hear this, but it is true, and it is borne out by his own figures. The Government could easily have made available temporary advances to the regional electricity boards, instead of doing as they did in order to gain a mean petty political advantage at the expense of the Federal Government, by bringing about a state of chaos in the electricity boards, in consequence of which large numbers of men were sacked.

Mr. Power: You know how much was lent to the Electricity Commission.

Mr. NICKLIN: The Government found temporary accommodation for the commission after the men had been sacked.

Let me quote the following, which appeared in the Townsville "Bulletin" of 7 Jan., 1951:

"The adamancy of the State Government is designed to convert the three boards into political guinea pigs and to conscript them on the side of the Government to raise Cain against Canberra."

The "Bulletin" went on to state that finance for regional electricity boards was far more important than the electrification of the Brisbane railways, the Tully Falls scheme, and other works. At the same time the Rockhampton "Bulletin" had a very critical leader on the Government's action in regard to regional electricity boards.

Mr. Power: The greatest rag in the State.

Mr. NICKLIN: I suppose the hon. gentleman describes it as such because it had the temerity to criticise the Government from time to time. If the Minister is not satisfied with what the Press in the areas affected have to say about these things, let me quote from a statement made at a special meeting of the Townsville Electricity Board on 4 Nov., 1951. The chairman, Mr. J. L. Kelly, said that the State Government should reallocate State loan funds, taking into account the nature of the works. He said that the Government was responsible for the default and should accept the responsibility.

Mr. Power: Kelly is a liar.

Mr. NICKLIN: That may be the Minister's opinion. According to him, anybody who says anything that hurts his Government would be a liar. He is chairman of the Townsville Regional Electricity Board and he bears out my contention that in denying financial assistance to electricity boards, and causing the sacking of men, at a time when they were not short of finance, the Government were merely seeking to gain a petty political advantage, as they thought,

over the Commonwealth Government. That is why we should examine the position to see whether it is really necessary to pass this legislation enabling regional boards to raise money by public loan at a time when the Government have plenty of money to help them.

Mr. Walsh: Where do you say we have the money to help them?

Mr. NICKLIN: I have just quoted the underspending of the loan moneys available to the Treasurer, and he knows that what I say is true.

Let us now turn to my second point, the point whether the raising of public loans can be confined to regional electricity boards. At the moment the same position is developing in connection with local authorities which, like regional electricity boards, have had to bear the brunt of the 40-hour week and the consequent wages spiral. Since the operation of the 40-hour week the Commonwealth grant to Queensland under the States Grants Acts has increased from £7,426,000 to £19,000,000, yet the Treasurer says the Commonwealth is denying him money, consequently he cannot pass it on to regional electricity boards or local authorities. What do the Government propose to do, if anything? That is what we want to know. It is to be noted that this restriction on raising loans from public funds does not apply to the Brisbane City Council. That authority has power to borrow, and its last loan of £800,000 at 4½ per cent. was over-subscribed by £400,000. The Attorney-General asked what about the Brisbane City Council, and that is my answer to him. This raising of public loans by semi-governmental authorities will not stop there. It will have to be extended to local authorities if the Government continue to deny them their share of the loan moneys allocated to the State.

Take the third point, the general borrowing for local-government purposes. We must take this into account because we are breaking away from the generally accepted policy of the Commonwealth over the years of restricting the principle of public borrowings by semi-governmental and local governmental authorities. We have to look at the effect this will have on that policy, as even the Treasurer will admit. The sole object of the Commonwealth-States Financial Agreement Act of 1927 was to do away with competition for available loan moneys.

Mr. Walsh: As between States.

Mr. NICKLIN: Whether it is between States, local authorities or semi-governmental bodies it does not matter two hoots, because it all comes out of the one bucket. If there is nothing in the bucket nobody can get anything out of it.

As I said previously, to some extent this objective of keeping some control over public borrowings in Australia is being frustrated in New South Wales and Queensland in particular, and to a lesser extent in Victoria. In South Australia and Western Australia the requirements for local-authority and semi-governmental work are included in the State

loan allocations. Consequently, they have not met the same difficulties as we have because of the borrowing practices instituted by Labour Governments in the past in an endeavour to get more loan money for the State. Because of the change in the financial circumstances the chickens are coming home to roost and difficulties are being encountered by semi-governmental and local-governmental authorities.

Mr. Walsh: Whose chickens?

Mr. NICKLIN: The Treasurer's chickens. We have to look at this matter carefully because it will have a vital effect on this State and the financial affairs of Australia. The interest rate for the present Commonwealth loan is 3½ per cent, whereas the rate for local loans is 4½ per cent. Do not let it be forgotten, Mr. Speaker, that local loans are guaranteed by the Government. In the present restricted condition of the money market it is quite possible that preference will be given to local loans at 4½ per cent.—and, as I said before, they are guaranteed by the Government—as against Commonwealth loans at 3½ per cent.

Mr. Walsh: Would you argue against that?

Mr. NICKLIN: The Treasurer would be the first one to cry to high heaven if he did not get his share of the loan money. He has to appreciate the fact that he cannot always have a sympathetic Federal Government prepared to find £100,000,000 out of revenue to look after the local requirements of the States. What is his position going to be next year if the States have to rely solely on Commonwealth loan raisings? There will be competition from a multitude of local authorities and their loans are guaranteed by the Government, and the rate of interest is higher. The Treasurer will be thinking seriously about that.

Mr. Walsh: I am thinking very seriously too.

Mr. NICKLIN: This is a matter that must soon receive loan council consideration from the point of view of the extent to which this new practice can be allowed without destroying the intentions of the Commonwealth-States Financial Agreement. Does the Treasurer wish to throw overboard the Commonwealth-States Financial Agreement and have a "free-for-all" on the loan market?

Mr. Walsh: It might come to a position when we might have to do that.

Mr. NICKLIN: Personally, I do not think it would be of advantage to do it, because up to the present time the arrangement has worked satisfactorily to the States—

Mr. Walsh: Some of the States.

Mr. NICKLIN: Let us look at the financial year drawing to a close. We find that the loan programme for the Commonwealth and the States is, in round figures, £219,000,000 approved—

Mr. Walsh: Cut by how much?

Mr. NICKLIN: That was the final sum; there was no cut at all. And for local authorities £95,552,000 was approved, with the proviso that an effort be made to reduce that sum by 25 per cent. That is the Commonwealth Government, who have been blackguarded right and left by hon. members opposite in an attempt to gain some political advantage. That Government have guaranteed to the States that they will make up the deficit, if any—and there will be a deficit as between loan raisings and the approved loan programme.

It appears now as if the Federal Government would have to find a cool £100,000,000 to see that the States—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. member to connect his remarks with the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. NICKLIN: I am certainly connecting them up with the provisions of the Bill. I am examining the necessity for semi-government authorities to go on the open loan market, and the effect that may have on the financial affairs of both this State and the Commonwealth. It is a very pertinent question and must be examined closely.

Mr. Walsh: They budgeted for that £100,000,000, and they look like getting a surplus of £250,000,000.

Mr. NICKLIN: I am pointing out that the Federal Government are extremely generous to the States.

Mr. Walsh: Not to Queensland.

Mr. NICKLIN: The present Federal Government have given this State a greater allocation of loan moneys than have any previous Federal Government.

Mr. Power: How much did they clear from taxation?

Mr. NICKLIN: I am not concerned with that, but I am concerned with the proportion this State receives. The proportion received from the present Federal Government was much greater than that received from the previous Labour Federal Government.

I should like to ask the Treasurer: what will be the attitude of other States that have wholly or mainly included local borrowings in their own loan allocations when they learn that we are going on the open loan market with our electricity undertakings?

Mr. Walsh: Name the States.

Mr. NICKLIN: South Australia. These things must be examined in considering this legislation, and for the good of this State, and of Australia as a whole, I hope it will not be an "open go" on the loan markets by all and sundry. If it is, it will lead to inevitable financial chaos and we shall return to a position worse than that which existed previously, when all the States and the Commonwealth were competing against one another to the detriment of all. That resulted in the Commonwealth-States Financial Agreement, which brought some

order into efforts by the various Governments to obtain moneys with which to carry on their activities. An orderly and co-ordinated approach to the loan market is the best method, not Rafferty's Rules.

Mr. Walsh: The only way to get that is to return a Labour Government to power in the Federal sphere.

Mr. NICKLIN: I should not like to see a Labour Government returned to power in the Federal sphere, because I know how niggardly was the treatment that Labour Governments meted out to this State when they were previously in power.

I leave the matter at that. In view of the effect that this action on the part of the Government may have on the general financial position of the States and the Commonwealth, I trust that the powers that are being given under this legislation will be used with great discretion, and that the Government will not go onto the market for an electricity loan whilst they have at their disposal funds that they could give to the State Electricity Commission to enable it to carry out its activities.

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg—Treasurer) (4.30 p.m.): I rise to make a few remarks on this important phase of the Bill, that is, the power that is to be extended to the State Electricity Commission to go on the open market to raise moneys on behalf of the various regional electricity boards throughout the State.

I do not know why the Leader of the Opposition should be so concerned about the extension of this authority to the State Electricity Commission. That authority is already exercised by the State Electricity Commission in Victoria, and has been for some considerable time. It is not a semi-governmental body whose programme is included in the State programme for Victoria. All that is being done here in Queensland is to extend the same rights and the same powers to a co-ordinated body, which will be able to go on the public market and raise money on behalf of the numerous boards, instead of having several boards individually going on the market.

Mr. Munro: Does that take it outside of the Loan Council?

Mr. WALSH: Of course it does not. I do not want to get into a general debate on the whole question of loan raising because I am looking forward to the time when I shall move the introduction of a Bill relating to the financial relationships between the State and the Commonwealth, and there will be plenty of scope for the Opposition and myself to go into all those phases.

Mr. Munro: When shall we have that?

Mr. WALSH: The notice has already been given. If the hon. member for Toowoomba had been following the proceedings of the House very carefully he would have known that.

All loans over £100,000 by governmental bodies are subject to the approval of the Loan Council. The Premier gets advices daily from the Treasurer of the Commonwealth, Sir Arthur Fadden, asking for the approval of this State for the raising of certain loans on behalf of different bodies in other States—country councils, water and sewerage boards and numerous other bodies in other States. That approval is sent on by me through the Premier, and it is happening every day. All we are doing is extending the same powers and the same rights to the semi-governmental bodies that are already exercised by the Brisbane City Council.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to all this money as coming out of the same pool. That is true, but at the present time any one of the semi-governmental bodies, including fire brigades, hospitals boards, regional electricity boards, local authorities, or similar institutions, have the right to raise debenture loans. Where do the debenture loans come from? They come out of the same pool. What is being done here is to co-ordinate the facilities to enable one central body to do the borrowing for all regional boards in this State, and the local authorities have asked for a similar power to be extended to them. That requires careful examination, because roughly there are between 130 and 140 local authorities in this State. We could get into a very confused state.

Mr. Gair: Varying amounts would be required.

Mr. WALSH: As the Premier says, varying amounts would be required, from £200,000 to £300,000.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition went into another phase when he spoke about the assistance that this Government could give to the regional electricity boards to prevent them from curtailing their activities. It is true that the Premier was responsible for calling a Loan Council meeting at which the only item that was listed for discussion was the question of borrowings of semi-governmental and local-authority bodies. The Federal Government were asked to see whether they could not give some financial assistance to enable these bodies to continue their activities, which were vital to defence. Nobody can argue against the case that was put up by the Premier in relation to water, transport, and power, three good things. We did not ask for anything for swimming pools and other things that can be left in abeyance. A strong case was put up by the Premier that would justify the Commonwealth in giving some assistance for those purposes.

I regret that I cannot go any further in this discussion than the Leader of the Opposition did, nor have I any desire to do so, because of the facilities that will be available to me on the other Bill that I just mentioned. Let it be understood that the local authorities and semi-governmental bodies have a larger programme of loan works than the State itself. Of the £13,000,000, in round figures,

required by them about £5,000,000 would be tied up in electricity programmes—a pretty formidable figure, and the Leader of the Opposition is obviously not serious when he suggests that the State can supply that £5,000,000 and provide for the other works of the State and semi-governmental bodies have larger claims out of the meagre allotment that the Commonwealth makes to this State. Because of the interest of the Premier in the matter and after consultation with me as Treasurer the Government immediately made available the sum of £750,000 by way of temporary accommodation, and other arrangements were made by the State Government Insurance Office, which had been responsible previously for making substantial sums available to regional electricity boards to enable them to carry on. Therefore, this Government have not been lacking in carrying out their obligations in this connection.

The Leader of the Opposition then went on to talk about the fall in interest rates and about money not being available. As the Premier asked the Prime Minister at the Loan Council, where has the money gone? Is it like the flies in the winter-time? Has it just simply disappeared? Let me tell hon. members that the Federal Labour Government were able to raise 11 loans between March, 1945, and September, 1949, aggregating £820,000,000 on a falling rate of interest, going from 3½ per cent. to 3¼ per cent., and these loans were over-subscribed to the extent of £66,000,000. Only one of the 11 loans, that floated in March, 1946, aggregating £90,000,000, was under-subscribed to the extent of £2,500,000, while two loans, just prior to the defeat the Federal Labour Government in September, 1949, amounting to £120,000,000 and £115,000,000, were over-subscribed by £18,000,000 and £19,000,000 respectively. Today we have £623,000,000 more in trading banks and savings banks deposits than we did and it is evident that the financial resources of the country have got into such a disorganised state that local authorities and semi-governmental bodies are suffering as a consequence.

Then the Leader of the Opposition tried to talk about political capital being made by this Government. We have never attempted to do that at any stage. When the Premier attended a loan council meeting in August last year for the purpose of considering the various semi-government and State programmes, this State and the Premier personally were complimented on the way in which we had presented our case. It was by no means inflated and as a result this State received only a 16 per cent. cut in its allocation, as against 25 per cent. in the case of the other States. The Leader of the Opposition can get it out of his head that we have made any attempt to make political capital out of this matter. He should ask the Federal authorities to stand up to their responsibilities in regard to the works that have been undertaken by local authorities, semi-governmental bodies, and regional electricity boards.

As I said earlier, I shall have a good deal to say on the Bill dealing with the relationship between the State and the Commonwealth, but I make this passing shot at the Leader of the Opposition in reply to his suggestion that difficulties might be created by the Government's giving these powers to numerous bodies to enable them to raise public loans. It is evident that he is against the giving of any such powers.

Mr. Low: Will the rate of interest be the same?

Mr. WALSH: I cannot say what the rate will be. The Loan Council is the body that determines the rate of interest from time to time. It has determined that the rate of interest on governmental securities shall be 3½ per cent. and on semi-governmental and local authority loans 4½ per cent. It is for the Loan Council to say. The attitude of this Government, as expressed by the Premier at the last Loan Council meeting—and I have no doubt it will be similar in future—was that we are against any increase in the rate. Under a Labour Government £820,000,000 was raised on a falling rate of interest. Why could not that be done today with £623,000,000 increase in trading-bank and savings-bank deposits.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about other States having included in their State programme their requirements for electricity. I asked him to name the States and he said that South Australia was the State. Of course South Australia is the State that gets a very large amount included in its programme. Western Australia had a very small amount, £300,000, included in its programme. South Australia, if anything goes wrong with its budget, it goes along to the Commonwealth and gets a hand-out, as it has done in the past, at the expense of this and the other Eastern States. The figures indicate—and I will bring them along during a later debate—that those States have been favoured with regard to electricity undertakings. The South Australian Government, when they meet with any difficulty in regard to their budget requirements, go to the Commonwealth to get a hand-out at the expense of the other States.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Attorney-General) (4.42 p.m.): I wish to reply to certain statements made by the Leader of the Opposition. I give an emphatic denial to the statement the hon. gentleman made that the State Electricity Commissioner went North with a direction to dismiss men. When I rose to a point of order he accepted my statement, but tried to get round the scrum to break through. I say emphatically that I never gave any direction to the Commissioner to go anywhere or dismiss anybody. It is not the policy of the Government to dismiss men from employment. It is true that the Commissioner went north. If the hon. gentleman knew the composition of the regional boards, he would know that the Commissioner goes north from time to time during the year because he is a member of every regional electricity board in the State, and it is important that he should attend the meetings of those boards.

The statement was made by the Leader of the Opposition—and I was amazed because he is usually fair in his criticism—that the Government should have made some temporary finance available to the regional boards. Evidently the Leader of the Opposition has no knowledge of the position or if he has he has fallen down a lot in my estimation. I hope he has not, because I have a good deal of personal regard for him. I suggest to him that when we are debating any matter we should be fair and honest. He talks about this Government's endeavouring to claim political kudos and score off the Federal Government. He is trying to score off this Government because this Government have made available, as the Treasurer stated, £754,000 in temporary loans to regional electricity boards. What would have been the position if the money had not been made available?

Mr. Low: Where did it come from?

Mr. POWER: The Treasury.

Mr. Low: From heavy-vehicle fees.

Mr. POWER: When I look at the hon. member I am satisfied that he has a head like a swallow's nest because what he has inside must resemble the material inside a swallow's nest, for him to make statements like that. The money came from the loan allocations to which this State was entitled.

The Leader of the Opposition also talked about the money made available by the Commonwealth Government to this State. The Leader of the Opposition must know that this State has not been able to get all the loan money required for the development of its projects.

Mr. Nicklin: It has not been able to spend what it has got.

Mr. POWER: If the hon. gentleman waits until the end of the financial year he will see what the position is. Let him compare the taxation collected from Queensland by the Commonwealth Government with the amount that has been handed back to this State. If he does that he must agree that the Commonwealth Government are advancing money to finance many undertakings in other parts of Australia out of money that should rightly come to this State, because they have adopted the policy of financing certain capital works out of revenue. Some of that revenue should have been made available to Queensland to enable us to carry out very important work.

Mr. Nicklin: If you are so badly treated, why do you not cut out the Financial Agreement and levy your own taxes?

Mr. POWER: We as a Government can run this State without the advice of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition knows that the State Government did what he asks us to do. We did not have to wait to be asked by the Opposition. We made £754,000 available to regional boards. If we had not done that the great majority of their employees would have been dismissed. In addition, the boards would have defaulted

on certain contracts that had been entered into, they would have been called upon to pay large sums by way of compensation, and litigation would have followed.

At this stage I pay a compliment to the Electricity Commissioner. I do not do this sort of thing often because I believe men are paid to do their jobs but no man in Queensland has given more time and attention to the work of the State Electricity Commission or to an endeavour to obtain finance for the various undertakings. He has visited Southern States on more than one occasion seeking money and he has been more or less successful. As a past Minister of that department I thank him for what he has done.

Had the Commonwealth Government not tightened up on the loan market we should not have been in the position we are and it would not have been necessary for this Bill to be brought down. After all, the only major provision of the Bill is that which gives regional boards an opportunity to go on the open market for money to carry out the vast undertakings necessary to the development of this State and it was very unfair for the Leader of the Opposition to say what he did. Then he has the temerity to say here that we have a sympathetic Federal Government! I suggest that he should consult the dictionary to see what the word "sympathetic" really means. The Commonwealth Government have never been sympathetic with any undertaking in this State. Money has been made available for the development of every other State, but because Queensland is governed by Labour she is being victimised by the Menzies-Fadden gang.

Let us go further and see how hypocritical and stupid the actions of the Commonwealth Government have been in connection with loan funds for this State. At the moment they have a number of committees to deal with various works. There is one that deals with electricity. On that committee are representatives from all over Australia and from many electric undertakings. Their object is to consider and recommend electrical development from a defence point of view.

Mr. Neil Smith, the present chairman of the State Electricity Commission, was a member of that committee and attended meetings in the other States. It was agreed that electricity should have No. 1 priority from both defence and development points of view. I say that time has been wasted. Highly paid public servants, not only from Queensland but from other parts of Australia and executive officers of private enterprise attended these meetings and a programme was mapped out. Queensland told the committee what the Government were prepared to do and what works were approved of but we were told by the Commonwealth Government, the Government with all these grandiose schemes, that the money was not available for them.

The Leader of the Opposition said that we had a sympathetic Federal Government. I want to say that if the State Electricity

Commission is unable to obtain loan funds—and I think it will be able to get the money—it will find itself in this position: contracts have been signed for a number of jobs to be undertaken in Queensland for the extension of electricity undertakings in various parts of the State—and I cannot see anything wrong with that—and unless this money is available there will be default by the State Electricity Commission. If that happens, the blame lies at the door of the Menzies-Fadden Government with their financial policy.

We had a further statement that Mr. Kelly, chairman of the Townsville Regional Electricity Board, has complained that the State Government should make money available to that board for the carrying out of its policy. That is a very nice statement to make, but who gave Mr. Kelly authority to tell this Government that we should curtail our loan works to make money available to the Townsville Regional Electricity Board? The Government have a number of commitments; there are quite a number of undertakings to be carried out. All this Bill contains is a provision enabling regional electricity boards to go on the open market and get money to carry out their undertakings, and I think that rather than be critical of the Bill every hon. member in the House should support it.

Mr. EVANS (Mirani) (4.53 p.m.): I draw the Minister's attention to a glaring anomaly that exists in the Bill regarding regions. I wish to tell him that the reason why there is no regional board in the Mackay area is that ex-Commissioner Cochran strongly recommended against the establishment of a regional board and fought me on the matter.

Mr. Aikens: You should erect a statue to Cochran.

Mr. EVANS: I do not agree with the hon. member. I believe that the district should have a say in its own affairs. He stood hard and fast on the Mackay City Council's conducting the whole of the undertaking in the Mackay area. No provision is made in the Bill for the Mackay region. Contracts entered into will have to be stopped, because of the action of the State Electricity Commission. I was the chairman of the council when Mr. Cochran came up. I have confidence in him, but I opposed the Mackay City Council's handling any electricity undertakings, for the reason that profits made from the undertaking can and will be diverted to the general fund. They still can be. That was the reason why I opposed the council's handling the undertaking. It was the Mackay City Council that made the decision as to extensions, and profit came very largely into the question.

The position is that today the Mackay City Council has no authority to borrow by means of public loans. As the result of the ex-commissioner's recommendation, Mackay is a region. A vote was taken on the matter of all the councillors. I was present, and I was one of those who voted. I suggest

that provision be made in this Bill giving the Mackay City Council the same authority as I understand the Brisbane City Council and the regional boards will have when this Bill becomes law. I understand that the boards will have power to borrow for the purpose of any electricity undertaking. In my opinion the present position is anomalous. I do not know the view that is held by the Mackay City Council, but as loan money is getting very hard to obtain I should think it would cut out all electricity undertakings. Instead, it will concentrate on the city area and the country districts will suffer. I ask the Minister to give every consideration to the anomaly that I have mentioned.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (4.57 p.m.): I shall not delay the House very long. First of all, I want to congratulate the Minister, because in replying to some criticism of the Townsville Regional Electricity Board that I made during the introductory stage of this Bill, he stood up today and quite calmly, and without the rancour that is associated with replies from other Ministers, read what was obviously a report from the State Electricity Commissioner on my remarks. The Minister was frank enough to admit that personally he knew nothing about the position of his own knowledge, and I repeat that it was obvious that the report he read today in this House was prepared by the State Electricity Commission.

I want to call the attention of this House and of the public to the fact that I lay at the door of the State Electricity Commission full blame for the shocking position that exists in Townsville today. Does anyone expect that the people who are responsible for the shocking position that exists in Townsville today would admit in a report they give to the Minister their own culpability in the matter? That is all I have to say on that point.

Mr. Riordan: Where do you think we got the information?

Mr. AIKENS: I suggest that the Minister got the information from the very people who are responsible for the shocking position that exists in Townsville, that is, the State Electricity Commission. The present Commissioner, of course, is not personally responsible for all that happened, but it is obvious that the person whom I blame would not, in a report that he made to the Minister, admit his own fault. Even those with the simplest intelligence will realise the truth of that.

Mr. Turner: Part of it. It was audited by the Auditor-General.

Mr. AIKENS: The report that the Minister read today, I presume, was not audited by the Auditor-General.

In his eagerness to shelve the blame, the State Electricity Commissioner made some astonishing admissions that even the densest members of the Opposition commented on. I was not here when the Minister started to read his statement. Everyone knows that

northern members must have their correspondence ready to catch the mail at a quarter to 4 o'clock, and I was in my office getting rid of my copious mail when an hon. member was kind enough to ring down and tell me that the Minister was "doing me over." I came into the Chamber and found, as I said earlier, that the Minister was calmly and coolly reading a long diatribe that he had received from the Electricity Commissioner.

Mr. Riordan: The hon. member who rang you on the phone is not reliable.

Mr. AIKENS: It is a matter of the correct interpretation of the term "doing me over." I thought I was getting my usual spate of virulent abuse. I came up and was quite surprised to find out I was not.

However, let me draw the attention of the House, and of those who read "Hansard" to some obvious errors in the report made by the Electricity Commissioner to the Minister. He said—and I am going on what was told me by people who were here when the Minister read it—that we sold to the T.R.E.B. an old, obsolete, and broken-down plant. Let me first of all point out to the House that we did not sell anything to the T.R.E.B. The then State Electricity Commissioner, Mr. Cochran, came to Townsville and met a full council meeting at the council table and said in effect, "Here are the plans that I have drawn up for acquisition by the Townsville Regional Electricity Board of the Townsville City Council electric light authority," and in effect he said, "I hope you agree to those terms, because if you do not you know the Act gives us power to take over your electric light authority whether you agree or not." They took over our electric light authority. I was one of the three who bitterly opposed it, and there are the records of the council to prove it.

Mr. Riordan: That is not true. I said second-hand plant.

Mr. AIKENS: If the Minister says it is not true I accept that because he knows as well as I do the distortions that can take place outside this Chamber of anything that is said in it.

I am buttressed by facts in this particular argument, and facts are very nasty things for guilty people to bump up against, and the Electricity Commissioner is the guilty man on this occasion. This is a report from the Townsville "Daily Bulletin," of only the other day, 13 March, 1952. We had some terrible blackouts in Townsville recently. So bad were they that the secretary—

Mr. Devries: You are telling me!

Mr. AIKENS: There is the Secretary for Public Instruction saying "You are telling me." He must have been there. However, the secretary of the Townsville Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Joe Holliday, one of the most responsible citizens in Townsville, and a man who is not given to extravagant statements, wrote to the Townsville "Daily Bulletin" and said that the electricity position in Townsville had never been so chaotic as it was at the present time. That appeared in the Townsville "Daily Bulletin." There are many members

on the opposite side of the House who know Mr. Holliday well and who know he certainly would not be in my political corner on any account.

Mr. Luckins: That is right.

Mr. AIKENS: "That is right," says the hon. member for Norman.

When the members of the T.R.E.B., who of course are good Liberal-Country Party members themselves, went to the Townsville Chamber of Commerce in an attempt to square off to the members of that Chamber—I just ran into the library a moment ago and took this extract from the Townsville "Daily Bulletin" of 13 March—this is what Mr. Hopkins, a member of the T.R.E.B., said about the plant that was taken over by the board in 1946—

"There has been a steady growth in the quantity of units sold over many years."

In 1937-48 this old, decrepit, broken-down and obsolete plant, he said, produced 9,301,000 units, and in 1950-51—that is the last year for which records are available—this old broken-down, obsolete plant that belonged to the Townsville City Council—

"... with a plant a lot older, and with only one small addition had been called upon to produce 36,128,000 units."

This plant that we had in Townsville when the Townsville Regional Electricity Board took it over last year alone produced 36,000,000 units of electricity. What a plant!

Mr. Riordan: What I said was that most of the plant was secondhand.

Mr. AIKENS: I accept the Minister's statement that he said the plant was mostly secondhand but I draw his attention to this fact that if he goes down the street and buys a brand-new Vauxhall car the moment he drives it out of the showroom it becomes secondhand.

Much of the plant was secondhand, the Minister says. This secondhand plant produced 36,000,000 units of electricity—not a bad effort for a broken-down secondhand plant. The Minister also said that we took £65,000 in assets. We did. We had £30,000 as a credit balance in the general account and we had £35,000 worth of bonds, all money belonging to the people of Townsville. The Townsville Regional Electricity Board embraces the shire of Ayr, the shire of Hinchinbrook and the shire of Thuringowa. We were not going to hand over £65,000 of money belonging to the Townsville people to these three shires. The Minister also said that at that time we owed £100,000 to the Government or the Treasury for loans. So we did, but the person who prepared the report for him failed to mention this point, that our assets alone were worth over £500,000—our power-house, sub-stations, reticulation and everything we possessed was worth over £500,000. And we owed only £100,000!

Mr. Burrows: Who owned it?

Mr. AIKENS: The people of Townsville.

Mr. Burrows: Who owns it today?

Mr. AIKENS: The State Electricity Commission really.

Mr. Burrows: Is it not a public utility?

Mr. AIKENS: Let me get on. Let me give some idea of the stupendous intellect of the Townsville Regional Electricity Board. When the Townsville City Council owned the electricity undertaking, naturally all of our employees were housed in the main council building and for their convenience we built a long bicycle rack out in the backyard. After the Townsville Regional Electricity Board took over they said, "We are entitled to all the assets belonging to the Townsville City Council electric authority and as 40 per cent. of your employees were electric authority employees we are entitled to 40 per cent. of the value of your bike rack and we had to pay them.

Mr. Low: You are lucky that they did not take the bike rack away.

Mr. AIKENS: We are lucky that they did not take the bikes. However, we went out of our way to help them. They did not have an office or any accommodation at all. The Army had seized our school of arts during the war, where we used to have a fine municipal library, and the Townsville Regional Electricity Board came to us and asked us to do it a good turn by renting our school of arts. Although I opposed the taking over of the Townsville electric authority we were ready to help the Townsville Regional Electricity Board to get away to a flying start, and we rented it our school of arts at a peppercorn rental. After we had rented the school of arts to help it get a go on it found that the school of arts was on Crown land vested in the council for purposes of a school of arts. It then ran down behind our backs to the Secretary for Public Lands, Mr. Foley, and said, "The Townsville City Council is not using the school of arts for the purpose for which the land was vested in the Townsville City Council. Cancel the grant of land to the Townsville City Council and so force them to give us the school of arts." A beautiful lot of fellows, the Townsville Regional Electricity Board!

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Farrell): Order!

Mr. AIKENS: I will finish on that point. This is what the people of Townsville are very sore about: Townsville has two-thirds of the subscribers or patrons or consumers but under this lopsided set-up with the Townsville Regional Electricity Board, they have only one-third of the representation.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. member to deal with the principles of the Bill.

Mr. AIKENS: I will not take advantage of your latitude, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think I have very effectively replied to the Minister on those two points alone. I just want to say this: whatever the Minister said in this House quite fairly and frankly and honestly, and whatever I say in this House

really do not matter very much, because members of Parliament are not here to make a decision and they are not interested in the affairs of the Townsville Regional Electricity Board. I will leave it to the people of Townsville to judge of the truth or falsehood of what I said the other night, and what I often said on public platforms and what I shall continue to say—that the T.R.E.B. is “on the nose”—and of the truth or falsity of what the Minister read out to-day. I will leave the people of Townsville to judge between us, and I shall be happy with the result.

Mr. SPARKES (Aubigny) (5.11 p.m.): I thank the Minister for his courtesy in replying to my comments on the introductory stage of the Bill. The new Minister is setting a very good example to some of the older Ministers in regard to replying to comments. I do appreciate his conduct in that respect.

I think every member admits the importance of the Bill, which grants power to raise loans. The position in my electorate is somewhat similar to that of the hon. member for Mirani. I think that in the cities of Mackay and Dalby the electrical authorities are on the same basis, and they are doing a wonderful job.

Mr. Walsh: The city of Mackay had £37,000 allotted and they asked that it be diverted to a crematorium and an auditorium.

Mr. SPARKES: I am suggesting that they are on the same basis.

Mr. Aikens: If they asked my advice I should tell them to take the crematorium before the Townsville Regional Electricity Board.

Mr. SPARKES: I do not want to enter into the pros and cons of the matter between the member for Mundingburra and the Minister in regard to the position at Townsville. I merely wish to bring before the House the position of the Dalby electric authority. In all good faith it took over this undertaking and went ahead with certain electricity projects. The Government approved of all its schemes, and today it finds itself in the position of having to meet, before the end of December this year, an amount of about £140,000, of which it has not got a “brass razoo.”

Mr. Walsh: What about the private banks?

Mr. SPARKES: It will not be long before the hon. gentleman will be down on his damn knees asking the banks and private investors to support his loan. That is typical of the hon. gentleman. He kicks the hand that helps him; and that is the most dirty, dastardly act any person could do. I could make it plainer than that but in deference to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will let it go at that.

Mr. Walsh: You voted for the party that brought in restrictions.

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. gentleman knows there is something coming that will hurt him and his Government and he is trying to push me off; but I will drive this home if I have to get a pick to dig it in.

This Dalby electric authority entered into this contract in all good faith and it has an engine and a gas producer and other machinery on the way from England to Australia. As a matter of fact, it expects the accounts to be presented for payment any day now. What is going to happen to that authority? It has entered into obligations on the full understanding that it was to have Government backing, but now I am told it has not one penny to meet these huge commitments.

Mr. Burrows: They will be sorry they voted for Artie!

Mr. SPARKES: Sir Arthur Fadden has nothing whatever to do with it. This Government gave those people an undertaking and I challenge any hon. member on the Government side to say that they have not faithfully carried out their side of the contract with the Government. In addition to preventing these people from extending the supply of electricity, it will force them to ration those towns already connected. What is going to happen? Will a receiver be put in? Perhaps the Minister can tell us that. I am told by these people that the whole thing is brought about by this Government's not carrying out their side of the agreement. They told these people to go ahead and now they are not going to help them. I appeal to the Treasurer to see that this emergency does not arise.

Mr. Walsh: Do you say this Government handed it over to the Dalby electric authority?

Mr. SPARKES: I say the Government approved of the whole transaction.

Mr. Walsh: The Government never owned it.

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. gentleman will say anything at all to dodge the hit. He will shadow-spar, shake his head, or do anything to get away from these contentious points. The plain fact is that the Dalby electric authority—

Mr. Walsh: Was never owned by the Government.

Mr. SPARKES: It does not matter who owned it. What the hell is the good of owning a few electric-light poles? Anybody could own them. The main question is: are the Government going to meet this account for £140,000? The Dalby electric authority has been prevented from sharing in the moneys that will be raised under this Bill.

Mr. A. Jones: The position would never have arisen if Charlie Russell was still a member.

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. gentleman can raise as many side issues as he likes, but he will not get over this position. In

today's "Telegraph" we read that there is to be a new bridge for the city of Brisbane. Where is the money coming from for that?

Mr. Walsh: Loan money.

Mr. SPARKES: Yet the man in the country, the man who is being asked every day by the Government to produce more, can go to hell so far as the Government are concerned. There is to be a new bridge for the city and nothing for the country. It is a tragic position.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Farrell): Order! There was no mention of bridges in the Minister's second-reading speech.

Mr. SPARKES: But the purpose of this Bill is mainly to give these people permission to borrow money.

Mr. Walsh: For electricity.

Mr. SPARKES: When the measure was introduced I heartily supported the idea of allowing them to borrow money, and I support it now. It would be tragic if this electrical development in the country was held up.

Mr. Walsh: We agree that it is tragic, but why do you not get your own Federal Government to do the right thing?

Mr. SPARKES: It is time the Government realised that there are things that they might do. If one looks at this evening's "Telegraph" one will see that there is to be a new bridge for the city. Do the Government blame Sir Arthur Fadden for that?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. SPARKES: I commend the position existing at Dalby to the earnest attention of the Treasurer and the Minister in charge of this Bill. The goods this authority bought in England were bought in good faith on a long-term policy. Contracts were entered into. The Dalby electrical authority has connected up certain towns, and that is all right, but so far as rural connections are concerned the position is tragic.

Mr. Walsh: Sir Arthur Fadden said that local authorities had no right to enter into commitments.

Mr. SPARKES: Neither the Treasurer nor I can in any way change Sir Arthur's view one way or the other. Surely the Treasurer must see the position that has arisen within Queensland? The Dalby electric authority is doing a wonderful job and I hope the position will not come about in which these country authorities will not be able to go on with their work. We shall not rest until the job is done fully and electricity is given to rural subscribers. An hon. member said, that in New South Wales it does not matter if you have a line running past your door, you cannot be connected. That is all hooey. I went to the trouble last night of making a telephone call to people connected to the circuit of the Tamworth Electricity Board. That authority burns coal for the generation of its power;

it has lines extending out into the country. It was connected to a person living seven miles out from its booster. There is no-one beyond this person; he is at a dead-end. That man paid £24 for the transformer and in his homestead he has an electric hot-water system, an electric stove, an electric pump that pumps water from the river, a big cooling room, and numerous lights, and he told me that the most he has paid for a month is £11. This is the remarkable thing: I am four miles from the line near my home and I said that I should be happy to pay almost anything to get power. In Queensland you have to build lines and pay for the job and you hand it all over to the board, as it owns the material. This man did not pay a penny, yet the transmission line runs right across his paddock. I saw all that when I was down there, and I checked up with him last night to find out whether he had paid anything. As I say, he paid not one penny to have the electricity installed; all he pays is £24 a year to meet the cost of the transformer.

I hope the Minister will look into these things. It seems strange to me that power that is generated in New South Wales—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! There is nothing in the Bill dealing with bringing power from New South Wales.

Mr. SPARKES: I am not suggesting that power should be brought from New South Wales, but surely I can make a comparison between the cost of—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The House is debating a Bill in which there are certain definite principles.

Mr. SPARKES: It is in the Bill that we are to borrow money for these things. If we are to borrow money, surely the people should be told why they are asked to put their money in?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member will not engage in a discussion with the Chair. Certain provisions are laid down in the Bill and the hon. member will stick to them.

Mr. SPARKES: I will stick to them. I do not want any privileges from the Chair. All I want is a fair deal from the Chair.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member will withdraw that remark. At no time has he got an unfair deal from the Chair. I give everyone a fair deal and no-one will get an unfair deal from me.

Mr. SPARKES: I did not say I got an unfair deal from you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. member to withdraw the remark that he wants a fair deal from the Chair.

Mr. SPARKES: I cannot withdraw a remark—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I warn the hon. member that if he does not obey my order I shall have to deal with him.

Mr. SPARKES: All right, I withdraw the remark.

The main provision in this Bill deals with the raising of money from the public. I think everyone will admit that. The people of Queensland will want to know—and it is our right to ask—what is to be done with their money. If it is to be a costly affair and will not meet with success, the people who are to supply this money are entitled to know all about it. After all, as my Leader so aptly warned the Government—although he did not say he disapproved of this measure—we shall probably dry up the well that is supplying the money, not only for Queensland but for Australia.

Mr. Walsh: What will happen then?

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. gentleman can answer that. He cannot very well blame Sir Arthur Fadden for it.

Mr. Walsh: I am only asking.

Mr. SPARKES: And I am pointing out what my Leader said. I am sure the Minister will agree that if the public of this State are to be asked to invest their money, they should have some idea of how it is to be spent. I have told the Minister the position that exists in Tamworth, which is a well-known city in New South Wales. If the electricity authority down there can do what I have said, surely we in this State should be able to do something along the same lines? We all realise how important it is to connect electricity to the homes of the country people, but we must realise also the importance of the charge that is to be placed on them. I am sure the Minister would be the first to agree that there would be no sense in connecting a farm with electricity if it was too costly to use it. It has been said that someone installed diesel engines in preference to using electricity. I do not want to enter into that argument, but I feel sure that the Minister does not want to see power connected with a place and then discover that it is more costly than power that the man himself can provide.

I make that information available to the Minister for his guidance, and I feel sure he will accept it in the spirit in which it is offered. Before I sit down, I make one more appeal that the Dalby electric authority be placed in such a position that it will not be left high and dry with £140,000 to pay and without 6d. with which to pay it.

Mr. BROSAN (Fortitude Valley) (5.30 p.m.): When the Minister was outlining the Bill in his second-reading speech he dealt very effectively with certain allegations that had been levelled at the Townsville Regional Electricity Board by the hon. member for Mundingburra. Subsequent to that we had a speech from the hon. member for Mundingburra in which he alleged that he in turn dealt satisfactorily with the Minister's reply. The statements that he made, as usual, were neither true nor effectual. I believe they were directed to an endeavour to bring discredit on the Townsville Regional Electricity Board members and its staff.

The hon. member haggled at the start over the Minister's statement that the Townsville City Council sold to the board the Hubert Wells power station, and played on the words that it was "taken over" by the board. When one has to resort in an attack on a Government and on a board, to a play on words of that kind I believe his case is very, very thin.

Then he said that facts were nasty things for people to bump up against. Well, they are, and I am sorry he is not here for me to give him some facts from the minutes of the Townsville City Council, which record an agreement to increase wages, and then the fact of his coming to Brisbane and denying that increase to the workers. Those are facts he does not like to bump up against.

Then he talked about the increase in units generated by the plant. It is a fact that the increase in units is considerable but it is a fact, too, Mr. Speaker, that there has been a considerable increase in the plant, and in addition to a considerable increase in the plant there has been a very effective, regular, and skilled maintenance programme, a programme that is very, very necessary anywhere, but particularly in a power station.

Just let us have a look at the increase in plant in that area. At the Hubert Wells power station the following new plant has been installed: a new 45,000 lb. per square inch boiler, two Worthington diesels of 300 kw. each, and a new turbo-alternator of 1,500 kw. It is only natural that the growth of population and the demand for electricity in the area would call for this additional plant, and with the improvement of the old plant, and thanks to the loyalty and skill of the staff in the power station, the number of units generated and sold has also grown. It is not, as the hon. member would have you believe, the result of the plant that his council handed over.

Then the hon. member told us that Mr. Cochran said that the board was entitled to all the assets, but he did not reply to what the Minister said about the £65,000 that they "hooked," the £65,000 assets that were transferred prior to the board's taking over. Nor did he answer the suggestion that they changed the tyres on the trucks, putting the old ones from the council trucks on the electric authority's vehicles and vice versa.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is getting outside the scope of the Bill.

Mr. BROSAN: I agree with your ruling and I will not transgress. I am only endeavouring to uphold the regional boards and the work they are doing. These loans will be successful and the money from them will be wisely spent. It is true that blackouts occur at power stations and that one or two have occurred in Townsville lately. Blackouts are not peculiar to the present day. There was a time, when flood waters reached a level at the power-house at Hubert Wells, when coal could not be used in the boiler fires. Wood had to be used and unfortunately one of the firemen jammed a piece hard in the firebox. It took the

Federated Engine Drivers' Union 11 months to get the hon. member for Mundingburra into court to have the man reinstated. So much for the hon. member who casts aspersions on the board and the Government and the State Electricity Commission.

The commission is doing noble work throughout the State and will continue to do it. The loans will be a success and they will attract the practical help of the Electrical Trades Union, which is vitally concerned in its success.

Mr. McCATHIE (Haughton) (5 37 p.m.): The Government are to be commended on the introduction of this legislation to allow the State Electricity Commission to go on the open market to borrow money for regional boards to enable them to proceed with programmes of work they have laid down. The assets of the regional board must be protected.

As a former member of the Townsville Regional Electricity Board I feel it incumbent upon me to commend its good work. I know that the members of the board were interested only in the improvement of the region but today the hon. member for Mundingburra stands up and on his own admission brands himself as a reactionary and as one who is not interested in giving to the rural areas the benefits of an amenity that the people of Townsville have enjoyed for many years. While I was a member of the board I was elected to this Legislature. During my election campaign I met over 1,000 people at their homes and I did not hide from them the fact that I was a member of the Townsville Regional Electricity Board. There was no great criticism of the board. Indeed, most people commended the board for the work it was doing.

The Townsville board has not been idle. Let me give some idea of the work that it did while I was a member. From the line from Townsville to Home Hill an extension has been made to Clare in the Burdekin Valley to give the people there the benefit of power for pumping on their farms and for domestic use. We ran a line from Home Hill to Ayr to give the people of Ayr the benefit of a sound and continuous supply. At that time they were not getting enough to satisfy them because the plant at Ayr was antiquated and blackouts occurred. It had to connect with the Kalamia mill to get continuity of supply for five days of the week and did not have a full supply on Saturdays and Sundays. However, because of the work of the regional board the people of Ayr now have continuity of supply.

In addition to the improvement to the town supply, there have been a number of extensions in the rural areas. There has been an extension to Giru to give the people domestic power. We have a line from Giru to Ayr, and there has been an extension from Townsville to Ingham to create a grid throughout the district, which is necessary for the advancement of electrical development. We think it is essential that Queensland should

be electrified as quickly as possible, and for that reason I commend the work done by the Townsville Regional Electricity Board.

Certain comments were made at a meeting held recently at Home Hill for the purpose of criticising the board. Today I read a report in the Home Hill "Observer" of 13 March, and I saw that one of the criticisms offered was that the board had increased its charges to too great an extent. I felt that that criticism was not warranted. The fact that we have such an investment urgently necessitates loan money to enable it to continue. I feel quite sure that the people of the Home Hill area in particular, who benefit largely as a result of the Townsville Regional Electricity Board's developmental programme and who will continue to benefit, must realise that the board has been faced with a tremendous increase in the cost of material and wages.

In discussing this matter, one of the speakers said: they fully realised the benefits that had accrued to them in increased production. The Inkerman mill area won the cane Derby last year—it looks as though it might do so again this year—and the only reason why they were able to obtain such heavy production was that they had continuity of electricity supply for their pumps and got a 24-hour-a-day service. Those people are not unappreciative of the fact, and the criticism offered was only that the board should endeavour to relieve them of some of the cost; and the instruction given to their mill suppliers' committee secretary was to investigate the cost of diesel plants—not that they would install them if the cost was less than the cost they were paying for the electricity supply. I think it is absolutely essential for the commission to continue the work of development of these regions. The people in the rural areas of the region are more than satisfied with what has been done for them, and they will show their appreciation in a practical way by investing in the loan when the commission goes on the market.

Mr. EWAN (Roma) (5.43 p.m.): I rise to support the remarks of my leader. It seems to me, after listening to the hysterical defence put up by Ministers, particularly the Attorney-General, that the Government feel guilty in introducing this legislation, especially as the major principle of the Bill is to enable regional electricity boards to go on the loan market. That is in conflict with the Commonwealth-States Financial Agreement, which lays down clearly that the Loan Council shall approve of borrowing. During the course of his remarks the Treasurer was asked that question by way of interjection, and he said that the principle of the Bill did not come under that agreement. I should like the Minister who is in charge of the Bill to enlarge on that. It is a principle that concerns me more than anything else. I am not in a position to join issue with members opposite on whether the regional electricity boards are working successfully or not; I leave that to those people who have had experience of the activities of the boards.

In view of the times through which the Commonwealth is passing, however, it is my firm belief that it is necessary for every State Government, whether Labour, Liberal or Country Party, to honour the terms of the Financial Agreement. It is our belief that the effects of the inflationary period through which we are going far outweigh any benefits the community might derive from the development of these electric undertakings at this juncture.

The Treasurer endeavours to blame the Federal Government for everything. During the last three months it has been noticeable that he has left no stone unturned to castigate the Commonwealth Government. With every piece of legislation introduced, he grasps every opportunity, either directly or by way of interjection to cast slurs on the Federal Government, and on that great Australian, Sir Arthur Fadden, in particular. Of course, we must make allowance for his feelings at the moment, because we all know that Sir Arthur Fadden gave him the licking of his life, and he will continue to do that.

The Treasurer suggests—and the Attorney-General joins him in this—that the Commonwealth Government acted unfairly to this State in connection with taxation reimbursements, but this charge cannot be borne out by facts, as the following comparison of taxation reimbursements made by the Federal Government to the various States will disclose. In the year 1951-52, the reimbursements to New South Wales amounted to £47,900,000.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is getting outside the scope of the Bill.

Mr. EWAN: I will connect my remarks with the Bill with your permission. The Treasurer stated that the Federal Government were acting unfairly to this State in their tax reimbursements.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! There is nothing about tax reimbursements in this measure. The main principle merely seeks to give power to regional electricity boards to raise loans.

Mr. EWAN: I realise that. The main principle is whether this Government shall depart from the Commonwealth-States Financial Agreement by authorising subsidiary bodies such as regional electricity boards to float loans.

Mr. Walsh: There is no such question in the Bill.

Mr. EWAN: The major principle of this Bill is to enable regional electricity boards to go on the loan market to obtain funds. I was endeavouring, with your permission, to quote figures that indicate clearly that the projects this Government are seeking to empower the regional electricity boards to finance were approved of by this Government in the years gone by but the Government failed to make adequate provision to finance those undertakings; in fact, their budgeting was rotten. I am simply replying to remarks made by the Attorney-General and the Treasurer. The Treasurer compared loan

allocations as between South Australia and Queensland and he and the Attorney-General endeavoured to convey to this House that the Federal Government were making hand-outs other than the money provided by the Loan Council to South Australia.

Mr. Walsh: That is true.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! This has nothing to do with the principles contained in the Bill.

Mr. EWAN: I appreciate your correction but I suggest to you that both the Treasurer and the Attorney-General dealt with this matter and, knowing your fairness whilst in the chair, of extending the privileges of this House to all hon. members irrespective of party I believe you will allow me to reply to those hon. gentlemen. After listening to them, one is forced to the conclusion that they are telling the people of this State that if they return a Country Party they will get all the money they want for these projects. What an indication to the electors! They will accept that advice, no doubt, 100 per cent. during the forthcoming elections.

Mr. Devries: You only wish it were true.

Mr. EWAN: The Treasurer stated that it was true.

Mr. Walsh: If you return a Labour Government in the Federal sphere, of course you would get more money.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. EWAN: It must be remembered that the Government, in approving of projects such as are envisaged by the regional electricity boards, must have made some financial provision for them. They seek now, after diverting funds allotted by the Federal Government—and very generous funds—

Mr. Walsh: For what?

Mr. EWAN: For the programme the Treasurer submitted to the Loan Council.

Mr. Walsh: It is not true.

Mr. EWAN: Then the hon. gentleman's predecessor.

Mr. Walsh: What you say is not true.

Mr. EWAN: The Loan Council approved of certain loan moneys being made available to Queensland for the specific projects approved of by the Loan Council and this Bill is simply designed to enable the Government to escape their liabilities in relation to the Commonwealth-States Financial Agreement. This is well known to members on the Government side and that is why they were so hysterical when the Leader of the Opposition stated the facts clearly and distinctly, and betrayed what was in the mind of the Government today. If the Government are not prepared to honour their undertakings entered into with the Commonwealth Government in relation to their loan programme and taxation reimbursement—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. EWAN: And in relation to projects approved of by the Loan Council, it is nothing but repudiation. They talk of making facilities available to the rural areas of this State.

We have only to look in this afternoon's "Telegraph" to read about a contemplated new bridge across the Brisbane River. No doubt the Government can find the money for that—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is out of order in discussing anything that is not contained in the Bill.

Mr. EWAN: Hon. members opposite have the temerity to ask me whether I should like to see some money spent in the rural areas. Of course I should, but I also want this Government to assume their full responsibility in curbing inflation and in putting this State and the Commonwealth on an even financial keel, instead of ducking round corners and repudiating agreements that were entered into by their predecessors.

Mr. BURROWS (Port Curtis) (5.56 p.m.): It is quite obvious that the hon. member who has just resumed his seat does not understand the workings of the Loan Council. He thinks that irrespective of what he says, as long as he attacks this Government and says nothing good about them, he is quite in order. Irrespective of how inconsistent or how illogical are his statements, he thinks he is justified in attacking this Government.

The main principle involved in this Bill is whether we are to continue our electrification scheme. What stage has electrification reached in Queensland today? In the electorate I represent, electrification schemes have reached the point where they are starting to give the man on the land—the man living away from the cities—some of the amenities and facilities that only electrification can provide. But what do we find following the restrictions on credit by the Federal Treasurer? Of course, I am not referring to the Federal Treasurer personally, but he is the instrument of the tragic Government that we have in Canberra. He is simply implementing the policy of his Government as dictated by outside financial interests, which should not be allowed to conflict with the public interest and with the giving of amenities to country people. We find that electrification schemes that have been reaching out towards small country centres have been held up and the workmen have been paid off. The work has been held up and it will cost a good deal of money to start it again. We all know that if any job is held up for any length of time, it has to face added costs when operations are started again. Electric-light poles are lying on the ground between Rockhampton and Gladstone and grass is growing over them. They are beautiful sticks of timber, and if the policy that is being adopted by Sir Arthur Fadden's Government is carried out, it is probable that they will ultimately be burnt by bush fires. It is quite apparent, even to anyone with an elementary knowledge of the position, that the hon. member

for Roma got up only for the purpose of talking or making a noise and trying to defend the action of the Federal Government.

We all know that the principle of the method of raising money for public utilities such as regional boards has operated ever since the creation of the Loan Council, and has operated quite satisfactorily and efficiently. All the loans that were obtained by regional boards and local authorities were approved by the Loan Council through the Treasurer at the annual meetings of that council when the various budgets came up for consideration. Hon. members will appreciate the fact that until that famous conference held some months ago between Sir Arthur Fadden and the general managers of the banks and other financial institutions—the proceedings of which were never published and which in consequence can be truthfully described as a secret conference—everything proceeded satisfactorily and reasonably well. The tying-up of credit has not only severely affected the local authorities and regional electricity boards, but private business houses and even primary producers. By these financial restrictions—

Mr. Ewan: That's pure bunkum, and you know it.

Mr. BURROWS: If the hon. member does not know anything more about the meaning of the word "bunkum" than he does about the finances of this State he would call corned beef and damper "bunkum." The hon. member for Roma said that because the Government were proceeding with this loan programme the regional electricity boards were not able to finance and carry on their works programmes. Nothing more stupid and more ridiculous was ever stated in this House. We can quite understand why his party regard his seat as very doubtful at the next election. If his electors had heard that speech his defeat would be a certainty.

Primarily I rose to deplore the fact that through these coercive tactics adopted by the Federal Government the work of supplying electricity to potential consumers in the country has been indefinitely held up. Hon. members opposite pretend always to be concerned about the welfare of the people in the country but they are in fact more concerned about trying to protect the political hides of the infamous Government in Canberra.

Hon. E. J. RIORDAN (Flinders—Secretary for Mines and Immigration) (7.21 p.m.), in reply: When the Bill was introduced it was so well received that I thought there would be little or no trouble about it and that no controversial matters would be raised. The Bill is of considerable importance not only to members of the Government but to members opposite, too. It contains only one main principle, that is, giving the State Electricity Commission power to go on the open market to borrow money to enable regional boards to expand their programmes and carry out the work they have undertaken. It is important that this work

should be continued, because it means the extension of electrical power to rural areas, which is important too from the defence point of view. I am very sorry that any controversial points should have been raised, but I trust that the Bill will have the whole-hearted approval of the entire House.

It is important, also, that the public should not be alarmed in any way by anything that might be said here or by any adverse criticism of the State Electricity Commission, which is to go on the open market for the loan. In the past the public have subscribed freely to loans for semi-governmental undertakings outside the State and it is important that everybody in Queensland should do his very best to see that the loan of the State Electricity Commission succeeds. If we have regard only for the extension of electricity to rural areas and the needs of defence, and realise how important that is, particularly in the far northern parts of the State, then the loan will be over-subscribed. The people should be encouraged to think along those lines. That should be the only argument in connection with the Bill, but today we have heard arguments concerning the powers of the Commonwealth, about the restrictions of credit and restrictions generally, but as I said on the introduction of the Bill, and I repeat now, we should be alive to our own responsibilities. It is not a question whether something is being done by the Menzies Government or the Fadden Government, but what concerns the Queensland Government.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. RIORDAN: I approach the matter from that angle, and for the reason that the Government will be backing the loan and they will be assuming the responsibility when they give their guarantee. It is essential that every hon. member, including every member of the Opposition, should consider the Bill in that light. The hon. member for Roma said that the idea was a wrong one, but let me tell him that the application by the State Electricity Commission to go on to the loan market for a loan has already been approved by the Loan Council.

It has fixed the date on which the loan shall be launched, 21 April. It has the approval of the Loan Council and the backing of the State Government and the backing of the assets of the State Electricity Commission and the regional electricity boards throughout Queensland.

Mr. Low: What is the amount of the loan?

Mr. RIORDAN: I am not in a position to state that. A lot of money has to be raised if our extension policy is to be carried out, and I have no doubt the people of Queensland will be fair-minded enough, irrespective of their political beliefs, to subscribe to the loan, just as they have subscribed to loans floated by similar authorities outside the State.

The hon. member for Aubigny told us that the Dalby electric authority was encouraged by the State Electricity Commission to

expand its authority, to extend its supply lines. That is very true, but what the hon. member for Aubigny did not say was that the Government have met 50 per cent. of those costs; they are giving them a 50 per cent. subsidy. In fairness to the Dalby electricity authority I am informed by the State Electricity Commissioner that it is doing a mighty fine job, but it will find itself in a similar position to many other local authorities in this State; because of the restrictions on credit on loan borrowings it will find itself in the same circumstances—over which it will have no control—as many other local authorities throughout the State.

In regard to the Mackay city electric authority, I am informed that it is doing a good job. It has been argued by the member for Mirani that they tried to convert that authority into a regional board when Mr. Cochran was there. All I can say in regard to these authorities is that they are doing a good job and extending their power lines to the country areas, and that consideration will have to be given to the question whether the whole of those electric authorities should not come under the regional boards.

Mr. Low: It would be the greatest mistake you could make so far as the Brisbane City Electric Light Company is concerned.

Mr. RIORDAN: I am talking about the Mackay electric authority. The electric authorities in those country areas, in the main, are doing a good job, but they will find themselves in the same difficulty as other authorities throughout Queensland. I do not want to enter into the argument as to whether it is due to somebody else's actions or a Government's actions or whether it has been brought about by financial restrictions; what I am most concerned about is to get the support of every member in this House for extension of power to rural and country areas and to bring greater amenities to the people in those areas. I have heard those ideas expounded by members on both sides.

Mr. Evans: Will you give them help if they apply for it?

Mr. RIORDAN: The Bill definitely sets out the purpose for which the loan is to be raised. The State Electricity Commission will go on the open market for the money for the purpose of eventually lending it to the regional boards throughout the State.

Mr. Kerr: What about the shires that are not under the regional boards?

Mr. RIORDAN: They have the power to borrow, but they are not covered by the Bill.

The Bill has been discussed in great detail and, without any reflection on the Chair, I should say some hon. members got a little wide of the mark, but that was all for the good of the measure. If this Bill goes through tonight in the way in which I hope it will, I shall be very satisfied indeed.

Motion (Mr. Riordan) agreed to.

COMMITTEE.

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

Clauses 1 to 18, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING.

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

MAIN ROADS ACTS AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

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

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg—Treasurer) (7.34 p.m.): I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Main Roads Acts, 1920 to 1943, and the Traffic Act of 1949, each in certain particulars.”

This is the first amendment of the Main Roads Act in eight years. Hon. members will agree that it covers a very important department whose activities spread over the whole State and have an important bearing on the economy and development of our industries and Queensland in general.

I will give hon. members an outline of the provisions of the Bill to give them some idea of the proposed changes. The first amendment is in relation to Section 5 of the Act, which deals with the corporation of the Commissioner of Main Roads. When this section was passed in 1925 upon the abolition of the old Main Roads Board, it enacted that the newly created commissioner represented the Crown. In the years that followed other Acts were passed and these provided that the commissioners—there were three—were to have and exercise all the powers, privileges, rights and remedies of the Crown. It is fitting that the Commissioner of Main Roads, whose operations are upon a large scale, should have the same powers, &c., as more recently appointed commissioners, and this amendment effects this change. It is proposed that the Commissioner of Main Roads shall be clothed with similar powers within his jurisdiction under the Main Roads Act.

Another provision deals with the necessity for the conservation of trees along main roads. I think hon. members who have travelled throughout the State must have seen, from time to time, the amount of destruction that has taken place along main roads, particularly by the reticulation of electric power and the erection of telephone lines. The authorities responsible for these services have exercised powers contained in their respective Acts, which enable them to cut timbers for the purpose of erecting telephone lines or power lines as the case may be. The policy of the Commissioner is and always has been to conserve trees and natural growth on roads under his jurisdiction, and to prevent as far as it lies within his power

the spoilation of native trees on his roads by others, but it is realised that the people in the country deserve to have every possible amenity and this necessitates the erection of telephone and power lines. In their erection, usually along roads, it becomes necessary to fell or lop many trees.

Mr. Sparkes interjected.

Mr. WALSH: If the hon. member for Aubigny wants to become provocative, may I remind him of the thousands of trees that the Jondaryn Shire Council rung along a particular stock route with which he is familiar. In many cases this felling or lopping can be done without adversely affecting either the natural growth or the beauty of the trees. But in other cases this cannot be done and therefore the only alternative is to keep the power and telephone lines off the main roads. To do this strips of land would have to be acquired where necessary from the adjoining properties. The Commissioner already has power to acquire for public purposes land adjoining main roads, and it is proposed by this Bill to make it quite clear that he has similar powers in connection with power and telephone lines.

Mr. Watson: To new extensions.

Mr. WALSH: You cannot remove existing power lines because the trees have been felled in most cases.

There is another important amendment and I should like hon. members to follow this one closely. It relates to the declaration of limited access on roadways that may be declared highways. Take for example the Ipswich Road, which has become a road carrying a good deal of heavy traffic between Ipswich and Brisbane. In this amendment the Commissioner is seeking power to declare any highway or road throughout the State under his jurisdiction to have limited access. That would mean that if the power is conferred upon the Commissioner he will be able to direct traffic from adjoining properties onto other roads or highways other than the particular road which is declared to have limited access.

Mr. Muller: Has he not that power now?

Mr. WALSH: No. If the Commissioner already possessed that power we should not be seeking it in this Bill. With the completion of the widening of Ipswich Road, which is the most heavily trafficked main road in the State, the traffic will be able to flow much more freely than at present. However, there is a growing amount of settlement on each side of the road almost all the way to Ipswich with numerous side roads joining the main road. Many of those side roads join the through road at places where visibility is restricted, such as just below the crest of a hill or on the insides of curves. The situation is aggravated by the fact that many private residences fronting the main road have direct access to that road. I think most hon. members will appreciate that fact, as they have no doubt travelled frequently along Ipswich Road and, for that matter, along

many other similar roads. It is felt that in the interests of public safety it is necessary that the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Commissioner, should have authority to declare any State highway or main road, or part of it, a limited-access road.

An Opposition Member: In other words, to direct traffic from it?

Mr. WALSH: That is so. Certain implications are involved. It will interfere with existing access to private properties adjacent to highways and main roads, which will mean that in many cases the Commissioner may have to resume certain lands in the vicinity, construct laneways and direct traffic onto another section of the highway or main road. That of course involves the question of the payment of compensation.

The result of such a declaration would be to prevent ingress to or egress from a limited access road except at places that the Commissioner provides, having in view the safety of such point of access. All other means of access to such limited-access road may be closed off by the Commissioner by means of fences or posts across side roads, &c. The Bill provides that from the date when a limited-access road is declared no person may construct or lay out any means of access to or from that road unless he has obtained the Commissioner's permission. The obligation is placed upon the Commissioner to display notices on each limited-access road indicating the means of access thereto or therefrom.

In the exercise of these powers, naturally some persons may have their normal means of access restricted and therefore the Bill provides that any person who believes himself to be injuriously affected by the operation of the section may claim from the Commissioner compensation for loss or damage. If the affected person and the Commissioner cannot arrive at a mutual agreement as to the amount of compensation payable, provision is included in the Bill for reference to the Land Court. The Bill contains detailed provisions as to the method by which the amount of compensation shall be determined, and provides that claims must be lodged within one year of the publication of the proclamation.

When a road is declared a limited-access road, its use for the driving of any loose sheep, cattle, horses or other animals will be prohibited.

A section of the Act that confers on the Governor in Council power to authorise the Commissioner to construct works is being enlarged to cover widenings as well as deviations. In the forward planning of the road-construction programme, the Commissioner often decides upon some major deviation from an existing route, or an extensive re-location of the route of a principal thoroughfare, the work of construction of which could not, for reasons of finance, plant or man-power, or the prior claims of other works, be started for some time.

However, if the resumption of the land was left until it was possible to start work, in the meantime closer settlement, resub-division or building might enhance the value

of the land to such an extent that the costs to the Crown would be considerably increased. From the owners' point of view, too, there would be the added inconvenience of having smaller areas of land decreased in size by the excision of a road area, and in having to move houses and other buildings. The object of this clause, therefore, is to obviate all this by giving the Commissioner the power, with the approval of the Governor in Council, to take land required for future works. He might decide to resume certain land that has been mapped out as part of the programme for the next 12 or 18 months. If that has been decided upon and approved, the Commissioner can proceed to resume it so as to avoid being faced with heavy costs, and very often saving the landowners themselves considerable inconvenience.

Mr. Kerr: Would this apply to Ipswich road?

Mr. WALSH: It is a power that is required throughout the State, where many roads require widening. A number of our main roads were surveyed in the early days, and hon. members will agree that they are now in need of widening. This simply gives the Commissioner power to resume that land 12 months or two years ahead, as the case may be, so that he will not be faced with heavy costs in the meantime, and as I said, it will possibly save the landowners much inconvenience as well.

Another provision deals with alignment or realignment. The local authorities have that power now, and the present Act incorporates within it certain sections of the Local Government Act. The Bill proposes adding to those sections so incorporated the one dealing with realignment of property boundaries. This is necessary where roads through populated centres are widened, thus necessitating setting back the building line. By giving the Commissioner the same power to realign as that possessed by local authorities, inconvenience and expense to land-owners can be saved. When the Commissioner decides to widen a road he can fix a realignment, and future buildings will have to conform to the new line, thus saving expense and inconvenient alterations later. I think that power will be appreciated by hon. members. It is one that is conferred on local authorities generally now, particularly in the city areas where it is necessary for them to lay down the distance houses can be constructed from the footpath and so on. All that is sought here is a similar power for the Commissioner.

Attention has been drawn to the necessity for clarifying the provisions relating to resumption of land. It is therefore proposed to repeal the existing section and to enact a new section on the general lines of provisions of the Public Works Land Resumption Act, several of the sections of which will be incorporated. By this means multiplicity of procedure in regard to governmental resumption of land will be avoided.

The new section provides that when the Commissioner has been authorised by the Governor in Council to take land he shall serve a notice on each person who, to his

knowledge, is entitled to make a claim for compensation. This notice will contain a description of the land sufficient to identify it and will state that the Commissioner is willing to treat in respect of compensation for the land taken and all consequential matters.

The notice will be served not later than 30 clear days before the Governor in Council makes a proclamation under the Public Works Land Resumption Acts actually resuming the land. Provision is made for the notice to be served personally, and machinery clauses are included to cover situations that may arise.

The section provides, in respect of compensation, that the sum payable shall be limited to the amount of actual damage caused by reason of the taking of the land and no enhancement of value shall be permitted as a result of any work carried out or to be carried out on the land resumed. Hon. members should agree with that principle. It is something I have advocated for many years. I do not see why a landholder should be able to benefit by the considerable expenditure of public money that enhances the value of his property on which he has spent very little himself.

Where the Commissioner takes land for the purpose of future works a new section will empower him to enter into an arrangement with the person from whom it was resumed to continue in occupancy upon such terms as are fixed by the Commissioner, including if necessary the payment of rental.

The section of the Act dealing with benefited areas is being amended verbally in two places to clarify its meaning.

In the schedule the clause relating to the power to make regulations covering the registration of motor vehicles is redrafted to clarify it and to widen the scope of the clause to meet modern developments in motor-vehicle design and operation, which were not envisaged when the clause was first inserted. I imagine that that principle will give hon. members opposite considerable scope to "go to town" on the 50 per cent. increase in motor-vehicle registration fees.

I have outlined the main amendments to the Main Roads Act. There is an important amendment to the Traffic Act. Amongst other things, the Bill provides that in future drivers' licences shall be issued free. The Leader of the Opposition seems to overlook the fact that in this State drivers' licences have always been on a lower scale than those in the other States. I emphasise that we propose to do away with a charge for a driver's licence but there will be a charge attached to each vehicle and there will be a difference between cars used for private or domestic purposes and commercial vehicles. That will be a considerable relief to those who have in the past been required to pay a fee of 7s. 6d. for each driver's licence. I hope that this concession, given by the Government in accordance with their policy of continually reducing taxation on the motorists in this State, wherever possible, will please hon. members opposite.

Another amendment relates to the present method of issuing licences. Each year it is necessary for the holder of a licence to have it renewed but the Bill proposes to divide the licensing fee into eight age groups. Therefore it will not be necessary for a person to apply for a driver's licence annually. In the first place that will do away with considerable inconvenience caused to people because they had to apply annually at various places where their licences were issued and on the other hand I imagine it will effect a considerable saving to the Government in the staff employed.

At the present time—and this will give the hon. member something to think about—applicants up to 41 years of age will receive a licence for a period of 10 years, commencing with and including the date of the issue of the licence. Therefore a person getting a licence at the age of 17 or 18 would have to renew it at the age of 27 or 28. At the age of 41 or over, but not 46, the driver will receive a licence for the period commencing with and including the date of the issue of the driver's licence and thereafter till the date when the applicant shall attain the age of 51 years; applicants over 46 years of age but not 62 years of age, a period of five years, commencing with and including the date of the issue of the driving licence; applicants 62 and over but not 66, a period commencing with and including the date of the driving licence and thereafter, till the date when the applicant shall attain the age of 67; all applicants of 66 years or over for a period of one year including the date of the issue of the driver's licence.

I think hon. members generally will agree that this is a very wise provision and one that will effect a considerable saving in documents and staff.

Mr. Ewan: Do you indicate the minimum age when a boy can apply for a licence.

Mr. WALSH: The minimum age is provided in the Traffic Act. I am surprised that one who has been in Parliament for three years has not made himself conversant with such an important provision.

An Opposition Member: Seventeen years.

Mr. Ewan: What is it?

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member got the answer—17 years. There are all sorts of limits in regard to that too, and there are powers to cancel licences in certain circumstances.

There is another important amendment, dealing not so much with the activities of the motorists themselves but with the ramifications of the department. At the present time the licences are issued by the Police Department and the records are kept under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Police. The Traffic Act is being amended and it is proposed to include any other department or sub-department for the recording of the licences and the documents relating thereto, but the Commissioner for Police will still have jurisdiction over the

issue of the licences in the first place. I have not a copy of the proposed form of licence but it is a handy little booklet and will stand up to the 10 years' wear.

Mr. Morris: You have not told us what the charge will be per vehicle.

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member will get that when he gets the Bill.

Mr. Morris: Are you not going to tell us?

Mr. WALSH: I have stated that the driver's licence will be free.

Mr. Morris: You have not told us the charge for the vehicle.

Mr. WALSH: The charge for the vehicle will be the same as for the driver's licence, in the case of private vehicles.

At this stage I do not propose to refer to any of the activities of the Main Roads Commission. I might do that later—it depends upon the discussion. I have outlined the principal features of the proposed measure and I think it will be agreed that in the main they are machinery in nature. The proposed alteration to the schedule of the Traffic Act, providing for the registration of motor vehicles, again, is purely of a machinery nature.

Mr. LLOYD ROBERTS (Whitsunday) (8.1 p.m.): From the Treasurer's opening remarks it seemed to me that this was going to be a simple and very necessary Bill, but as he proceeded, little matters appeared to be clouded and camouflaged, and it now appears that we cannot comment to any great extent until we have actually seen the Bill.

Personally, I feel that it is a step in the right direction to give the Commissioner the extra powers referred to. We all know that Mr. Crawford is doing an excellent job and I am quite sure this added power will not be misplaced if it reposes in him.

The Treasurer mentioned that the Bill authorised the Commissioner to construct works. That covers a wide area.

Mr. Walsh: I did not say that.

Mr. LLOYD ROBERTS: I took those words down. They were, "authorising Commissioner to construct works."

Mr. Walsh: The Commissioner already has power to construct works.

Mr. LLOYD ROBERTS: One thing I sincerely hope he does immediately is construct something in the nature of a saw-milling works so that we can get some of the many bridges needed throughout the country.

Mr. Walsh: You will be expelled from your party for advocating socialisation.

Mr. LLOYD ROBERTS: One privilege we on this side enjoy is that of stating our own views. There are no strings attached to us. Unlike hon. members of the Government party, we do not have to jump when somebody pulls the string.

On glancing through the 30th annual report of the Commissioner of Main Roads I find the greater part of one page refers to a bunch of tied-up bridges in my electorate. On the Mackay-Habana road they have the Barnes Creek bridge, an A-class concrete bridge, under construction. It has been under construction for 12 months, but it is now completed except for the approaches, and they have now been approved of. About a week ago I obtained a copy of the "Mackay Daily Mercury"—it takes about three days to get down here—and read in it a notification to the effect that these approaches had been approved of by the Treasurer. It surprised me to see that in a three-days old newspaper, because I had made representations in connection with that matter on numerous occasions. About two days after reading that news in the "Mackay Daily Mercury" I received a letter from the Treasurer informing me along lines similar to what I had read in that journal.

This letter took exactly five days to come from the Treasurer's office to me, but the letter that went to the Mackay paper evidently got there within 24 hours.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. LLOYD ROBERTS: Going a stage further, I mention the Nielsen Creek bridge, "(a) class, composite bridge construction, not commenced."

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I will not allow the hon. member to discuss main roads.

Mr. LLOYD ROBERTS: I believe I am in order in discussing these matters.

The CHAIRMAN: I will determine that.

Mr. LLOYD ROBERTS: We can return to that matter later. I shall have pleasure in moving an amendment later so that this discussion will be allowed.

I said earlier that the Treasurer spoke of authorising the Commissioner to construct certain works and that was the reason why I proposed mentioning the 12 or 15 bridges within my electorate. Some are in the same condition as they were in two or three years ago; they do not look like being finished, and I am hoping that the Commissioner, after receiving this authorisation—the Treasurer said he had this power all the time—will construct works to enable these bridges to be completed.

The Treasurer said—and this is rather a bald statement to make and he did not qualify it to any extent and I hope the Bill will—that enhancement of value caused by road works is not to be taken into consideration in arriving at the unimproved value of resumed land. That is a particularly wide statement to make, because it does not say whether it refers to roads in the future or roads of the past. I can come to only one conclusion—that the Crown is out to get the land it wants at the cheapest possible cost. The land might have a bitumen road running alongside it but according to the Bill the mere fact that there is a good road cannot be taken

into consideration in arriving at the unimproved value of the land. That is absolutely ridiculous and we might as well say that because at one time bullockies drove through Queen street, Brisbane, we cannot now—if we want to resume land alongside it and remove buildings—take into consideration in arriving at compensation the fact that it is now a good bitumen thoroughfare. I will discuss this matter further when I see the Bill.

The proposal to issue free licences to drivers of motor vehicles is all very well. No doubt the Treasurer remembers the tempest or storm that he had about his cars during the past few weeks when he increased the registration fees—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I will not allow a discussion on motor-vehicle registration fees.

Mr. LLOYD ROBERTS: I am referring to license fees. The Treasurer said "This clause will give you an opportunity to come in on that matter."

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. LLOYD ROBERTS: The free licence is only a sop to the people in the hope that they will forget something that has happened in the past.

It has been costing them 7s. 6d. for a licence fee, but the recent increase in registration fees will cost them another £5 or £6. The Government must think that the withdrawal of the licence fee of 7s. 6d. will make the people forget the increase in registration fees.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. LLOYD ROBERTS: This is one of the most restricted debates that I have ever heard in this Chamber. In every matter that I want to bring up I have been immediately smothered.

Mr. Walsh: It is not restricted.

Mr. LLOYD ROBERTS: It certainly has been as far as I am concerned. One minute I cannot talk about bridges and the next minute I cannot talk about registration fees. I suggest that on future occasions, Mr. Farrell, you might issue a notice for the guidance of us younger members.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! When I gave my ruling with regard to registration fees, I was unaware that the Treasurer had made some reference to that matter.

Mr. LLOYD ROBERTS: I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. However, I shall defer any further comments I have to make till a later stage of the Bill.

Mr. SPARKES (Aubigny) (8.11 p.m.): At the outset I should like to say that this is not the simple little Bill that the Treasurer would have us believe.

Mr. Walsh: You are worrying about our keeping cattle off the roads.

Mr. SPARKES: That might be a very important matter, too. As a matter of fact, it would be a very good thing if another means was provided for the travelling of cattle. Any man who is experienced in driving cattle keeps as far away from a main road as he can. Ask the hon. member for Gregory whether that is not so.

The Minister, in this instance, reminds me of the chap with the three thimbles and the pea—"Which one is it under?" The fool comes in and tries to pick the pea. In this case the Treasurer thinks the average farmer will "come in" because he is getting 7s. 6d. in one pocket and paying £7 or £8 out of another. It almost brought tears to my eyes when I heard the Treasurer's generosity! He thinks that will fool the farmer. That is the opinion he has of the farmer.

At the outset, the Treasurer referred to trees along the roads. Most of us will agree that it is very nice to have shelter trees along our roads. However, the Treasurer is now proposing that where telephone or electric-light poles are to be erected, they are not to go along the road but in some man's paddock. The result is that that man's trees will have to be cut down. He has had the brains to provide shelter there, but the Treasurer will have the hide to go in and cut his trees down.

Mr. Walsh: No.

Mr. SPARKES: What rot!

This Bill may be all right while we have a man of the calibre of Mr. Crawford handling it—

Mr. Riordan: What do you want from him?

Mr. SPARKES: I want nothing from him. I know Mr. Crawford personally and I have been very pleased to know him. Many people leave a shelter belt right round their properties. They do that for two reasons. It is a shelter belt for sheep or stock to camp under, and it is a fire-break. That green timber is very helpful in a bush fire. I have a property with four or five miles of a shelter belt along the fence. He is going to come in and cut those trees down to run a telephone line.

Mr. Walsh: What about the "Save the Trees" campaign?

Mr. SPARKES: He wants to save the trees on his land, not on mine.

Mr. Walsh: You are well off the main road.

Mr. SPARKES: I am right on the main road, and I am right on the hon. gentleman's track too. The hon. gentleman specifically mentioned the Jondaryan shire and the stock route that runs down the line. What happened there was that the whole of that stock route was rung. The hon. gentleman and all of us realised that it was a great pity, but it would have been just as great a farce to leave all green timber there, because you cannot grow trees and grass too. The ideal

would have been to leave green timber on one side and clear the land on the other, because after all a stock route is for sheep and cattle to feed on.

Mr. Walsh: What distance is it?

A Government Member: He would not know.

Mr. SPARKES: Damn it! I travel on it every day.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not want to interfere too much with the language that is used in this Chamber but I would ask the hon. member to use better language.

Mr. SPARKES: Any language I use is found in the English dictionary.

The CHAIRMAN: I want the hon. member to obey my order.

Mr. SPARKES: I am obeying it. This is a very closely-settled area. No-one was more upset than Mr. Kent, the chairman of the shire, that it was rung out entirely.

Mr. Walsh: You are against our saving the trees.

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. gentleman sitting on the Treasurer's left will tell him that only yesterday I had an interview with him, along with my colleague from Barambah, and we asked him to leave some trees. If the hon. gentleman wants to learn something he can come out to my property and he will see that trees have been left everywhere. If an adjacent land-owner has rung his country out and there are no trees on it it is quite sensible, and something that the Commissioner would do, to run the line inside the property, but on the other hand, if a man has built a shelter of timber it would be a stupid thing to go in and cut his timber down, just as it would be to cut it down on the road.

Mr. Walsh: The Post and Telegraph Department have the power now to go onto your land and fell trees.

Mr. SPARKES: I realise that but that department has no power to go into my land if it is clear on the road outside. After all, there are certain rights of common law. As a matter of fact, I very much doubt whether another part of this Bill is valid, that is the clause that is being brought in to stop persons who have bought a piece of land and built their home on it from having access to a road. The hon. gentleman says that he can stop them from going onto that road. I rather doubt it. If this Parliament agrees to legislation like that, to stop a man from going onto the road, it will want its brains brushing. You can go to any part of the world, to centres with the densest traffic, and you will see that people who live alongside the road have the right to go onto the road. The Commissioner, who has been to America and other places, will know that the people have the right to go onto the road.

Mr. Walsh: No.

Mr. SPARKES: They have. Can the hon. gentleman tell me of one place where they cannot use the road?

Mr. Walsh: In America the idea has been extended very considerably.

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. gentleman should have a talk with his Commissioner.

Mr. Walsh: This idea applies in other countries very extensively. You are the only one on the other side who will object to it.

Mr. SPARKES: We have had too many Bills from the hon. gentleman, to take any one of them at its face value. Does the hon. gentleman mean to tell me that if people want to travel along the main road they must go round a back road to get to it?

Mr. Walsh: Yes.

Mr. SPARKES: The Opposition will look very carefully into that provision. There will be a great deal of trouble if you are going to do that. I appreciate the desire of the Commissioner to divert traffic from the main road by providing alternative routes. I can understand that where there is heavy traffic there may be some wisdom in splitting it up and diverting it along other routes. That is a very different matter, but the Minister will be in for a bit of trouble if he thinks that people will be content to run right round the back to other roads in order to return to the main road later on.

The provision as to travelling stock is all right. Anyone who has had any experience in New South Wales and Victoria will know that there are a number of very narrow roads in those States and that the constructed part of a main road goes right down the centre of, say, the 3-chain road. That is wrong in the first place. The constructed portion should be on either side of the road. In any case, no sensible man would endeavour to travel his stock along the main road. I have continually advocated the construction of the built-up road on one side of, say, a 3-chain road. In the more closely settled areas you are compelled to travel along the main roads to get your stock to the trucking centres or to market.

Perhaps the Minister has the idea that he will resume land for stock-route purposes. While main roads are very important, stock routes are very important too. I thought the Minister was going to say that he proposed to resume land alongside a road in order that stock may travel with greater ease than they do at present. That would be something like a sensible idea. I thought that perhaps the Commissioner would be directed to survey a 2- to 3-chain road and place the constructed portion to one side, and not right down the middle of the road. If the constructed portion is laid down the middle of the road it makes it very difficult and dangerous for stock to travel.

The stock are on either side and when a car comes along they run from one side to the other. I invite the Minister to give serious thought to that point. In 99 cases out of 100 it would not matter whether you built the road on the side or in the middle. On the ordinary road it would make no

difference if you kept right over to one side and it would make it much safer for travelling stock.

Mr. Walsh: Don't you realise that is already being done in some parts of the State?

Mr. SPARKES: Will the hon. gentleman show me where the road is built on one side, when he has time to spare?

Mr. Walsh: You go up to the Nebo area.

Mr. SPARKES: I have been there, but I did not see any roads on one side; they may have been built in the last few years. You can go from here to Charleville and you will not find such a road, unless one was built very recently. The majority of small roads are 2 to 3 chains wide and the motor road goes straight up the middle. We should profit from what has happened in other States.

Mr. Walsh: On 2-chain roads?

Mr. SPARKES: On 2-chain roads. The average main road would not take up much more than a chain. Even a 3-chain road—and most of them are 3-chain roads—would not have much space left on which to drive stock if you put a road down the middle. If you put it on one side a man might take along 40 or 50 cattle. Quite a number of stock are being taken to market in mobs of 20 or 30. Why not lay it down that where there is a 3-chain road the road shall be built on one side. I prefer to wait until I see the Bill before making further comment.

Mr. Walsh: You are not going to say anything about the registrations?

Mr. SPARKES: I am not worried about the registrations. We got 7s. 6d. back. Why should we worry? (Opposition laughter.) Look at the magnificent gift we got. Surely we are not going to look the gift horse in the mouth? Not on your life! I reserve any further comments till I see the Bill.

Mr. EWAN (Roma) (8.28 p.m.): I congratulate the Treasurer on the Bill and particularly on the provision that vests greater powers in the commission. We have had many dealings with Mr. Crawford and we hold him in high regard.

I think the Treasurer is very wise—and in this I differ from the hon. member for Aubigny—in endeavouring to protect some of the trees on these roads, particularly on the western roads. If you have a puncture or a breakdown a little bit of shade is a wonderful help along these roads. I hope that when the Main Roads Commission is constructing main roads in those areas it will preserve the limited amount of timber that happens to be growing there.

Furthermore, I note with some pleasure that it is intended to take action in connection with the indiscriminate erection of telephone and power lines. In my area, for instance, there is a part known as Gammie Plains. It is a reserve and there are about a dozen telephone lines running from all angles. That area would be a particularly fine

emergency landing-strip for aircraft but for the indiscriminate way in which telephone wires have been strung across it. The Commissioner is to have power to acquire strips of land for the erection of power and telephone lines. That is a step in the right direction because in those areas out West, with their limited amount of timber, all main roads, when constructed, could be used as emergency landing grounds for light aircraft. We are arriving at the stage in our evolution when the people of the West in particular are making more and more use of aircraft in carrying out their business. As these roads are built, if they have no telephone or power lines running on both sides of them, they could be used for emergency landings. Without these obstructions those roads would enable people to fly in perfect safety in light single-engined aircraft for hundreds of miles and for that reason the Minister is well advised in including such a provision in the Bill.

I notice with some misgiving that the Governor in Council can, on the recommendation of the Commissioner, order limited or free access to a main road and can restrict access. I sound a note of warning there similar to that uttered by the hon. member for Aubigny. For the life of me I cannot imagine people in the West taking very much notice of orders in council if they can get on to a main bitumen road by travelling half a mile instead of going round for four or five miles. If that provision is administered with the sympathy we have learnt to expect from the present Commissioner there might not be much trouble. When we know a little more about the Bill, we shall be able to express a sounder opinion on the matter.

I notice that the landholder is protected in connection with the acquisition of land for the construction of access roads in that he may appeal to the Land Court. That is a wise provision.

Another clause deals with the prohibition of stock on main roads. On this point I do not think along the same lines as the hon. member for Aubigny but I do point out that many property-owners along main roads have land on both sides of the road. I take it that provision dealing with access roads relates to vehicular traffic. I should like to know what is the position of the stock-owner who owns property on both sides of the road.

Is he going to be prevented from driving stock across these roads to pasture on land on the other side?

Mr. Walsh: It would depend on circumstances.

Mr. EWAN: I cannot envisage any circumstances that would prevent a man holding land on both sides of a road from having the right to use his property on both sides. The only circumstance would be if the Commission built a bridge, or a sub-way under the road. There are many main roads that bisect properties and I hope the Treasurer will give full consideration to that fact.

I now pass on to the humorous part of the Bill, and we always appreciate a little humour from the Treasurer. He has quite a lot of it and knows how to use it, particularly in an endeavour to string us along and lead us into the bog-holes. He said drivers' licences will be issued free, but in a modified tone of voice he told us of one licence to the driver and one to the vehicle, and he said quietly that the licence on a private vehicle would cost 7s. 6d. He did not tell us what the licence on a commercial vehicle would cost. See how effective he is! He gives the licence fee back to the motorist and proceeds, like the grand financier that he is, to take 7s. 6d. out of his pocket and says, "Here, I want to be generous to you; I will licence your vehicle instead of the driver." He is going to charge the private vehicle-owner 7s. 6d., but he did not tell us what the commercial-vehicle licence would cost. We shall get it in the schedule of fees, probably by way of regulation.

But the Treasurer did not consider this aspect of the matter: a considerable number of people in country areas own more than one vehicle; some own three or four. Are they going to pay a licence fee on each of those vehicles? Of course they are. The Treasurer is not such a generous gentleman as he attempts to indicate he is by saying, "We are going to be very lenient to the motorists of the State."

Mr. Walsh: You are very fortunate. You are fortunate if you own six cars. It takes the worker all his time to own one.

Mr. Nicklin: He said "vehicles."

Mr. EWAN: When we see the Bill we shall have to consider it carefully, no doubt, because the Treasurer did not enlighten us much as to its contents. I asked the hon. gentleman a polite question, but he did not know the answer and he became abusive and said, "You should know, being three years in the House." I knew the answer all right, but I wanted it officially from him.

Mr. Walsh: You got it.

Mr. EWAN: I did not get it from the Treasurer. Someone over there told me. He concurred. He has not told me yet. I am hoping for the best. The minimum age at which a person can hold a licence is 17 years.

Mr. Walsh: That is what you are saying.

Mr. EWAN: Is it not right? The Treasurer has the chance to tell me whether it is right or wrong. I tell the Treasurer that it is right. I make an appeal to the Treasurer along these lines: In the country areas of the State, boys and girls of five or six years of age are taught to drive motor vehicles on some properties, and many boys at the age of 15 can drive motor-vehicles just as capably as any adult. They are driving tractors and bulldozers on private properties. I have seen them knocking down scrub and on tank-sinking plants, and they are doing a mighty job. I have been approached on many occasions by tank-sinkers and men employed on contract who have sons of 15

or 16. Those boys are doing a man's work, and their fathers have asked me to try to get driver's licences for them. It must be remembered that out in the hotter parts of Queensland, a boy of 14 is physically and mentally an adult. I ask the Treasurer to give serious consideration to reducing the age at which it is possible to get a licence. These lads could be given certain tests to prove their ability, and I suggest that the age should be reduced from 17 to 15½. On many properties the father might be away and perhaps the mother is left with a boy of 13 or 14. The boy has to drive the motor-vehicle to the nearest town or station for rations. These lads are just as proficient at driving as adults, and it would mean a very big thing for people in the inland areas if they could get licences.

I reserve any further comments I may have to make till a later stage.

Mr. WATSON (Mulgrave) (8.42 p.m.): There are one or two points in this Bill that need clarifying. In introducing it, the Treasurer said that there have been no amendments to this legislation for eight years and, of course, certain amendments become necessary to all legislation as times goes on.

With regard to the lopping or removing of trees on roads, I found it very interesting to hear previous speakers discuss the clause in the Bill as it affected grazing areas. They were in favour of keeping the trees on the roads and directing the power lines through adjoining properties, and vice versa. That may be all right in grazing country, but in the area that I represent the main industry is sugar-growing. Since I have been in this Chamber a Bill similar to this was passed dealing with the hydro-electric scheme that has now been started. A small clause was contained in that legislation that gave the relevant authority the right of access to certain properties to construct its transmission lines. The result is that we shall have a one-chain road with a narrow bitumen strip along the centre and on both sides a nice growth of trees. However, under this amendment also, the power line and the telephone line will be pushed back on to properties that in all probability already consist of assigned land, or land that will become assigned in the near future. The power line from Innisfail to Cairns travels through the middle of 135 farms. I am mentioning this to show the damage that could flow from this amendment. We should have a main road with trees on both sides of the strip, and then we should have our cultivation interrupted by a telephone line, we should have a power line for distributing our power from the transformers, which would necessitate another resumption, and then we should have our high-power line with a further resumption of our land. As I see it, you are going to take away a valuable asset that the farmer has in his assignment. The Minister knows the sugar industry and he can no doubt picture the damage that could be done by all these resumptions, particularly at a time when we are looking everywhere for new land. I know that the Minister will give me a reply on this matter.

With regard to motor-car registration, I have listened with a great deal of interest to the Minister, and I am still looking for the nigger in the woodpile. When he says he is giving us something for nothing, I know that it will be something, plus a return to the Government.

Mr. LOW (Cooroora) (8.46 p.m.): This is a very important debate because main roads are very important to the State. I sincerely hope that we shall soon have many more main roads constructed throughout Queensland.

I take the opportunity of saying that I have always found the Commissioner and his secretary very helpful. When I have approached them they have always responded and done the very best they could for me.

I think that the suggestion of the Premier to put the Department of Main Roads under the control of the Minister for Transport is a step in the right direction. I do not intend to pursue that matter, but is a reform that I have advocated in this Chamber on a number of occasions. I hope that when all phases of transport have come under the one direction, everything will dovetail together and good results will be achieved.

The Bill contains several amendments, one of which provides for the elimination of payment for drivers' licenses and their renewal annually. Ever since the Traffic Act was brought into operation I have thought that it was a nuisance for people to have to go along to the police station every 12 months and get a new licence. It causes the Police Department and its officers quite a considerable amount of trouble. I believe that this provision will save a good deal of office work, but I do not expect that it will be of any financial benefit to the owner of a motor-car. The smallest amount payable is 7s. 6d. and goodness knows what will be the highest amount.

Mr. Walsh: Seven shillings and sixpence will be charged for any vehicle used for private purposes.

Mr. LOW: There is nothing free about this.

Mr. Walsh: If you have five in a family, now they would have to pay five amounts of 7s. 6d. With this amendment they will pay one 7s. 6d. for the vehicle.

Mr. LOW: When we see the list of charges we shall know whether there is any financial benefit or not. I do know that after the passing of the Traffic Act a number of people complained about having to go to the police station and get their licence renewed every 12 months. Policemen are very busy and cannot always attend to the public when they go along.

In regard to the preservation of trees, everyone likes to see a row of trees along a highway because they add to the pleasure of the trip but in some places, as soon as the trees are planted they die. It is

absolutely useless planting the trees if you do not look after them. That is only a waste of time, money and material. I am reminded of an incident relating to a proposal to extend electricity into a new residential area on the Bruce Highway just outside Nambour known as Parklands. On the left-hand side of the road going north we have the golf club and the telephone line and the other side is lined with natural forest trees. There was a controversy between the City Electric Light Company and the Main Roads Commission and eventually there was a deadlock; the commission told the company that it could not give permission for them to run their power lines along the Highway as it would entail the cutting down of quite a few trees. The residents asked me to see what I could do about the matter. I took it up with the Main Roads Commissioner, who gave me a very courteous hearing, but there was considerable delay in arriving at a mutual arrangement between the company and the commission. Eventually the commission agreed that the company could remove a certain number of trees from the side of the road but they would have to be bulldozed out and not chopped down. Now that some of the old box trees have been removed the highway looks better for it—the visibility is better too—and it will only be a short time till the electricity is extended to the new area. My point is that the absence of a mutual arrangement kept 25 families in the dark for over 12 months. That is to be regretted. The folk living in the homes protested very vigorously but they had to wait for 12 months. I am pleased that these difficulties will be overcome in the future. I trust that the Main Roads Commission will co-operate with the City Electric Light Company, because it is just as important to give people electricity as it is to build roads. Both should go hand in hand in the development of the State.

Let me tell the Minister another thing about trees on secondary or developmental roads. When the Main Roads Commission takes them over, there is often a considerable quantity of big standing timber on them. These roads are constructed on the basis that 50 per cent. of the cost is borne by the Main Roads Commission and 50 per cent. by the local authorities and when they are declared they are taken over by the Main Roads Commission. If anyone wishes to buy that timber the Main Roads Commission says it belongs to it, but if the area is infested with noxious weeds the Main Roads Commission directs the council to clean them up. The commission cannot have it both ways. If the commission owns the millable timber it owns the noxious weeds. Where there is timber on a road declared under the Main Roads Act the local authority should own at least 50 per cent. of the millable timber, if it is compelled to accept responsibility for the clearing of the noxious weeds. Quite a number of local authorities do not look upon the matter very lightly. If the Main Roads Commission is going to claim the millable timber it should claim the noxious weeds and remove them as well.

I hope the provisions of the Bill generally will be for the welfare of the State. I reserve any further comment till the second reading.

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg—Treasurer) (8.57 p.m.): I do not know that there is anything to which it is necessary for me to reply. There has been a general discussion on some of the points I outlined. Many of the fears expressed by the hon. member for Aubigny are largely imaginary. I think he appreciates the fact that the Commissioner of Main Roads has always given sympathetic consideration to the interests of the country people and their properties and I am sure that in carrying out any of the powers conferred on him he will adopt the same sympathetic approach to those interests as he has done in the past.

The destruction of trees on highways is something in which the Commissioner has taken a keen interest for many years and instead of condemning, the hon. member for Aubigny should have been applauding any amendment that had the object of preserving trees on highways. I have probably known the Commissioner longer than the member for Aubigny or any member of this Committee. I recall the first year he became associated with Main Roads activities in my own area and I have found that in his administration he has always endeavoured to understand the requirements of the man on the land, and he has administered his Act in a way similar to that of Sir John Kemp.

I thought that the amendment of the schedule dealing with registration and renewal of registrations would have prompted hon. members opposite to discuss the question of the recent increases in motor-vehicle fees.

Mr. Sparkes: One member did and you jumped on him.

Mr. WALSH: The Chairman corrected that later when he found there was an amendment of the schedule dealing with those things, and subsequent to that announcement there was nothing to stop the hon. member for Aubigny or any other hon. member from dealing with the matter they discussed here the other day. Very obviously they did not want to discuss it because they know the Government's case is a good one. (Opposition interjections.)

Mr. Morris: That is a funny one.

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member for Mount Coot-tha says it is a funny one, but he will be looking funny by the time I have finished dealing with the figures that I have here. They will indicate clearly that over the years the Government's policy has been to expend the greater part of the moneys received in motor-vehicle registration fees in rural areas.

There seems to be some suggestion that there is a catch in the Government's concession in connection with the fee of 7s. 6d. that is paid on each motor-vehicle used for private purposes, compared with the existing provision under which it is necessary for

every driver of a vehicle to take out a licence. At present, a farmer who has five in his family in addition to himself who drive the car, is required to pay a fee of six times 7s. 6d. for licences. Under this Bill he will pay only the one 7s. 6d. Surely that is a concession? If the hon. member wants it to remain as it is, all he has to do is move an amendment to that effect.

In case any hon. member should endeavour to compare the driver's license fees in other States with those operating in Queensland, I propose quoting figures now to keep him on the right track. The hon. member for Roma said here the other day that in New South Wales primary producers received a concession of a 50 per cent. reduction in motor-vehicle registration. I corrected him and pointed out that the concession given was only 10 per cent. and it applied only to tractors, trailers and the like but not to the primary producer's private car.

Mr. Ewan: When was it altered?

Mr. WALSH: Now, after claiming that the concession was 50 per cent., hon. members are asking me to tell them when it was altered. I am telling them it is only 10 per cent. and it does not apply to cars used for private purposes.

Let me now give hon. members the driver's licence fees operating in Queensland. The learner's permit is free. The fee for driving any other class of motor vehicle is 7s. 6d. If the driver only obtains a licence to drive a motor-car in the first instance, the description of all other classes of motor vehicles is deleted from the driver's licence. If the licensee, after subsequent trial through the Commissioner of Police, proves his competence to drive any other class of vehicle, that other class of vehicle is endorsed upon his driver's licence without any further fee.

In New South Wales the learner's permit costs 5s.; in Queensland, as I have pointed out, it is free. The fee for a licence to ride a motor cycle in New South Wales is 10s., while that for a licence to drive any other class of motor-vehicle is 15s. It will be noted that in New South Wales, if a person desires to ride a motor-cycle and also drive a motor-car, he is required to obtain two licences and pay two fees, one of 10s. and the other of 15s. In Victoria, the fee for a driver's licence is 10s.

Mr. Sparkes: What are registration fees in those States?

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member for Aubigny wants me to discuss motor-car registration fees now. I wanted him to discuss that matter. As the question of registration fees is referred to in the amending Bill, I point out to hon. members that one of the reasons for increasing the charges was the ever-increasing costs imposed on main roads over the years. I refer to such things as increases in the basic wage, improvements in conditions to the workers, increases in the price of bitumen, increases in the purchase price of land, and so on. If we want to make a comparison of increased charges I could give no better example than the increase in

the price of the "Courier-Mail." It does not appear to be much but the penny increase in the price has meant increased revenue to that paper of £254,000 a year. The increase of 2d. on the audited circulation of the "Sunday Mail"—I refer to the audited circulation in both cases—has meant an increase of £102,700, the combined total being £356,700. Readers of those papers are entitled to ask: why all this increased revenue? No doubt the papers will argue about increased costs of paper and wages, etc.

But, Mr. Farrell, it does not stop there. The "Courier-Mail" carried a leading article over the initials of "C.B.", that person being no other than the managing editor, Mr. Colin Bednall. He put his initials to the editorial. He took the Government to task for their decision to increase registration fees but he overlooked the fact that in the case of the "Courier-Mail" advertising rates in 1947 the casual rates were 18s. 6d. an inch and in 1951 52s. an inch, an increase of 33s. 6d., showing an overall increase of 181 per cent. The rates over the 1,000 ins., 3,000 ins., 5,000 ins., and 6,000 ins. were 16s., 15s. 3d., 14s. 9d., and 14s. 6d. in 1947 as against 47s. 6d., 46s., 45s., and 44s. 6d. in 1951, an increase of 31s. 6d., 30s. 9d., 30s. 3d., 30s., or represented in percentages 197 per cent., 201.4 per cent., 205.3 per cent. and 206.9 per cent.

The Leader of the Opposition worked out his comparison of the registration fee in 1939 with that of 1952, to his own satisfaction, but it is not necessarily the correct one. If we take the same period and apply it to the "Courier-Mail" we find that a casual advertisement cost 12s. in 1939 and 52s. in 1951, an increase of 40s. or 333.3 per cent. I only cite that as evidence that although the papers criticised the action of the Government for increasing registration fees, it can at least be said that the farmers and others get something for their money from the main roads, which cannot be said of the "Courier-Mail."

The hon. member for Cook referred to certain works undertaken in his electorate and referred to the Coen-Port Stewart road and went on to say that certain of the employees had been sitting down doing nothing for a period.

The hon. member for Cook is not denying that. I have been informed by the Commissioner that this is not a gazetted main road, so that the hon. member for Cook cannot say that anything that happened on that job was the responsibility of the Main Roads Commissioner.

Mr. Wordsworth: It was entirely Main Roads plant.

Mr. WALSH: It does not matter what plant it was. I am not denying that possibly it was Main Roads plant, but it is not a gazetted main road and what the hon. member had to say about the fact that the men were not working would not be the responsibility of the Commissioner of Main Roads.

The hon. member went on to refer to the shortage of equipment in the Department of Main Roads. In the last financial year before the war, that is, 1938-39, the net value of plant owned by the department, after allowing for depreciation, was £102,967. In that year maintenance of plant cost £21,860, and £41,635 was spent on the purchase of new plant. In the last financial year new plant was purchased to the value of £260,248, plant maintenance cost was £305,653, and the net value of plant on the books was £1,091,038, compared with £102,967 in 1938-39. In other words, the department has increased the value of its plant over nine times since 1938-39.

Mr. Wordsworth: You cannot deny that it is hiring plant all over the State.

Mr. WALSH: I am coming to the point as to why the Main Roads Commission is short of plant. The Leader of the Opposition and other members opposite like to say, "The Treasurer with the one-track mind" every time I mention the shortcomings of the Federal Government. Those shortcomings are well known, particularly to the public of Queensland. The information has been conveyed to me only tonight that a contract has been given to southern woollen mills and that the Queensland mills have been pushed to one side. That is why our Queensland mills have had to dismiss hundreds of employees.

Mr. Nicholson: That comes under the Textile Acts, not the Main Roads Acts.

Mr. WALSH: I am merely drawing attention to the fact that there is at least some justification for my utterances against the Federal Government. The hon. member for Murrumba can rest assured that I will keep well on the track, because I have a great respect for the Chair and always have had.

The hon. member for Cook said there was no denying the fact that the Department of Main Roads is short of plant. Of course it is. It has been one of our big complaints against the Federal Government that we have not been able to get the necessary import licences.

Mr. Wordsworth: You could have bought the plant here.

Mr. WALSH: I am making my point, and if the hon. member can rebut it, well and good.

The Premier has made repeated requests to the Commonwealth Government, both as Minister in control of the Department of Main Roads and since he has become Premier, for licences to import heavy American graders. The department was informed that they could be landed here within three months of placing an order with the factories. However, we were told by the Commonwealth Government that that equipment could be manufactured in Australia or obtained from British sources. Although orders were placed with Australian firms as far back as 1946, only six have so far been delivered, and of 10 ordered from Great Britain in 1949 only five have been delivered

to date. Hon. members will realise the difficulties under which the department is labouring when, as the result of the policy of the Federal Government, it is not allowed to import this very essential heavy machinery from America. Is it any wonder that we are short of equipment? And if the import licence had been issued when first asked for these graders could have been bought for round about £6,000 instead of £8,500, which they are costing now. Still hon. members over there say there is no justification for the increase in the registration fees.

Now I come to some of the remarks that were made by speakers in connection with the balance in the Main Roads Fund. Mention was made of the years from 1944 to 1947 and from 1947 to 1950-51, but it does not matter what the balance was in those years; what we are concerned about is the balance in the fund today. The Main Roads Commission has exceeded its vote by £881,000, and it means that the Government have to find that money from some other source.

An Opposition Member: What about the heavy-vehicles tax?

Mr. WALSH: The registrations are going to provide some of it, but I point out that considerable expenditure was undertaken by the Main Roads Commission during the year, particularly to relieve unemployment in the coastal areas caused by the drought. The Commission undertook a good many schemes, and some of them before the orders in council were issued, so that it could get on with the work. In pursuance of that policy it spent an amount of £881,000 in excess of its vote. It is no good worrying about what was in the fund in 1944, it is what is in the fund today that matters.

Hon. members should realise that as a result of the policy pursued since 1942, this is the only Government in Australia who have been able to marshal their financial resources in such a way as to provide for specialised works, and we are continuing that policy up to 30 June, as we have done for the past 20 years.

The Leader of the Opposition had something to say about the neglect of the North. This, of course, is only beating up the old political propaganda that the member for Mundingburra indulges in from time to time—the so-called Northern Development League and similar things that are raised immediately before elections. They come along with a story suggesting that this Government have not done very much for the North. I stated here the other day that in Queensland there were something like 130,000 miles of road and only 20,960 of that mileage was gazetted as main roads. I pointed out that in the eight principal cities along the coast from Cairns down to Ipswich and Toowoomba less than 140 miles of that 20,960 miles were gazetted as main roads within the boundaries of those cities, and approximately 92 miles were gazetted within the boundaries of the Greater Brisbane area or 229 miles of main roads all told within city areas. It is very obvious therefore that the Main Roads

Fund is not being expended within city areas, and for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition and others who indulge in propaganda about the neglect of the North, I propose to put on record figures that will clearly indicate that the commission's policy, in accordance with the Government's policy, has been such as to give considerable preferential treatment to the northern areas, particularly in the shires.

The total expenditure on permanent works and maintenance in the Northern Division since 30 June last amounted to £12,102,387. That excludes £920,000 spent on the Burdekin River bridge. It represents 27.37 per cent. of the amount of £44,219,706 expended throughout the State by the Main Roads Commission since its inception. The expenditure in northern city areas amounts to £333,197, equal to .75 per cent. over the whole State. The expenditure in northern towns is £52,000, equivalent to .12 per cent. of the whole State and the expenditure in northern shires is £11,716,139 representing 26.49 per cent. for the whole State. The amount of £12,102,387 represents £9,100,210 on permanent works and £3,002,177 on maintenance, of which the sum of £1,550,607, being £840,330 for permanent work and £710,277 only as a charge to local authorities, and this is equivalent to 12.81 per cent. of the Main Roads expenditure on permanent works.

I know that the Leader of the Opposition does not like these figures but they are facts. Over £11,000,000 has been spent in northern shires out of a total of £12,102,000 and only £1,550,607 is repayable by those shires. Hon. members must agree that this is a considerable concession to local authorities in northern areas. While it might bore hon. members it is a very good thing to have them on record.

I notice that in the Cairns shire the expenditure on permanent works up to 30 June, 1951, amounted to £110,261 and on maintenance £17,724, and the amount charged to the local authority is £36,904 for permanent works and £10,771 for maintenance. In Charters Towers the amount spent on permanent works is £11,038 and maintenance £3,631. In Mackay £26,704 on permanent works, £8,836 on maintenance, and in Townsville £90,303 on permanent works and £64,700 on maintenance.

Taking all the shire areas the total amount expended is £12,102,387 whereas the amounts repayable by the local authorities is only £1,550,607 or 12.81 per cent. It must be remembered that the amounts spent by the Main Roads Commission comes out of the Main Roads Fund and apart from the Main Roads Fund the balance must come from Treasury loans made available at low rates of interest. These repayments to the fund must be a charge against other than the land-owners. I say advisedly that if consideration is to be given to a reduction in motor registration fees below the present level it will be necessary to review the charges that are met by local authorities under the heading of permanent works and maintenance at the present time.

I think it is logical to say that in these days, if the Main Roads Commission is constructing improved roads in the areas adjacent to grazing properties, that the landholder gets some benefit; he gets more benefit than the city dweller who uses his motor-car to run to the seaside periodically. The Opposition want to argue that fees must be reduced or retained at their present level, so there must be another method of finding the money, which must come from somewhere; consequently that would be a method I would suggest the Government would have to adopt whereby the motorist could be relieved of some of the charges paid by way of registration fees at the present time. It is obvious that the Opposition are not prepared to pursue the line of criticism that they followed the other day in regard to motor-registration fees. However, if there is any Opposition member who wishes to take the question further, I can assure him I shall be only too pleased to listen to his remarks and reply to them.

Mr. WORDSWORTH (Cook) (9.27 p.m.): I regret the necessity for having to speak now, before seeing the Bill. The Treasurer has seen fit to endeavour—as the barrister does every day—to discredit the witness, and as I happen to be the witness I must reply. I say that if everyone on that side dealt as carefully with the truth as I do, there would be more truths uttered in this Chamber. The Treasurer said—and I must accept his statement—that the Main Roads Commission does work for shire councils. I happen to have visited Coen not seven months ago. I went out by jeep and had a look for myself at Station Creek because you cannot always believe what you hear. In that area there had been a gang—I could not tell you the number of men—and they had little equipment to work with and there was no guidance, with the exception of the ganger. It is to the credit of the district engineer and his assistant that when they arrived there they took the men away. That work that was being done was entirely under the supervision of the Main Roads Commission, and whether they were doing the work for the Cook Shire Council or the Main Roads Commission is beside the point. Unreproductive money was paid over by somebody—either the Main Roads Commission or the Cook Shire Council.

On the matter of equipment, the Treasurer, as usual, blamed the Menzies-Fadden Government.

Mr. Walsh: I can only be factual about it; they would not issue the licences.

Mr. WORDSWORTH: May be they did refuse licences, but I point this out: a couple of years ago there was quite a lot of heavy equipment available in Queensland. In the main it was new equipment that was specially sent up to various islands in the Pacific to be ready for use in the gigantic operation of the contemplated attack on Japan, which never took place because of the ending of the war by the atomic bomb.

Most of that equipment was as good as new, except that it was affected by weather. Several shiploads came to Queensland. I think the company handling it was Heavy Equipment Ltd. of Yeerongpilly, and this company reconditioned it but gave no guarantee with it. Its men reconditioned that equipment and it was sold in the main to road-building authorities in other States. I know the Treasurer will come back at me and say that the Main Roads Commission would not buy much of that equipment because there was no guarantee with it and it could not be relied upon to last for a certain number of years. I answer him in advance by saying that before the equipment was sold it was inspected on behalf of the other States by an engineer of the Queensland Main Roads Commission and approved of by him.

Mr. Walsh: Why did not the northern shires buy it?

Mr. WORDSWORTH: I am not dealing with the northern shires.

The Treasurer has challenged hon. members on this side to speak on the matter of motor registration fees. We all say that the 50 per cent. increase was unwarranted because already there had been a substantial increase a little over a year ago. We admit that part of that substantial increase of a little over a year ago was to make up for the decrease that had been granted more or less by all States during the war as a concession to motorists because of shortage of petrol through petrol rationing. To increase the fees by another 50 per cent. at a stage in our history when the great majority of the people of the Commonwealth have given a Government a mandate to do something about stopping the spiral of costs and inflation is blatant lack of co-operation with the anti-inflationary policy of the Commonwealth Government. Of course, that is only consistent with other administrative acts of this State Government over the last six months. I venture the opinion that when the next basic-wage adjustment is made it will be found that Queensland's C Series Index will have increased substantially, while that of some other States will have remained almost stationary. I suggest also that these increased registration fees will add still further to the impetus of that inflationary spiral.

The Treasurer said he has had to face increased costs for labour, equipment and extra work that have been asked for. That is agreed. He also said that part of the increased expenditure by the commission was caused by the need to relieve unemployment. That also is true because last year in some seasonal industries the season ended early. Almost every sugar mill in the State finished the season early in November, whereas normally some mills are still working in December, and the need to find employment for these seasonal workers was experienced earlier than usual. If the Treasurer needs extra revenue to prevent unemployment I suggest that in order to do that and at the

same time co-operate with the Commonwealth Government in combating the inflationary spiral the Government could have obtained the extra revenue needed from the money they hold in trust in the Unemployment Insurance Fund that was closed many years ago. In that way costs would not have been increased by one penny to anybody in the State.

Motion (Mr. Walsh) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

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

GOVERNMENT LOAN BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

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

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg—Treasurer) (9.33 p.m.): I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to authorise the making of arrangements by the State of Queensland pursuant to the provisions of the Commonwealth and States Financial Agreement Acts, 1927 to 1944, for the raising of a loan by the State, and for other purposes.”

This Bill is in accordance with the usual practice of getting authority to raise loans. The last such Bill was in 1950 and the authorisation at that time provided for a sum of £25,000,000. State works and projects of a capital nature and advances made to Government and semi-governmental authorities for capital works are financed from loan moneys, that is to say, moneys the Government obtains by means of loan raisings; the indebtedness thus incurred becomes portion of the State public debt. The Government periodically must ask Parliament to pass a Bill to authorise the raising of moneys by way of loans, to enable it to carry on its programmes of works. The Bill I am now introducing is for this purpose.

To give an outline of the position, at the end of June last the amount available for raisings under the Government Loan Act of 1950 was £16,159,779. The gross loan programme approved by the Loan Council for 1951-52 amounts to £23,321,000. These figures have already been presented to Parliament during the last Session and are set out under various headings to show how the money was allocated and expended. This expenditure will be covered partly by:

Estimated repayments to Loan Account	£1,300,000
Probable loans from the Commonwealth Savings Bank on account of increased depositors' balances	2,800,000
Cash balance of Loan Account at 1 July, 1951	2,039,397
	<hr/>
	£6,139,397

Deducting this sum from the approved programme of £23,321,000, it will be seen that the loan raisings of £17,181,603 will be necessary to ensure that the loan works programme can be fully implemented. The available authority of £16,159,779 is therefore inadequate to the extent of just over £1,000,000.

The Bill seeks authority to raise loans to finance the Government's loan programme for this year and the year 1952-53. The amount sought is £40,000,000, which it is thought will be sufficient to this end.

I wish to make it quite clear to the Committee that the purpose of the Bill is only to give to the Government a general authority for the raising of £40,000,000 for expenditure on public works and services. It does not lay down the terms and conditions of loan issues, nor does it give authority for the expenditure of loan moneys on specific works or services.

The terms and conditions of loan raisings, as hon. members know, are approved by the Australian Loan Council and by the Queensland Government. Parliament controls the spending of loan moneys, which before disbursement must be voted by Parliament through the Estimates and appropriated in Appropriation Acts.

The gross expenditure from Loan Fund from July, 1932, to 30 June last reached the considerable sum of £86,980,065, which indicates that this Government have not been unmindful of their responsibility for providing funds for developmental works and services.

It is interesting to note that, despite the Loan Fund expenditure of approximately £87,000,000, the Public Debt since July, 1932, has increased by only £54,245,116. This is conclusive evidence that this Government have used loan moneys prudently and effectively.

The Government's long-range policy of development and expansion, improvement of railways and roads, provision of water supplies and numerous other projects, calls for heavy loan fund finance, and, I maintain, amply justifies the amount of the authority now sought.

Hon. members will realise that this is merely, as I have indicated, an authority to raise £40,000,000, which it is expected will take us over the period. Whether we get that sum will depend largely on the financial policy of the country as a whole. I fully expect that during the course of this debate a good deal of time will be taken up by hon. members opposite in criticising this Government on the way in which these loan moneys have been expended and in saying how they should have been expended. Very little time, I am sure, will be taken up by members of the Opposition in outlining to the Committee the difficulties confronting this State, and every other State, because of the financial policy of the present Federal Government. It is idle to suggest that the financial policy that has been implemented by the present Federal Government is not

having a serious effect on the development of industry throughout Australia. Local authorities that are affected by the loan raisings under this measure are crying out today for funds, but we are told that the moneys are not available for investment. During the period from 1945 to 1949 eleven loans aggregating £820,000,000 were raised by the Chifley Labour Government, and they were over-subscribed to the extent of £66,000,000. Further, deposits in our trading banks and savings banks have been increased over the last few years by £623,000,000. And yet we are told that the money is not available!

Is this the new order that men have been encouraged to go to the other side of the world and fight for? Millions of pounds were found to wage war and for the production of war equipment, yet when these men come home they are told that there is not sufficient money to build war-service homes for them or to provide equipment for them to engage in primary production, both in this State and in other States.

I can understand the apologies that will be made by hon. members opposite, but what is the answer? Here today they are recruiting throughout the country asking young people to go to Korea and elsewhere, and at the same time telling them they cannot find the necessary financial wherewithal to give them security under the present peace conditions in this country. Does it mean that when we are engaged in another world-wide conflict once again the purse-strings will be released and millions will be allowed to flow? What is the answer then to the question that will surely be asked: where did the money come from? Is it not right to assume that under present-day conditions our financial resources should be so marshalled by the Federal Government in power that there will be reasonable scope for all engaged in industry? The policy appears to be to get back bit by bit to the conditions that were operating from 1929 to 1933. The then Labour Government, the Scullin Labour Government, were in a majority only in the Lower House, and not in power because they had an adverse majority in the Senate. Any attempt on their part to give effect to a sound financial policy was frustrated at every turn by the anti-Labour parties.

I can remember the occasion when the famous fiduciary Bill was brought down, which was going to make £18,000,000 available by way of loan to local authorities and local bodies to enable them to carry out a series of works that would have the effect of re-employing hundreds of thousands of workers who were driven out onto the roads with their swags, not being able to get enough to feed their families. What was the attitude then of the banking institutions, the creatures of the Government in this country? They stood up and said they could not make the money available.

Mr. H. B. Taylor: Prime Minister Scullin said Australia could only pay 12s. in the £1.

Mr. WALSH: Mr. Farrell, the hon. gentleman has succeeded by that interjection in showing that after a period of successive anti-Labour Governments from 1917 to 1929 the country found itself in a position that it could pay only 12s. in the £1. If there is any responsibility on the shoulders of a Government it is on the anti-Labour Government, because the Scullin Government came in after anti-Labour Governments had wrecked the whole economy of our country. A Labour Government were not prepared to repudiate, despite all the efforts of Lang, who was one of the buttresses of Menzies and Fadden in the 1949 election. It was a Labour Government who stood Mr. Lang up and would not allow him to repudiate. They had to take over the disabilities that applied in Australia as a whole because of the continuous anti-Labour policy operating over a period from 1917 to 1929.

Then what do we find? We find that there was a Premiers' Plan. I know it is going to be said that we had Labour Premiers in this State and that State. What the Labour Premiers were faced with was to find a solution that was going to get this country out of the discreditable position it had got into because of anti-labour administration over the years preceding Labour.

But despite the fact—

Mr. Kerr: What about the price of wool?

Mr. WALSH: If the hon. member wants to take me on the subject of prices I will meet him and show him that in the years following the return of a Labour Government in this State export prices of primary products were lower than they were when the anti-Labour Government were in power in this State.

Mr. Kerr: Not wool.

Mr. WALSH: I am talking of primary products. That policy was continued for about three years until the Labour Government were returned in this State in 1932 under the then Leader of the Labour Party, Mr. Forgan Smith. I well recollect the 1932 campaign, when the local paper in Mackay ridiculed the claim of Mr. Forgan Smith who was going to the Loan Council to see that the position was adjusted. "Just imagine," it said, "One man; what could he do?" But history has shown that Mr. Forgan Smith subsequently attended the Loan Council meeting in July and again in November the same year. Mr. Lyons, the then Prime Minister, who had continued his policy that had been in operation for over two years, put up the Premiers' Plan for a further period and a further 10 per cent cut in wages. The Leader of the Opposition will remember how Mr. Moore and Mr. Godfrey Morgan went down in April, 1932. They were quite prepared to agree to that plan of a further 10 per cent. cut in wages but they were honest enough to say—you can see it in the records of the Loan Council in the parliamentary library—that they had an election pending and it would be difficult for them to implement it. They realised that if they agreed to a further 10 per cent. cut in wages

in this State they would not have been returned to office. They did not seem to realise, of course, that they were on the way out then.

Mr. Forgan Smith attended his second Loan Council meeting in November, 1932. Mr. Lyons, the Commonwealth Prime Minister, submitted the Premiers' plan again, and Mr. Forgan Smith moved an amendment.

Mr. Nicklin: The famous amendment!

Mr. WALSH: The famous amendment—the Leader of the Opposition agrees with me. That famous amendment had the effect of opening up the purse-strings, and at last money was made available. The Leader of the Opposition cannot deny it. He will have to tell the people of this country that Mr. Lyons, the Prime Minister of Australia, was prepared to continue the policy that had been in operation for two years, a policy of restricted finance in relation to Governments and local governments and that in a matter of months finance was made available through the Loan Council to the States. It was from then on that the Labour Government in Queensland implemented their policy of subsidies to local authorities of 50 per cent. for sewerage work, 50 per cent. for water supply, road works, bridges, and so on, and it had the effect of employing thousands of people in this State. You cannot get away from that, Labour's attitude at that time, through its leader, Mr. Forgan Smith, was responsible for the return of a stabilised economy throughout the whole of Australia. Might I emphasise the point that over a period of six years the Federal Labour Government raised a sum of £820,000,000, not on a rising rate of interest but on a falling rate of interest, starting at 3½ per cent. and being reduced to 3¼ per cent. and subsequently to 3⅓ per cent., and that two of their loans which were floated in September of the year just prior to the defeat of the Chifley Government were largely over-subscribed.

Very good! Overnight almost, with the return of the anti-Labour Government you find the market has dried up. Why? I should like to hear an explanation from the Leader of the Opposition on behalf of the Menzies-Fadden Government, or from some other financial expert on the other side.

Mr. Muller: You do not want an explanation. You know the reason yourself. Be honest.

Mr. WALSH: Of course I know the reason, and I stated it early in the session last year when I referred to the financial racket that was going on. If the hon. member wants to justify it he had better tell this to the primary producers to whom the private banks are refusing overdrafts to enable them to buy machinery and increase production. He knows that. His own factory and numerous others are coming to me asking for some assistance, and only because the taxation policy of the Federal Government will not allow them to build up their reserves and extend their factories so as to help in increased production.

Mr. Muller: Did you hear of the drought? Anyone would think you were only born this afternoon. (Laughter.)

Mr. WALSH: Now we have got it from the member for Fassifern that the drought is responsible for the Federal Government's withholding the money.

Mr. Muller: I did not say that at all.

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member was going to give me the reasons, and the reason he has given is that there is no money available because there is a drought. This is the very time when there should be within our financial resources money available by the million to help the farmers under these conditions. This Government are the only Government in Australia who have a drought-relief Act—the only State in Australia that has or the statute book an Act providing for drought relief to farmers in periods of drought.

Mr. Pizzey: Other Governments give direct grants.

Mr. WALSH: I will get on to that and the hon. member will not be pleased when I do. Surely he does not think I have come here without being equipped with information on these matters? When I am finished with them it will be clear to everyone that Queensland is the only State that considers the primary producers. I say that quite frankly.

Mr. Nicklin: You make certain of your pound of flesh too.

Mr. WALSH: I do not know what the Leader of the Opposition is talking about. They get drought relief interest-free for two years. The Government make the money available from loan funds and somebody has to pay the interest. We are getting our pound of flesh from somebody else and not the farmers, because they get money interest-free for that period and thereafter at interest of 2 per cent. on money that costs 3¼ per cent.

Mr. Muller: Whom do you get the pound of flesh from?

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member would not be paying much for it. It is hard to extract anything from him. I take the opportunity of issuing a warning that if the present policy is to be continued by the Federal Government the picture will be pretty grim one this time next year. The Premier is going to have one of the toughest battles that have been fought by any Premier since 1932. I should not be surprised at all if we were not, as a result of the Federal financial policy, faced with a cut of 50 per cent. in our loan allocations.

Mr. Muller: What about another Premier's Plan?

Mr. WALSH: If the hon. member favouring the introduction of another Premier's Plan, he had better get the lead of his party to incorporate that in his policy speech next year. As I see the position, emphasise that the people of this State will be very thankful they have had a Labour Government in power since 1932—a Government who have so marshalled their finances that at least we can say we have a little

nest egg that will help us to tide over the difficult period. But it will not be because of any action of the Federal Government.

Mr. Nicklin: I thought you were broke.

Mr. WALSH: I am surprised at the Leader of the Opposition, because I have noticed that he has put forward a more intelligent analysis of the Financial Statement and the financial accounts generally than the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who is supposed to be a first-class accountant. I do not think I ever conveyed the impression that we were broke. The Leader of the Opposition knows as well as I do that we have the Post-War Reconstruction and Development Trust Fund and I know that the Opposition would like the Government to make inroads into such funds so that we might face a position where we have thousands of unemployed. Fortunately for the people of Queensland, we are the Government.

Mr. Muller: In other words, you are as tight as the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. WALSH: We are not a bit tight. According to the Leader of the Opposition, we have more money than we can spend. If that is so, we cannot be very tight, and I remind him that while we have had the money we have invited the local authorities to come and get it and spend it.

I point out also that for the loan allocation for the present financial year the sum of £23,321,000 has been mentioned. In that amount there is £6,000,000-odd for local-authority purposes. In other words, approximately 27 per cent. of our total loan allocation is set aside for local-authority purposes.

An analysis of approvals by the Loan Council for local-authority borrowings will disclose that in the aggregate the loan programme of local authorities is considerably higher than that of the States. There is the £6,000,000-odd in our own loan allocation, together with Loan Council approvals amounting to £13,000,000, making £19,000,000 between them, to be expended on works programmes for semi-governmental bodies and local authorities throughout the State, against the State's loan allocation of between £16,000,000 and £17,000,000. I repeat for the benefit of hon. members opposite that because of the policy pursued by their supporters in the Federal sphere, it looks as if the States throughout Australia were going to be cut to the extent of 50 per cent. in their loan allocation. I wonder what the hon. member for Fassifern will say about drought relief then. How does he expect this State to give drought relief and concessions to primary producers if the Federal Government have not the courage to stand up and organise the financial resources of this country in the same way as the Chifley Labour Government did?

Motion (Mr. Walsh) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

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

The House adjourned at 10.8 p.m.