

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 4 MARCH 1958

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Legislative Assembly.

FIRST SESSION OF THE THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT.

(Second Period)

[VOLUME 3]

TUESDAY, 4 MARCH, 1958.

**DEATH OF SIR JOHN DUDLEY
LAVARACK.**

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. A. R. Fletcher, Cunningham) took the chair at 11 a.m.

REPLY TO MOTION OF CONDOLENCE.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Assent to the following Bills reported by Mr. Speaker—

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that I have received a letter from Lady Lavarack, the widow of the late Sir John Dudley Lavarack, conveying thanks for the motion of condolence passed on 4 December.

Profiteering Prevention Acts Amendment Bill.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

Coal and Oil Shale Mine Workers' (Pensions) Acts Amendment Bill.

QUEENSLAND TRADE DELEGATION TO THE UNITED KINGDOM.

Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty. Limited Agreement Bill.

University of Queensland Acts Amendment Bill (No. 2).

Sugar Experiment Stations Acts Amendment Bill.

Dairy Products Stabilisation Acts Amendment Bill.

State Electricity Commission Acts and Another Act Amendment Bill.

Traffic Acts and Another Act Amendment Bill (No. 2).

Landlord and Tenant Acts Amendment Bill.

Land Acts and Other Acts Amendment Bill.

Roads (Contribution to Maintenance) Bill.
Judges' Pensions Bill.

Forestry Bill.

State Housing Acts and Another Act Amendment Bill.

Local Government Acts and Another Act Amendment Bill.

Irrigation Acts and Another Act Amendment Bill.

Racing and Betting Act Amendment Bill.
1958—31

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Premier) (11.8 a.m.), by leave: As hon. members are aware, the Hon. K. J. Morris, M.L.A., Minister for Labour and Industry, will shortly be proceeding overseas for the purpose of leading a Queensland Trade Delegation to the United Kingdom and other countries. Mr. Morris proposes leaving Brisbane on 11 March, 1958.

His Excellency the Administrator of the Government has, therefore, by virtue of the provisions of Section 8 of the Officials in Parliament Acts, 1896 to 1957, authorised and empowered the Hon. Jack Charles Allan Pizzey, Minister for Education, on and from 11 March, 1958, to perform and exercise all or any of the duties, powers and authorities imposed or conferred upon the Hon. the Minister for Labour and Industry by any Act, rule, practice, or ordinance, and during the temporary absence from Queensland of the Hon. Kenneth James Morris.

I lay upon the table of the House a copy of the Government Gazette Extraordinary issued on 28 February, 1958, containing this notification.

Whereupon the hon. gentleman laid the Government Gazette Extraordinary upon the table.

PAPERS.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

- Order in Council under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Acts, 1938 to 1954, and the Tully Falls Hydro-Electric Project Act of 1950.
- Order in Council under the Public Service Acts, 1922 to 1955.
- Regulations under the Public Service Acts, 1922 to 1955.
- Orders in Council under the Traffic Acts, 1949 to 1957.
- Regulations under the Traffic Acts, 1949 to 1957.
- Regulations under the Inspection of Scaffolding Acts, 1915 to 1955.
- Order in Council under the Factories and Shops Acts, 1900 to 1954.
- Regulation under the Factories and Shops Acts, 1900 to 1954.
- Rules under the Police Acts, 1937 to 1957.
- Regulation under the Statistical Returns Acts, 1896 to 1935.
- Order in Council under the Landlord and Tenant Acts, 1948 to 1954.
- Order in Council under the Criminal Code.
- Order in Council under the Supreme Court Act of 1921.
- Order in Council under the Maintenance Orders (Facilities for Enforcement) Acts, 1921 to 1956.
- Order in Council under the Mortgagees and Other Persons Relief Acts, 1931 to 1943.
- Order in Council under the Financial Emergency Act of 1931.
- Order in Council under the Lessees' Relief Acts, 1931 to 1932.
- Order in Council under the Justices Acts, 1886 to 1956.
- Order in Council under the Landlord and Tenant Acts, 1948 to 1957.
- By-law under the Harbours Acts, 1955 to 1956.
- Order in Council under the Harbours Acts, 1955 to 1956.
- Order in Council under the Racing and Betting Act of 1954.
- Order in Council under the Tully Sugar Works Acts, 1930 to 1937.
- Proclamation under the Fisheries Act of 1957.
- Regulation under the Explosives Act of 1952.
- Regulation under the Fisheries Act of 1957.
- Regulation under the Motor Vehicles Insurance Acts, 1936 to 1945.
- Regulation under the Navigation Acts, 1876 to 1950.
- Regulation under the Port Dues Revision Act of 1882, the Port Dues Revision Act Amendment Act of 1950 and the Navigation Acts, 1876 to 1950.
- Regulations under the Racing and Betting Acts, 1954 to 1957.

- Regulation under the Water Acts, 1926 to 1954.
- Ordinances under the City of Brisbane Acts, 1924 to 1957.
- Order in Council under the Sewerage, Water Supply and Gasfitting Acts, 1949 to 1951.
- Regulation under the Hospitals Acts, 1936 to 1955.
- Regulations under the Health Acts, 1937 to 1955.
- The Food and Drug Regulations, 1957, under the Health Acts, 1937 to 1955.
- The Health (Food Hygiene) Regulations of 1957 under the Health Acts, 1937 to 1955.
- The Milk Sellers Regulations, 1957, under the Health Acts, 1937 to 1955.
- The Islanders Regulations, 1957, under the Torres Strait Islanders Acts, 1939 to 1946, and the Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Acts, 1939 to 1946.
- The Sanitary Conveniences and Nightsoil Disposal Regulations of 1957 under the Health Acts, 1937 to 1955.
- Order in Council under the Abattoirs Acts, 1930 to 1949.
- Order in Council under the Peanut Industry Protection and Preservation Acts, 1939 to 1941.
- Order in Council under the Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Acts, 1926 to 1957.
- Order in Council under the Sugar Experiment Stations Acts, 1900 to 1957.
- Regulation under the Fauna Conservation Act of 1952.
- Regulation under the Fruit Marketing Organisation Acts, 1923 to 1956.
- Regulation under the Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Acts, 1926 to 1957.
- Regulation under the Second-hand Fruit Cases Acts, 1940 to 1952.
- Regulation under the Slaughtering Act of 1951.
- Regulation under the Stock Acts, 1915 to 1954.
- Regulation under the Sugar Experiment Stations Acts, 1900 to 1957.

QUESTION.

OPERATION OF ROADS (CONTRIBUTION TO MAINTENANCE) ACT IN RELATION TO PRIMARY PRODUCTION.

Mr. V. E. JONES (Callide), without notice, asked the Minister for Transport—

“Will the Minister indicate what action has been taken by the Government relating to the operations of the Roads (Contribution to Maintenance) Act of 1957 following on requests made to him by dairy organisations within my electorate, and others, for consideration of possible exemptions therefrom?”

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer) replied—

“As the hon. member is aware, a report on these representations was considered by the Government Party on 31 January, following which the Hon. the Premier issued a statement indicating that the difficulties of certain primary producers and others who owned trucks of over 4 tons capacity were appreciated by the Government. He added that it had, therefore, been decided to have full statistical records kept in relation to all returns received during the first month's operations of the Act, and that when such data was available the provisions of the Act would be fully reviewed.

“Since its introduction on 1 February, the operations of the Act have been very closely watched by my departmental officers and particular attention has been given to its effect on the economy of primary producers and others most immediately affected. Fourteen days after the close of the month are allowed under the Act for the completion of returns by hauliers and other truckowners. Immediately this period in relation to the month of February expires on 14 March and my departmental officers have proceeded with and completed their statistical calculations, the review referred to by the Hon. the Premier will take place.

“A booklet dealing with the operations of the Act has now been published, and 20 copies will be delivered at the end of this week to each member of Parliament for distribution. Individual copies will be available to the public on application to the Department of Transport, Ivory Street, Valley, Brisbane.”

DEATH OF MR. T. F. PLUNKETT.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE.

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Premier) (11.37 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

“1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this State by the late Thomas Flood Plunkett, Esquire, a former member of the Parliament of Queensland.

“2. That Mr. Speaker be requested to convey to the widow and family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of the Parliament of Queensland, in the loss they have sustained.”

The late Mr. Plunkett entered Parliament in May, 1929, as member for Albert, which later became Darlington, and served continuously until he retired at the end of the Thirty-fourth Parliament. At the time of his retirement he had the second longest continuous service in this House.

During the period he represented those electorates he gave excellent service not only

to his constituents but also to the State. There was no hon. member more assiduous in his duties than the late Mr. Plunkett. The fact that he was held in such high regard by the people of the electorates he represented was evidenced by the tremendous majorities he received at each election or the privilege he was given of being returned unopposed.

Unfortunately he did not live long to enjoy his retirement. On 24 December, 1957, shortly after he retired, he passed away.

I think all hon. members will agree that the late Mr. Plunkett was one of the best-liked members in this House. He was highly respected by all of us. In fact those who knew him found it impossible not to like, admire and respect him. He was a man of very high principles and ideals and lived according to those principles and ideals.

He was a very good debater and could speak on a wide variety of subjects. He was listened to with the greatest respect when dealing with primary industries, particularly the dairying industry of which he knew so much. In debate he was always fair, although he could hit hard if the occasion demanded. He is sadly missed in debate in this House.

Notwithstanding his long period as a member of Parliament, he was perhaps better known to the people of Queensland because of his long association with the dairying industry.

He was not only a pioneer dairyman but a pioneer in organisations of dairymen in the State. The late Tom Plunkett gave a tremendous amount of time to the organisation of the dairying industry in Queensland. His guidance over the years has been appreciated by dairymen and the record he held in connection with the various organisations in the industry has not been equalled by any other person in Australia. Naturally he was a very firm believer in the principle of co-operation. He was a director, chairman, and vice-president of various co-operative associations and companies in the State. He was also chairman of the Australian Dairy Export Control Board, Queensland Chairman and representative of Australian Dairy Council and Chairman of the Queensland Butter Board and a member up until the time of his death. There are dozens of other primary organisations with which he was associated and it would take much time to state them all. He had an unequalled record of representation in dairying organisations; indeed he gave tremendous service to the industry in which he grew up. He was sent overseas to New Zealand and Great Britain by the industry on several occasions and the information he was able to bring back was of great help not only to the industry in Queensland but throughout Australia. The industry is receiving the benefit of that knowledge today.

He gave himself unstintingly not only in the service of his electors but of primary producers. Queensland is the poorer for the

passing of the late gentleman and I am sure that all hon. members join with me in expressing deepest sympathy to the wife and family of the late Tom Plunkett in the loss that they have sustained.

Mr. WOOD (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) (11.43 a.m.): In seconding the motion moved by the Premier I wish to associate the Opposition with the sentiments expressed. The Premier has given a full and truthful outline of the qualifications of the late Tom Plunkett. We all knew and respected him and I think it could be truthfully said that there were few people in public life who set a standard equal to that set by the late gentleman in personal integrity. The Premier has quite rightly spoken of his vigour in debate, particularly on those subjects of which he was an acknowledged authority, dairying in particular and primary production in general. The Premier was right when he said that in his vigour the late gentleman never lost the dignity of his office. I have never heard him say one unkind word personally of any man whether in this Assembly or outside. If we can say nothing finer than that about him we would be saying a lot. We often hear the term "father of the House" referred to. In terms of service in this Assembly the late gentleman was not the father but he had all the characteristics that we associate with a father. I know that when I came here first the late Tom Plunkett gave me good advice. I know of many occasions when he went out of his way to offer helpful advice to hon. members on first entering the House, no matter to which Party they belonged. He was never unkind in his opinion, and if he thought that an hon. member lacked some of the qualities that should be apparent in a member of this Assembly he would quietly, privately and in a most helpful way endeavour to assist him.

I think we all feel the better for having known Tom Plunkett. A former member of this Assembly possessed qualities much the same as those of Tom Plunkett; I refer to the late Thomas Dunstan. Both those gentlemen reached a fair age, neither lost his mental alertness, his sense of humour, or his interest in humanity. Tom Plunkett served this State well, and Queensland is the poorer for his passing.

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane) (11.46 a.m.): The members of my party and I desire to be associated with the motion of condolence to the widow and the family of the late Thomas Plunkett. We all sincerely regret his passing. He was a man in every respect. Personally, I had a great affection for him because of his high principles, high standards, and high sense of citizenship, which one expects to find in the parliamentary halls of this democracy.

As the Premier has said, Tom Plunkett not only served well and ably those whom he was honoured to represent in Parliament, but he also served the very important primary industries of the State in an excellent manner.

In debate, Tom Plunkett always disclosed a sense of fairness and of social justice, which is very important. Unfortunately, on too many occasions we are inclined to become unbalanced in our perspective when considering the rights of the employer as compared with those of employee, and vice versa. It is important for the good of the State and the country that there should be a balanced sense of social justice between both those sections of the community. Tom Plunkett possessed that balanced sense of social justice. He believed that the worker should receive a fair return for his labour, just as he fought in season and out for justice for the primary producers, of whom he was one. He fought their cause with marked success over the years.

As I have already said, Tom Plunkett was a man of high standards. He was also a great husband and father. In turn, he was blessed with a charming wife and an excellent family. His death, therefore, would cause a great deal of grief to them, as it did to his innumerable friends.

It is true, as the Premier has said, that Parliament and the State are the poorer for the death of Tom Plunkett. However, that is something that must come to us all in our turn, to some earlier than others. Tom Plunkett was blessed with a reasonably long life, which he spent usefully and well as a God-fearing and God-loving man, in the service of his country and his fellows.

Mr. GAVEN (Southport) (11.50 a.m.): I wish to associate myself with the motion of condolence to the family of the late Tom Plunkett. I was deeply shocked on Christmas morning when I arrived in Brisbane from India and at the airport I was given the news of his passing. I had been associated with him as a mate for 35 years. I think I knew him as well as any hon. member in this House. It was always a great pleasure for me to be associated with a man of such outstanding integrity. He possessed many fine attributes. I think the finest were the regard he always had for his fellow men and the great love and affection that he showed his own family. He was a man of very high principles. His honesty and probity were beyond reproach.

He left behind him in his work on the South Coast and in his own area something that will be very hard for anyone else to follow. Not only did he win the respect and approbation of the thousands of people who knew him, including hon. members of this Assembly, but he also won the approbation of those associated with him in every State of Australia and overseas in his work for the dairying industry. When the history of that industry is written, as I am sure it will be one day, it will not be complete without some strong reference to the great help he gave it.

He came with his parents to the Beaudesert district many years ago among the pioneers. Many of them brought little more with them on the boat than an axe and a billy can.

They began development work and founded the dairying industry in the Logan, Waterford and surrounding districts. They then moved on to Beaudesert and by dint of hard work and initiative, alongside other pioneers, they developed that district into one of the best in Australia. The work done by the late gentleman and those who were with him could well be emulated by many of our younger people who in the development of industries and the opening up of new country are carving a name and making history for Australia. I join with the sentiments already expressed because I believe that Parliament has lost a good man, the district has lost a great worker, and the dairying industry has lost an excellent representative. He will always be remembered and his name will be revered for the many kind things that he did. He had a kindly disposition and an ideal temperament. We will always remember him for his kindly approach to many matters, to hon. members and to many thousands of others during his lifetime.

Mr. HARRISON (Darlington) (11.54 a.m.): As the successor in this Parliament to the late Thomas Flood Plunkett as hon. member for Darlington, I join in paying my respects and extend my sympathy to his family on his passing. I have known him since my boyhood days. I think my father and he were original members of the first board of directors of the Albert and Logan Co-operative Dairy Association. So I knew him as I grew up. I have always had an immense admiration for him but it was not until it fell to my lot to succeed him in this House, until I went around the Darlington electorate that I realised the tremendous respect and affection that the people everywhere had for him.

When I came to this House I realised that the feeling of all hon. members towards him was exactly the same. Wherever he went he was regarded as a friend, a very true and loyal citizen in every way. As his successor I wish to associate myself with the motion moved by the Premier extending our sympathy to his wife and family.

Motion (Mr. Nicklin) agreed to, hon. members standing in silence.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

LACK OF FULL EMPLOYMENT.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that I have received the following letter from the Leader of the Opposition:—

“Leader of the Opposition,
“Parliament House,
“Brisbane.
“3 March, 1958.

“The Hon. A. R. Fletcher, M.L.A.,
“Speaker,
“Legislative Assembly,

“Parliament House,
“Brisbane.
“Dear Mr. Fletcher,

“In accordance with Standing Order 137, I beg to inform you that it is my intention, on Tuesday, 4 March, to move—

“That the House do now adjourn.”

“My reason for moving this motion is that I desire to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, as follows:—

“1. The very urgent necessity for a full and immediate discussion by this Parliament of the present grave unemployment situation in Queensland, whereby the percentage of unemployed in the State's work force has increased from 1.4 per cent. at the end of September, 1957, to 3.5 per cent. at the end of January, 1958.

“2. The failure of the Government to provide any substantial correctives for the gradually worsening unemployment position in the State.

“Yours faithfully,
“(Sgd.) L. A. Wood.”

Not fewer than five members having risen in their places in support of the motion—

Mr. WOOD (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) (11.57 a.m.): I move—

“That the House do now adjourn.”

I charge the Government with having failed dismally to honour their election promises to the people to maintain economic stability and full employment.

Right from the Government's accession to office in August last year there has been a gradual worsening of the lot of the workers until today the unemployment position has reached alarming proportions.

At last the Premier is prepared to concede that the position is serious, and the Federal Minister for Labour (Mr. Holt), who was so optimistic about the situation when speaking in the Federal House on the Budget debate on 12 September last, is also taking a serious view of the position.

As the unemployment situation progressively deteriorated since last August we first found the Premier and his colleagues attributing it entirely to the normal seasonal decline. Then we found them attributing it to the drought. Admittedly both of these factors had a big bearing on it, but would it not be true to say that the overall situation is largely due to the restriction of credit? And this is the policy of the people the Deputy Premier, the Hon. K. J. Morris, referred to in his policy speech as “our friends in the Menzies-Fadden Government.”

Worse than this is the apparent complete incapacity of the State Government to handle the situation. Might I recall to the House some of the rosy promises contained in the word pictures of the Deputy Premier when giving his election policy speech on behalf of

the Liberal Party? Here are some of his rhetorical flourishes when seeking the votes of the people—

“I would like you all to look at the glowing vista of development that lies ahead of Queensland. What can and must be achieved adds up to a most exhilarating story. Just think of the unexploited resources of the North and North-West, the glittering mineral wealth awaiting transformation into prosperity for all. It is a vision splendid that should inspire every Queenslander. This great State is waiting for its opportunity, an era of development which will create more and more jobs, an era of development which will create more prosperity, and higher living standards.”

I draw particular attention to the following statement—

“Indeed, given the development that we are determined to see, it won't be a matter of finding jobs for men but finding all the men for all the jobs. We pledge ourselves to maintain the 40-hour week, in fact, we recognise that the working week will, in the course of time, be shortened.”

That is the picture painted by the Deputy Premier, in the City Hall on 2 July last. What do we find today? Instead of the Government's looking for men to fill all the jobs which the Deputy Premier was going to produce, we find unemployment has more than trebled since the Government took office. A conservative estimate is that there are more than 20,000 out of work. The Deputy Premier promised that eventually the working week would be shortened. The Government can certainly say something has been done in this direction, because the working week has been abolished for 20,000 or more workers. This army of men is on the dole. The Government have been so busy legislating for higher rents to satisfy the cupidity of landlords that they have failed to take due note of the deteriorating employment position in Queensland. The result is that now, just as rentals are being increased by 20 per cent. and a lot more, tenants find themselves unemployed and unable to meet any rental at all. Will the Deputy Premier now re-invite these unemployed workers to join him in looking down his “glowing vista of development that lies ahead of Queensland.”? I think not. The glow, the glitter and the glamour have long since vanished from Tory election promises, showing what they were—the windy talk of political salesmen. I recall that during the election campaign the Premier wrote the following words which appeared in Brisbane “Truth”—

“We most certainly won't interfere in any way with the benefits enjoyed by the workers today. Such a suggestion is ludicrous and is just one of the snarls from the Labour faction, and is as silly as most of their machine-made election talk.”

The Premier will probably tell us today that the Government have not interfered with any

benefits enjoyed by the workers. But, I ask, what have the Government done to protect the basic thing in the worker's life—his employment? Or do not the Government think that this is their function? We look for something much more positive than non-interference in the beneficial conditions enjoyed by the workers. It is for their sins of omission in respect of unemployment that we condemn this Government. Beyond seeking further money from the Australian Loan Council the Government have done precisely nothing. The present stop-gap plans for utilising the additional £1,788,000 allocated by the Loan Council will not produce anything but a temporary and restricted palliative. Nor will the injection of a further paltry £15,000,000 credit into the economy by the Central Bank make any great improvement, a fact which is readily admitted by the spokesmen for big business organisations.

The Prime Minister, as reported in today's “Courier-Mail” in an article headed, “Jobless ‘scare’”, proved how much he has lost touch with problems. His statement is on the lines of the pronouncement he made that there was no housing problem in Australia. When speaking on behalf of the Liberal candidate in a by-election, he said—

“Labour Party talk of unemployment in Australia was ‘psychological warfare.’ Beware of it.”

The article continues—

“Mr. Menzies said the great thing Australia had to fear was fear itself.”

Hon. members of the Australian Labour Party are concerned about the fear of those people who are already in the swelling ranks of the unemployed, and the anxiety of those who can see the indications that they may quite easily join this force.

Let me state quite clearly the attitude of hon. members of the Australian Labour Party. No-one with a degree of common sense would want a depression or would take action that would create a depression, but to evade this issue of unemployment is cowardice, and to paint the picture as being anything other than the one that exists is deception. Hon. members of the Australian Labour Party wish to be neither cowardly nor deceitful. If as a result of this discussion the Government can be spurred to take steps to provide jobs for those men who are now without them, our purpose will have been served. We would be just as happy to see this solution as the men on whose behalf we are stating this case.

Mr. Menzies went on to say—

“The economy is immeasurably sounder in every way today than it was 30 years ago in the last depression.”

What a yardstick by which the Prime Minister measures the economic standards of any country! Surely he can find a better yardstick than the last depression. The contention of the Australian Labour Party is that the economy of this country should be

so buoyant that there should be no unemployment but unfortunately credit restrictions are exercised and relaxed in such a way that unemployment is constricted or relaxed at the whim of the Central Government in Canberra. In Australia's state of buoyancy in trade, of which Mr. Menzies speaks, there is no need for unemployment. There should be work for any man who is willing to work.

There are two very serious and distressing features about the present unemployment situation which should earn the lively and practical interest of the Government. These relate to the predicament of apprentices just coming out of their time, and teenagers looking for their first jobs. There was 21,000 of them this year.

In regard to young men just finished their apprenticeship—some are working as dish-washers in cafes and cleaners in city buildings. I personally know several who are unable to obtain employment in the trades for which they were trained. Is that not a rather odd phenomenon, when the Government professedly placed such emphasis on the output of technical men who have the know-how demanded by highly mechanised industry of today.

What is happening to the youths who came onto the labour market this year? I am certain every hon. member knows of boys of good character who have done their training and cannot obtain a job. How much promising material is being lost because of their failure to find employment as apprentices in their chosen trades?

The Courier-Mail reported on 29 January that there had been 140 applicants for 10 apprenticeships at one engineering shop and 100 for 15 vacancies at another. Work must be found for these young people, primarily for their own sakes, and secondly, for the sake of the State. The Government have been making a great play of their committee to investigate juvenile delinquency. One would think they were pioneering such research. However, the libraries are replete with books by world-known sociologists who have spent decades in investigating the causes of juvenile delinquency. I can hardly imagine that the investigation by a coterie of political neophytes will add to the information available. If the Government were to study world findings on the major causes of delinquency they would find that ranking high among them was unemployment. At this moment the Government have the opportunity, and the duty, to arrest incipient delinquency by setting out to provide work for the young people who came on the labour market this year. Like many others, on the broad issue of unemployment, I am quite convinced that the figures issued by the statisticians are a very poor index of the actual position. The latest figures for Queensland issued by the Federal Labour Minister (Mr. Holt) show that at the end of January, 10,215 persons were receiving unemployment relief. This represents an increase of 2,415

in a month. However, in one month the number of Queenslanders registered for jobs with the Commonwealth Employment Service rose by 4,086 to 19,797. The statement containing these figures was issued by the Federal Minister on 19 February, yet when the Trades and Labour Council in Brisbane reported only a week earlier that there were at least 20,000 out of work in Queensland, anti-Labour political circles professed to believe that this was a gross over-statement. Now we have the official declaration that the registered unemployed here number only 200 fewer than 20,000.

(Time expired.)

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (12.13 p.m.): In supporting the motion—

Mr. AIKENS: Mr. Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I understand that some of the Whips have been running to you with a list of speakers to be called in this debate. I belong to none of the three major political parties and I inform you now that I would like to participate in the debate. I do not think a debate like this should follow party lines.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member can rest assured that his rights in this Parliament will be properly guarded.

Mr. LLOYD: This motion is a very important one for the whole of the people of Queensland. It has become obvious over the last few months that people in industry and working people have to a great extent lost confidence in the present Cabinet as very little has been done by it to alleviate the position in any way. The Cabinet have led the people to believe that the unemployment is the result of the existing drought. Unemployment was prevalent long before there was a drought. Far from doing anything to grapple with the question, the Cabinet have in fact aggravated it. Several incompetents in the Cabinet have done much to aggravate the position. This morning notice was given of a question directed to the Minister for Agriculture and Stock which shows that action is contemplated to make a ghost town of a small country centre. Although not more than 50 or 60 people will be thrown out of work, it will have a snow-balling effect on the whole of the economy of that small area. The same conditions are arising in many other phases of industry. However, although the Minister for Labour and Industry is confronted with an emergency arising from unemployment, he is taking a tour to London on a job that could be done more competently by the Agent-General for Queensland in London. As a matter of fact, it is quite probable that people here who are interested in the expansion of industry would prefer that the Minister should remain here because they fear that he may damage the case that is to be presented in London. I am quite sure that the Agent-General could cope more adequately than the Minister for Labour and Industry with the job of attracting finance to Queensland.

The Government cannot hope to overcome the problem of unemployment merely by a theoretical approach. The building industry of any country gives a good indication of its prosperity, and in Queensland there has been a very serious decline in the number of people engaged in the building industry; there has been a reduction of 2,500 employees in the last nine months. That is a very serious matter, and it cannot be overcome by the approach that is being made by the Government. During the debate on legislation that was introduced earlier in the session, they said that it would result in the building of large numbers of flats and homes for rental, and would be an incentive to private industry to embark on large construction works. The Treasurer, too, has said that the guaranteeing of bank overdrafts for co-operative building societies would result in greater employment of people in the building industry. I am not saying that it will not, but let us examine the matter seriously. This is an immediate problem; its solution cannot be allowed to wait for another 12 months or two years. Unless the Government are prepared to do something that will encourage private industry to embark on a greater building programme than we have at present, unemployment will not be relieved.

Even while the Government speak glibly about developing the State, there is a drift from the country areas to Brisbane. Men who previously were employed in country areas are leaving their families there and coming to Brisbane, where they are placing themselves at the mercy of the Government in getting employment and housing for themselves and their families. Young people who have only recently left school cannot find employment and are enlisting in the armed services. You have only to go to the Commonwealth Employment Office any day of the week to see people trying to register for employment. So great are the numbers that many of them are unable to register at the first attempt and have to call again the next day.

It has been said that in the past our Party has supported the principle of three weeks' annual leave. It is in times such as these, when there is greater mechanisation in industry and increased production with less labour, that we should make at least some attempt to reduce the working hours. It is our opinion that the reduction of working hours consequent upon the introduction of three weeks' annual leave would, in some measure at least, relieve unemployment. It would cost the State very little compared with recent basic wage increases because of the high prices of commodities or with the increases that will stem from the economic theorist attitude of increasing rentals. To say that an increase of 2s. a week in the basic wage will cause further unemployment is ridiculous. Increased numbers can be employed in industry by granting a small advantage to

the workers. Quite possibly, many other measures will be brought into the House that will further increase the basic wage and cause further deterioration in the social welfare and daily living of the working people of the State.

The Government by their attitude have shown that they do not intend taking immediate precautions but rather that they will contrive to follow along the lines dictated to them by their colleagues in the Federal Parliament where finance has been restricted to such an extent on housing loans that people are unable to embark on housing plans.

Interest rates, of which the Treasurer himself spoke some years ago, have so increased that they are creating unemployment. The restriction was introduced, or allowed to be carried on, by the present Federal Government as an anti-inflationary measure but it is now creating unemployment and we oppose it, as every person in the community would. The increase in interest rates is becoming more apparent every day. We note the unlimited operations of finance companies in hire-purchase trading, offering to the public interest rates as high as 10 per cent. on loans. Such manipulation of finance must be in competition with government services, whether local, State, or Federal Government. There must be competition for the money available to the Government and in the end it must create unemployment. Higher interest rates do not bring about greater productivity. There is productivity in the original manufacture of the goods made for sale but not in the subsequent manipulation of finance by the finance companies or the trading banks. The Central Bank will be allowing the trading banks to make available to the public £15,000,000, some of which will be absorbed by small industries, primary producers and others, but what employment will be offered to the people, particularly in Queensland?

(Time expired.)

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Premier) (12.23 p.m.): I have listened with a great deal of interest to the Leader of the Opposition and his Deputy in the hope that I might get some constructive suggestion to deal with the problem on which the motion is based, but I am grievously disappointed because not one has been put forward. Instead we have heard a tirade against the Government and many wild statements that cannot be substantiated. Instead of doing anything real to meet the problem the Leader of the Opposition and his Deputy have done the State a grave disservice.

The Leader of the Opposition speaks of the very urgent necessity for a full and immediate discussion by this Parliament of the present grave unemployment situation in Queensland. Realising the problem we have to face, the Government would be prepared to have discussion on a basis that would do

something real but, instead of giving a suggestion for attacking the problem, the Leader of the Opposition immediately launched an attack and charged the Government with inefficiency, with ineffectiveness and with the restriction of credit and other actions over which we have no control. The motion is not designed to deal with unemployment at all. Its object is obviously to attempt to embarrass the Government. (Opposition laughter.)

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. NICKLIN: The Leader of the Opposition is attempting to create a scare on unemployment and his action is as contemptible as it is subversive of the State's and the nation's economy.

By attempting to break down the confidence of the community the Leader of the Opposition is making a major contribution towards increasing unemployment in Queensland, not decreasing it. This is not the time for talking the way the hon. member is talking. We should all be endeavouring to tackle the problem as the Government are tackling it, along realistic lines. For mere political gain, not for any concern for the welfare of the workers of the State without jobs, the Leader of the Opposition attempts to magnify out of all proportion the unemployment position in Queensland. I say more in sorrow than in anger that he does his office little honour and himself less in substituting fiction for truth. It is only in keeping with the campaign he has been following in the parliamentary recess when he has been indulging in the same sabotage in his own electorate and in the Toowoomba district. There is no doubt in my mind that this is not any real attempt to help solve the problem facing us at the present time but mere political stunting in an endeavour to build up the failing political prestige of his own party.

Let us have a look at the second matter, "The failure of the Government to provide any substantial correctives for the gradual worsening unemployment position in the State." The hon. member for Kedron said that the Government had done nothing to attack the immediate problem. When we came into office we were faced with an immediate problem of 690-odd men sacked by the previous Government. They are in employment today.

Hon. V. C. GAIR: I rise to a point of order. The statement that 690 men in the railway service had been sacked by the previous Government is not in accordance with truth. The Premier, who has a reputation for veracity, might inform the House that all that had taken place before he became Premier was a recommendation from the Commissioner to the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works. My Cabinet had never discussed the matter.

Mr. NICKLIN: These men were facing unemployment. Today they are still working as a consequence of our action.

The Government have been in office only a comparatively short period but during that time they have done a great deal to stabilise affairs in the State. They have made a real attempt to deal with the problem of unemployment, not a sham attempt as has been made by the Leader of the Opposition today. We have faced realities. We do not want to make any political capital out of unemployment. We realise that the position has been greatly accentuated by the drought which we are still unfortunately experiencing. But not one single word did I hear from the Leader of the Opposition today about the effect of drought on employment in Queensland.

Mr. Burrows interjected.

Mr. NICKLIN: The hon. member was praying that there would be unemployment in Queensland so that he would have something to hang his political cap on. Immediately we were elected we took steps in Government departments to make the best use of the available money in the State. As a result we were able to put into effect a very extensive and realistic programme of governmental works from one end of Queensland to the other. The Main Roads Department, which will be dealt with later, is carrying out a very big programme of works. The Department of Public Works and all other departments are doing a very big job and are spending the maximum amount of money available. We approached the Loan Council with a case that did get results for this State. As a result of that Loan Council meeting Queensland got the second highest allocation of any State in the Commonwealth.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. NICKLIN: It has never been better in the history of the Loan Council. At the same time Queensland indicated to the Loan Council that while the State should do everything possible to assist in the unemployment position it was also the function of the business community and industry to assist to maintain employment. We emphasise the point that it is not the sole responsibility of the Government to maintain employment. Our Government are playing their part. In addition to that we have gained the confidence of industry, and industry is endeavouring to play its part in overcoming this problem. It is a pity that we do not get co-operation from hon. members opposite in this respect. Immediately we returned from the Loan Council meeting I made a public appeal to industry and the leaders of this State to come in behind the Government and capitalise on the shot in the arm to the economy of this State which was given by the extra money. We have done something real to tackle this problem. We are not crying Jeremiahs like hon. members opposite, nor do we endeavour to create a scare, thus preventing industry

from employing more people. We have done everything to encourage industry to employ more people.

Let us have a look at how we used the extra money we received as a result of our representations to the Loan Council. We have allocated £663,000 as additional debenture borrowings for local authorities, and for loans and subsidies £225,000, making a total of £888,000.

Mr. Walsh: They have not got the money yet.

Mr. NICKLIN: I point out that we have also arranged for the local authorities to raise that money. It is no use having an allocation unless you do something about it. The local authorities will get that money. It will result in greater employment throughout the State. This policy will have a tremendous impact on the unemployment position. We have given an additional £125,000 to the Main Roads Department to be used on works with the highest labour content. The Forestry Department is to be given £75,000, a major portion of which will be spent in providing employment. The Railway Department has been allocated £50,000. All of that will go to provide employment, and the amount will be split between the four divisions in the State.

In the field of housing, advances will be made to co-operative building societies and those societies are commencing to make a tremendous impact on the housing situation. The allocation under this heading is £100,000. £50,000 has been allocated to public works generally, making a total of governmental works of £400,000 and for local authorities £888,000. Is that not something real? Is that not action to deal with the problem? Of course it is. Hon. members opposite cry wolf and say that the Government are doing nothing. While hon. members opposite are talking, the Government are taking action along sound and practical lines, which will have an impact on this problem.

This important subject cannot be dealt with adequately in the available time, but as I said at the outset the Government, instead of crying to the community about unemployment and bad times, have done something to put a real shot in the arm of the economy of the State. We have encouraged industry to back us in our efforts and as a result we are coping with the problem of reducing the number of unemployed in Queensland. Recent figures show that there has been a substantial decrease in the number of unemployed workers. The problem is being tackled in a practical way. The Government are doing something real, in contrast to the Opposition's attempt to create in the community a lack of confidence, a feeling of panic, a feeling that we are ruined because unemployment has reached the level of 3.5 per cent. I can remember when unemployment amounted to 30 per cent. and an hon. member in the Federal Parliament, Mr. Cleary, stated that that was a sound, stable level of unemployment.

Hon. members opposite have introduced this motion not in an effort to make a real contribution to the solution of the problem, but in order to gain some mean political advantage.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona) (12.39 p.m.): I support the motion not for the reason stated by the Premier, but for the purpose of impressing on the Government the need to take some action to relieve unemployment.

I have no desire to embarrass the Government. They have been embarrassed by the actions of the Prime Minister and the Minister for Labour and Industry. The Leader of the Opposition has referred to the statement of the Deputy Premier that the Government would be looking for men to fill the jobs. If anyone has caused the Government any embarrassment, it is the Deputy Premier.

I am very concerned about the position. The figures given in the Press are not by any means correct. That there are 10,000 people drawing unemployment sustenance does not reveal the true position because it is necessary for a person making an application for sustenance to wait a number of weeks before he is eligible for it. Unemployment is on the increase despite the statements made by the Premier this morning. I have not seen anyone more uncomfortable in his defence of the actions of the Government than the Premier was today. He had no case to support his remarks; he could not reply to the charges made against the Government that they had shown no interest or desire to relieve the situation. Only the other day a cannery sought a number of men and we had the spectacle of thousands lining up looking for jobs. It is apparent to me that the Government are desirous of having a pool of unemployed. That has been the policy over the years of all anti-Labour Governments. Recently Archbishop Halse said that he did not approve of the idea of having a large army of unemployed to make men work harder. The Government should take notice of the remarks of that learned gentleman. I charge them with doing nothing to relieve the acute position. They forced Parliament to sit into the early hours of the morning on legislation affecting price control of commodities. That was bad enough for the man with money to buy the commodities, but what about the position of those out of work and unable to buy them? The Government also rushed into action worsening the position of the workers by an amendment of the Landlord and Tenant Act. It has been revealed that in some cases 65 per cent. increases in rents have been allowed. How is the unemployed man able to meet that position? People are being ejected and thrown onto the streets in greater numbers than ever before because of the actions of the Government. The Premier suggested that we might make suggestions which might assist them to find ways of alleviating the trouble. I suggest that one of the first things

they could do would be to stop creating highly paid positions in the Government service. A number of highly paid positions are being created while useful people who earn a living by the sweat of their brow are unable to get food and clothing. Another judge of the Supreme Court was appointed involving further expenditure. I consider this appointment unnecessary. A delegation headed by the Minister for Labour and Industry is to proceed overseas. He is charged with the responsibility of finding work for the unemployed and he should be here to look after them. Notwithstanding all he might try to do abroad nothing will be done and he will be unlikely to do anything to influence people to come to the State.

Mr. Hanlon: The Treasurer said that there was no investment capital available.

Mr. POWER: That is true. We do not want again to go back to the days of the issue of rations to the unemployed. We had the statement made by the Minister for Labour and Industry that there were numerous new companies being registered in Queensland. It was exploded by the Leader of the Opposition when he asked how many had actually started in the State. I have had numerous interviews with people seeking employment. Employees in the building industry have perhaps suffered greater than others in other spheres within the metropolitan area. I can only speak of that area as I have not had the opportunity of going to outside centres. Men in the building industry are being continually put out of work as well as clerical employees. The Premier and the Treasurer went south and were able to get a small handout from the Commonwealth Government but the position of local authorities has not been eased very much at all because they still have to raise the additional loan money. The Treasurer admitted that many loans had failed and local authorities have had difficulty in getting money to develop their areas.

Mr. Hiley interjected.

Mr. POWER: The mere fact that a further £15,000,000 has been released does not mean a thing. There are hundreds of millions of pounds today tied up and not being used for the development of Australia, and it is the responsibility of the Government and the Commonwealth Government to make money available so that the unemployed in the State can be found work.

Certain gentlemen are investigating child delinquency. Unemployment of our young people tends towards child delinquency. Many young people are finding it impossible to get employment. This did not happen in the days of Labour as there were more jobs available than people to occupy them. The position has deteriorated considerably and I repeat that the Government are concerned not with the workers of the State but with greedy landlords and leaders of industry.

The Government have shown in no uncertain manner their attitude to the workers by the elimination of price control and the amendment of the Landlord and Tenant Act. Living quite close to me are some age pensioners who will have to leave their home and live in institutions because of the actions of the Government. Surely it is no part of Christianity that some people should have money loaded onto them whilst others are unemployed and living in poverty. I charge the Government with doing nothing at all to relieve unemployment.

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (12.46 p.m.): I have listened very carefully to the submissions of hon. members opposite, who have charged us with doing nothing to relieve unemployment. The Premier has already replied to some of their statements, and I intend to give them a few more answers.

I charge hon. members opposite in turn with parading a difficulty and making no specific suggestions towards relieving it. We have just heard a heated tirade against the Government, but the only practical suggestion from the hon. member concerned was that we should do nothing about what he referred to as the tall poppies in the State Service, when many hundreds of people are unemployed.

An Opposition Member: Many thousands.

Mr. HILEY: Many thousands, if you like.

The hon. member's suggestion about tall poppies in the State Service is no answer to the problem.

Mr. Aikens: It has a very bad psychological effect.

Mr. HILEY: Acting in any other way would have a worse effect in the long run. Queensland has already hunted from its service too many competent people. That is something that happened because of the treatment that was meted out by hon. members opposite. We are quite firm in the view that key men demand a good reward for their services. It is time that the Government of Queensland recognised that fact.

We are charged with doing nothing to relieve unemployment. The whole of our case that was presented at the recent meeting of the Loan Council revolved round two points only: unemployment, and the extent to which drought had paralysed production in certain of our primary industries and had thus contributed to unemployment. So successful was the presentation of our case that we came back with the highest per capita grant in the Commonwealth.

The Government have been watching very closely world price trends that might possibly affect employment, apart altogether from the temporary spasms that arise through drought. We have every concern for the lower prices for metals and wool, which could eventually reduce employment and living

standards throughout Australia, no matter what Government are in power or what they might do. However, we do not regard falling prices as having yet reached the stage where they constitute the background of a general recession. As we see it, we have to combat a slight easing in world prices, which has been aggravated by the results of a bad local drought. For that temporary problem, we say we have been able to command what we regard as a sufficient short-term answer. We can see in it a pump-priming operation that will throw into circulation a sum of money capable of quick spending that will prop the position materially until the effects of the drought recede. I think it was the hon. member for Kedron who charged us with having restricted credit. There has been no restriction of credit by the Queensland Government. We have used all our resources.

Mr. Wood: His statement applied to the Federal Government.

Mr. HILEY: He did not make that clear.

Mr. Hanlon: Are you disowning Menzies and Fadden now?

Mr. HILEY: We cannot make those decisions. We urged the release of more credit and in fact there has been a release of more credit.

Mr. Hanlon: The Labour Party has been urging it for six or 12 months.

Mr. HILEY: We in Queensland are using all our resources. We have gone further. We have set out deliberately and consistently to help the local authorities and semi-governmental bodies raise the full programme to which they are entitled. I have listened to some stupid statements and calamity howling. Let me give the actual figures of what has already been raised. As at 4 March 1958 the local bodies of the State, the bodies that have an approved borrowing programme less than £100,000, had raised 98.1 per cent of their approved programme.

Mr. Walsh: What is the amount?

Mr. HILEY: I could not tell the hon. member that off hand but it is a substantial figure. Then let us take the semi-governmental bodies, who never attempt to raise their approved programme in one go—people like the State Electricity Commission, the Brisbane Council and the Southern Electric Authority, the three biggest single bodies in the semi-governmental field, who commonly raise their approved figure in two or three public loans raisings a year. Already, with only two-thirds of the year gone, the semi-governmental bodies have succeeded in raising 75.8 per cent of their approved programme.

Mr. Walsh: That includes all local authorities over £100,000.

Mr. HILEY: Exactly, and that is extremely good. I have no hesitation in saying that I can see quite clearly that at 30 June there will be none of the State's allocation of loan money going bad because bodies cannot take it up. We are watching it closely. If we see that any of the semi-governmental bodies will fail, we will transfer their money to other local authorities ready and willing to take it up. There will be no unused resources.

Mr. Walsh: How much has the Brisbane City Council raised of its approval to date?

Mr. HILEY: I could not tell the hon. member that but it is doing better than it did last year.

Mr. Walsh: It would want to.

Mr. HILEY: It would. It will still fall short of its programme. I will hold a conference at an early date in the course of which I will settle how much of the loan approval the Brisbane City Council will forgo so that other local authorities can take it up. There will be no wastage of approved loan money.

Mr. Walsh: We would be very pleased to see it raise it.

Mr. HILEY: On top of that, when the Loan Council gave us approval for another £663,000 we recognised that, if the money was to work and to work speedily in the direction it was intended, for the relief of unemployment, we had to get cracking quickly. So we cut out all the ordinary red tape of advertisement of intention and all the rest of it. Although only three weeks have passed since the Loan Council met, already men have been employed by some local authorities. They have all been given the green light and been told in round terms that the money to cover the £663,000 is assured. I made it my business to have that assured before the Central Bank announced that it was releasing another £15,000,000. So the £663,000 was assured even before that release of credit by the Central Bank.

Mr. Walsh: Give us another £50,000 for Bundaberg and we will show you how to spend it.

Mr. HILEY: If Bundaberg asks for it and has projects to show that it has a quick use for it, it will be considered. We cannot send out money to local authorities that have no plans prepared, no pockets of unemployment and no way of using it speedily.

As to housing let me throw in the teeth of those who criticise us and say that the total housing performance is going back—that it is quite true that there is a sag back but the great sag back is in commercial building. On the Government Statistician's figures as at December last, the houses completed in the first two quarters of the year totalled 3,860 whereas the figure for the

corresponding two quarters of the previous year was 3,789, so there has been no reduction in the total.

Mr. Mann: You cannot get a home at the Housing Commission.

Mr. HILEY: I shall throw it in the teeth of hon. members on both sides of the House: compared with even six months ago how many cases do hon. members now get of applicants with 100 points priority who are unsatisfied?

Mr. Mann: More.

Mr. HILEY: Nothing of the sort. I have been surprised and delighted at the extent to which we have run up on the housing position for people with 100 points of priority. In recent months I have written to many hon. members on both sides of the House to tell them that housing needs had been satisfied. I can assure hon. members that it is the conviction of the executive officers of the Housing Commission that we are running up so fast on the 100 points priority that it will not be long before we are down on the lower scales.

Mr. DONALD (Bremer) (12.56 p.m.): If the Premier was disappointed with the contribution made by the Leader of the Opposition when he moved the motion, I sincerely say that we were extremely disappointed with the Premier's contribution. He did not tell us just what the Government were doing to alleviate this serious position, and indeed the Treasurer went very little further.

Even if the Government are not entirely responsible for the unemployment at present existing in Queensland, they must accept responsibility for working for the return of the present Federal Government and the defeat of the previous Labour Government in the Commonwealth sphere, which it cannot be disputed did provide full employment. The present State Government have worked consistently not only for the return of a non-Labour Government in the national sphere, but for their maintenance there. Again it cannot be disputed that the present Federal Government have created unemployment, perhaps consciously and deliberately to aid the people whose interests they serve in the Federal House. Unemployment has increased under the present Commonwealth Government. Perhaps the best way to refer to the present unfortunate position is to speak of the many people to-day who have more dinner-times than they have dinners. Compare the present position where many people have more dinner-times than they have dinners with the satisfactory position that prevailed after World War II. when the Commonwealth Government were in the hands of the Australian Labour Party, a time of full employment and jobs went begging in all sections of the community. Compare the record of the Chifley and Curtin Government with that of the anti-Labour Government in office after World War I.

Compare the unemployment throughout Australia in the period after World War I, with the post-war period after World War II. under Labour administration. By putting Labour's policy into operation the then Commonwealth Government provided everyone in the Commonwealth with a useful job; everyone was gainfully employed and there was no unemployment. If the transition from war to peace could be successfully overcome by Labour administration so that tens of thousands of people who were members of the various fighting services of the nation could be taken from tasks of war and found useful employment, why is it not possible to find useful employment for everyone today? It is because the Liberal-Country Party in the Federal sphere, unaided by the Liberal-Country Party in the State sphere has been unable to provide employment for everyone, that this motion is moved. We do not do it to embarrass the Government because as the hon. member for Baroona has said, they have embarrassed themselves by the announcements of some of their Ministers and the promises they made when wooing the electors.

Mr. Speaker, the failure of the Government to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing for the people justifies the moving of the resolution. It is a severe indictment of both the Federal and State Governments. The workers have been appealed to again and again to work harder and produce more because that was the only way in which they could expect to prosper and improve their standard of living. They have worked harder; they have produced more; but unfortunately they have not prospered, nor have they improved their living standards. No one can truthfully claim that the people have more or better food, shelter or clothing—the three essentials in any society. The cost of food and clothing has increased steeply but unfortunately the same cannot be said of the quality. The present Government's legislation has increased the cost of shelter by anything from 40 per cent. to 60 per cent. That has been clearly indicated by the Press reports of landlords taking advantage of the legislation introduced at the beginning of this session. The quality of the food has also decreased as a result of legislation passed during the present session. Although the housing position is still far from satisfactory, we have the sorry spectacle of skilled building workers being unable to obtain employment. What a condemnation of our present system of society. People homeless, people wanting homes which they cannot obtain because they are out of employment. That applies to forestry workers, carpenters and joiners and artisans who should be employed in providing homes for the people. The mine-workers, in common with other workers throughout the Commonwealth, responded to the call for more production. They increased their production individually and collectively and have been rewarded with wholesale dismissals. We have been asked by the Premier and the Treasurer

what the alternative is; what suggestion have we to make? The introduction of diesel locomotives prompts the question of where we would get the fuel necessary for them. We are taking away the livelihood of many of our people and destroying the economy of our nation by importing fuel to drive locomotives instead of developing the coal-mining industry and producing oil from coal. Is not the solution to obtain oil from coal? It is not an impossible proposition; it is a practical one which, if put into operation, would provide employment for many people now out of work. It is a proposition that could be carried out if the Government were sincere. Again I condemn the Federal Government for their lack of endeavour to provide employment. It has been proved that it is possible to obtain oil from coal and shale in this country. There is no doubt about that. There are also many other by-products that would be profitable. The Government want to know what we have to offer besides criticism. The matters I have mentioned should have been obvious to the Government. That is one method of overcoming unemployment.

Unemployment in industry is to some degree due to mechanisation or automation. While those who own the machinery are making profits higher than ever before, the men who produce the wealth are thrown on the scrap-heap. If we are to manage or govern this country efficiently we must do it in an economic manner, by seeing that the economy of the individual, the State and the nation is not interfered with, and we cannot strengthen the economy of the nation by dismissing men and giving them the dole. Let us encourage scientific development so that we can produce what we need in abundance and so that all workers can be kept in employment.

That brings me to my next statement. I hate to have to mention it, but, at a time when the nation is crying out for scientists, there is not very far from this Chamber a young man who has obtained a degree of Bachelor of Science and who cannot obtain employment. That is another indication of the position. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned the fact that apprentices cannot obtain employment. This young man has obtained his degree of Bachelor of Science, but the Government cannot place him in employment.

(Time expired.)

Hon. E. EVANS (Mirani—Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads) (2.22 p.m.): I have listened very carefully to the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the hon. member for Baroona and the hon. member for Bremer. They have not made one suggestion as to how the problem could be overcome. It is known to all hon. members that the position is affected by conditions over which we have no control. Those conditions apply all over Australia. Hon. members opposite know that it applies in New South Wales. The Leader

of the Opposition quoted figures for unemployment. He realises that the position is almost as bad in New South Wales as in Queensland, but he knows also that the drought has broken in New South Wales.

The New South Wales unemployment figure is 2.7 per cent., but that State has not the seasonal industries of Queensland.

He also knows or should know, as hon. members opposite generally should know, that in North Queensland last season the crushing finished early in December. As the hon. member for Bremer has said, we endeavoured to become efficient. We endeavoured to crush our crop in the best period of the year when the sugar content was greatest, and virtually all the dismantling work was done prior to the end of the year. That is done if possible to avoid the monsoonal period. Hon. members generally know the position in North Queensland. Can anyone tell us how we are to stop the floods? They cannot be stopped. In running a business or a country, efforts must be made to get value for money. The high unemployment figure for Queensland is due firstly to the drought conditions in southern and western Queensland and also to the amount of work of a seasonal nature and secondly in North Queensland to the early cessation of crushing, and the amount of overhaul work that has been done prior to the monsoonal period. I venture to say that from one end of the sugar industry to the other not one outside man is being employed. It has been raining throughout January and February.

Mr. Thackeray: It is not raining in Rockhampton.

Mr. EVANS: I am referring to the sugar industry. I did not know that sugar cane was grown in Rockhampton.

Many of those employed in the sugar season go south when the season is over. Many do not want other work and do not look for it. Many earn enough in the season and do not want more work. Some earn well over £1,000. They want to live in Brisbane. Many of the seasonal employees do not apply for work but are registered among the unemployed.

An Opposition Member: They would not be registered.

Mr. EVANS: There is always unemployment in January, February and March, no matter what Government are in power, and every sensible member knows that. Let me deal with the departments under my control. The Government have afforded me the opportunity of doing everything possible to employ every available man. The former Premier knows that when we came into office in August last the State had reached the top of employment. We have endeavoured to hold that position. No doubt we have had our up periods and at times were down slightly. The reason that we have been down for short periods on our employment figure—and

the position will be remedied shortly—is because of the lack of plans and specifications. The former Government centralised. I have altered that position.

Mr. Wood: I have owner-drivers in my electorate who have not done a day's work since August last.

Mr. EVANS: We have let more jobs in Queensland this year than were let out last year, but I have been confined to letting out work where plans had been prepared. I make no secret of it that we cannot get draftsmen. The position in the Main Roads Department has been decentralised. Through the Main Roads Department I have written letters to every shire council and every consulting engineer in Queensland pleading with them to prepare plans and specifications to the requirements of the Main Roads Department, so that we can go ahead and spend more money. As hon. members probably know I consulted with my Cabinet colleagues to get further money. We got £450,000 from the Federal Government for the Mary Kathleen road.

Mr. Davies: Are you satisfied with the allocation from the Commonwealth Government?

Mr. EVANS: I am not prepared to say I am satisfied but I am saying that we are doing everything possible under the circumstances to give employment and we are spending more money and employing more men than were employed previously.

Mr. Hanlon: Even those employed need more money since you came into power. You set about abolishing price control and rent control, hitting the employed, but what are you going to do about the unemployed?

Mr. EVANS: The Opposition have said what Labour will do. I shall tell the House what Labour will do. On every occasion we have nailed the Australian Labour Party it has said, "The Gair Government never told us about that." Hon. members opposite shuffle but they were members of the Government and did not know where they were going because they did not know what their Government were doing. That Party comes along now and tells us what we should do but its members have not given one constructive suggestion. Can they tell us how we can control droughts? Will they deny that there has been a drought in western and south-eastern Queensland? Will they deny that there is still a drought existing? Will they deny that drought creates unemployment, that goods are not coming forward as they are not being produced? Will they deny that money is not percolating because it is not being earned? Of course they cannot deny those things. All the hon. member for Baroona can do is to put the whole of the blame onto price fixing. I think that we should get Mr. Fullagar to assist the hon. member in preparing his case.

Mr. Power: I know what you will do with him if you get a chance.

Mr. EVANS: I will do it openly.

The Department of Main Roads has spent as much money as it possibly can with the plant that it has available. I am consistently pressing consulting engineers and local authority engineers to prepare plans for work with first, second and third priorities, so that we can make more jobs available. When I took over the portfolio of Minister for Main Roads there was only £419 in the Treasury for main roads work. Almost every month the Main Roads fund at the Treasury is over-drawn because of my efforts to give as much employment as possible with the money at my disposal. During the two years immediately prior to my taking over the portfolio of Minister for Main Roads, the Main Roads Fund had a surplus of £500,000 in the Treasury. In spite of the present lack of funds, however, we are holding employment at its peak.

The hon. member for Bremer knows as well as I what has happened in the coal-mining industry. Although markets have fallen considerably there has not been much falling off in employment. In 1956 there were 3,603 employees in the coal industry, and notwithstanding the considerable falling off in markets and a number of retirements, the number at present in employment is 3,406.

Mr. Houston: What about the increase in population?

Mr. EVANS: I am talking about the amount of coal that we can sell. If the hon. member for Bulimba can find more markets for our coal, I shall be very happy to hear of them.

(Time expired.)

Mr. HANLON (Ithaca) (2.30 p.m.): The Premier has charged members of the Australian Labour Party with trying to create a fear complex among the people of the State and a lack of confidence in industry. If there is any fear complex or lack of confidence in industry, it has been brought about by the tragic combination of a Tory Government in Queensland and a Tory Government in Canberra. It is all very well for the Premier to say that he can do nothing to relieve unemployment, but it is very fortunate that for 25 years there has not been a combination of a Tory Government in Queensland and a Tory Government in Canberra. What have we now?

On the one hand we have a Federal Government who either refuse bluntly or are too timid to release in the community enough money to take up the serious lag in employment on the grounds that it would cause another inflationary spiral, which, for some reason known only to themselves, they claim credit for having stopped in the last few years. On the other hand we have a State Government who, in six months of office, have

introduced legislation that will make rents and prices soar and that will combat any good that might have been done by the Menzies-Fadden Government in curbing inflation.

The Premier will say quite innocently, "What can we do?" What has he done? As I interjected when the Minister for Mines was speaking a few minutes ago, the Government by their actions have made conditions for the employed, let alone the unemployed, twice as difficult as they were previously. Only this morning we read in the Press that rents have been increased by from 40 to 60 per cent. following the legislation that was introduced by the Minister for Justice in the earlier part of the session. Yet the Premier says, "What have we done?" The English novelist, Graham Greene, referred to innocence as a dumb leper wandering the world without his bell and meaning harm to no one. The Premier this morning in his pitiful display of innocence could be aptly described in similar fashion.

Let us consider briefly the release of £15,000,000 to the trading banks from the special accounts of the Commonwealth Bank. Much has been made of it by the Menzies-Fadden Government as something wonderful that they are doing for the country. How long have Dr. Evatt and other prominent members of the Australian Labour Party been urging that money be released from those accounts to relieve unemployment and to infuse a little confidence into industry, as the Premier described it? Let us not be over impressed by the announcement that £15,000,000 has been released by the Central Bank. In the six months from October, 1956 to April, 1957, far from any moneys being released by the Central Bank to the trading banks from those special accounts, a total of £85,000,000 was called up by the Central Bank under the direction of the Menzies-Fadden Government. In the corresponding period from October, 1957 to April, 1958, with only two months to go, there has been a belated release of £15,000,000 from the Central Bank. So instead of in 1956-57 a draining off of £85,000,000 from the community into those special accounts there has been a releasing of £15,000,000, or in other words an infusion into the economy of about £100,000,000 in effect. Yet figures quoted by the Leader of the Opposition and by his Deputy show that the employment position has deteriorated alarmingly over the period. What is the use of the Premier saying we are trying to make political capital out of this matter and that we are trying to infuse a lack of confidence or a false sense of fear into the community? Heaven knows if we on this side of the House could only infuse a little fear into the ranks of the Cabinet Ministers we should be doing something for the unemployed and for industry.

It was claimed the golden era of prosperity would follow the amalgamation of a State Tory Government and a Federal Tory Government but they are the ones responsible

for the unfortunate circumstances in which the unemployed find themselves today. The release of £15,000,000 from special accounts over six States among eight trading banks will be only a drop in the ocean compared with the amount really needed to stimulate the economy and combat unemployment. It is so ludicrous that one wonders at the members of the Country-Liberal Party attempting to put it forward.

It was rather amazing that the announcement by the Central Bank of the release of £15,000,000 credit from the special accounts came only last Friday, I think it was, which was the day following the adjournment of the Federal House on the motion of Dr. Evatt, the Leader of the Australian Labour Party, on this very question, and two days preceding a special conference called by the Labour Premier of New South Wales, Mr. Cahill, on housing. It is even more significant that the scions of the trading banks said they had no knowledge at all of the release of the £15,000,000. If they have not yet been made aware of it except through the Press, we can well imagine how long it will take for it to be infused into the economy. Last December Dr. Coombes, the Governor of the Commonwealth Bank, told Australia that there was going to be a little easing of credit but the first sign we have had of it from the Menzies-Fadden Government is this £15,000,000 now being released through the Central Bank.

The Premier this morning more or less conceded that the Opposition were justified in raising this matter when he said that he would not at all mind a discussion on unemployment as long as something constructive was put forward. It is interesting to recall that for the first time in 25 years it has been necessary for a Leader of the Opposition to move the adjournment of the House on the subject of unemployment. Have a look at the arithmetic of it and you will find that 25 years ago was 1932, the culmination of the tragic Moore Government in Queensland.

The Leader of the Opposition pointed out the fall in the number of people engaged in the building industry in Queensland. He gave figures for Queensland. The figures for Australia are even more alarming because in the past year the number of employees in the building industry has fallen from 212,000 to 119,400. If the Premier says that it is a satisfactory state of affairs in housing and employment we find it very difficult to follow his arithmetic.

Hon. K. J. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Labour and Industry) (2.42 p.m.): It is very interesting to note that in the 1½ hours of the debate the Government have answered so effectively the comments that have been made by Opposition members that the attack has already swung from the State Government to the Federal Government. I have no doubt that in the next hour it probably will swing to 25 years ago.

An adjournment motion on a matter of urgent importance is always an action to be treated seriously. That the Government have treated it very seriously has been proved by the fact that already from this side the Premier, and the Treasurer, who accompanied him to the recent very successful Loan Council meeting, have spoken. The Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads has explained the very definite action taken by his department in this grave problem facing us.

The point I wish to make is that if the responsibility is on the Government to face up to an adjournment motion in all seriousness, as we have done, so too there is a responsibility on the Leader of the Opposition and his Deputy to conduct the debate as seriously as the Government have done. I was very disappointed to note that even in the opening remarks of the Leader of the Opposition he made a statement the very implication of which was completely untrue—and he knows it. He said that at last the Premier is prepared to admit that the unemployment situation is serious. I am paraphrasing his words but that is the sense of what was said by the Leader of the Opposition. I remind hon. members opposite that during the election campaign in July and August the Premier went to no end of trouble to point out the serious situation that Queensland was facing as a result of the maladministration of the Gair Government. All hon. members should have known how serious the situation was in July and August last year. I wish to quote from a speech made by the ex-Treasurer on 19 March that year, i.e. 1957. Although members of the official Opposition do not own the hon. member now, they supported him then. This is what he said—

“I might say for the information of hon. members that in addition to the 400 building workers about to be dismissed, since 1 July last it has been necessary, owing to the shortage of funds, to effect the following reductions in the number of Crown employees:—

Forestry	416
Irrigation	508
Public Works	300
Railway Department	500”

That shows a total of over 1,700 workers which the Government were in the process of dismissing on 19 March last year. The State was faced with a serious unemployment situation. As a matter of fact, had the administration of the Gair-Walsh hierarchy continued we would have faced an unemployment situation infinitely greater than this State had experienced for many long years. Fortunately, as a result of the election, we were able to form a Government which were prepared to recognise those problems and take positive action to overcome them.

Mr. Gair: What have you done?

Mr. MORRIS: Although we have been the Government for only six months, the hon. the Premier and the Treasurer, owing to their capacity and ability to present a case infinitely better than the hon. member for South Brisbane and his Treasurer were able to do, were able to convince not only the Federal authorities but the other State authorities that Queensland had been badly served in years gone by. That was due to the inability of the hon. member for South Brisbane and his Treasurer to present the case for Queensland.

Mr. Gair interjected.

Mr. MORRIS: The hon. member who interjects was one of those who were primarily responsible for the fact that no decent case was presented on behalf of Queensland for many years. My colleague, the Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads, has stated that he is using every penny available in providing employment throughout the length and breadth of Queensland. The only lag is in waiting for prepared plans for further expenditure. My colleague the Minister for Education will show hon. members, I have no doubt, how in his particular field the problem of unemployment is being met very successfully.

When hon. members opposite refer facetiously to glowing vistas of development, I should say they are doing nothing but a disservice to the State.

Mr. Hanlon: You were the biggest knocker of Queensland in history when you were on this side of the House.

Mr. MORRIS: If that is true, I shall when I finish my speech take off the belt and hand it to hon. members opposite. They are supreme as knockers of Queensland.

The Government recognise that the development of Queensland must be done in two parts, the first a short-term part and the second a long-term part. They have demonstrated not only to hon. members opposite who themselves failed in the matter, but have demonstrated also to the people of Queensland as a whole that by presenting a good case Queensland has received the second highest allocation of any State in Australia.

That money is already being used to provide employment on a short-term basis, but the Government are considering long-term development, and plans for long-term development are manifold. It is quite impossible in the time available to me to mention the plans that exist. It should be known to virtually everyone that plans have already been made by the Government for long-term development in all parts of the State, plans that will be made public in the very near future.

(Time expired.)

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (2.53 p.m.): It is quite true, as the Premier said, that there has been quite a lot of political stunting in this debate. Unfortunately the political stunting has come from both sides

of the House. I do not indulge in political stunting. In this debate I am concerned only with the deplorable unemployment condition that exists in North Queensland today. We have heard from the Ministerial bench that unemployment in Queensland, and particularly North Queensland, is the result of the drought and the floods. I throw that statement back in the teeth of those who made it. Being a North Queenslander by residence, I know that in the last 20 years we have had bigger droughts and worse floods, but we have never had the amount of unemployment there that we have today.

Mr. Gair: You had a bigger drought in 1951.

Mr. AIKENS: And we had the father of all floods in 1946, but we did not have the unemployment that exists in Townsville today and throughout North Queensland. Statements that all the men out of employment in North Queensland are seasonal workers are just not true, because many of those out of work in Townsville and in North Queensland are tradesmen, and jolly good tradesmen at that.

It was said by the Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads that many men in seasonal industries in North Queensland did not register for employment or did not seek employment in the slack season and consequently we cannot take notice of the particulars issued by the Department of Social Services for those who are registered as receiving employment benefits. I sincerely hope that it was not said by design. The Minister should know better. If he does not, I tell him that before unemployment benefits can be obtained from the Department of Social Services the men must register for employment. Every man who is receiving unemployment benefits is registered for employment, but cannot get it.

I realised what was coming in North Queensland. On 14 November last I asked the Premier this question—

“Is he aware that it is estimated that there will be 2,000 unemployed in North Queensland at the end of this year? If so, has the Government any plans to relieve the distress thus caused, and what are they?”

I have not the opportunity or the time at my disposal to read all that the Premier said but I want to say that all he said in reply to my question was published in the northern papers and that the northern people were very happy with the Premier's assurance that everything was being done to meet the threatened unemployment in North Queensland at the end of last year. They are not at all pleased now; they are disillusioned and disappointed. I came straight down here from North Queensland arriving only this morning and anything I tell the House about North Queensland is first-hand knowledge. It is not second-hand knowledge got from

stooges and pimps. I live in the North and what I say about North Queensland is the truth.

Mr. Walsh: You did not get it from Hemenstall.

Mr. AIKENS: Nor Perrott, either. I get my knowledge from my own observations. The Premier said today “We have done something real and tangible to relieve the distress caused by unemployment and to relieve unemployment.” I challenge him to tell me one thing he has done for North Queensland in the last two or three months to relieve unemployment. It is true that the Government authorised the Townsville City Council to borrow £20,000 to start the Belgian Gardens sewerage scheme. If the Council runs true to form they will end up by letting a contract and the contractor will make £10,000 cop for himself, and spend £9,000 on machinery and £1,000 in wages. That is their whole contribution to the relief of unemployment in Townsville and the Townsville area. Let us be honest with ourselves. The real reason for the unemployment in North Queensland is the lack of foresight, vision and courage on the part of past Governments and on the part of the present Government. Time after time in the 14 years I have been a member of this Assembly I have hammered or tried to hammer into the minds of hon. members the need for the establishment of secondary industries in North Queensland to process and manufacture the great wealth of primary products produced there. Yet we have heard from the Agent-General and from men who should know better that North Queensland should do the producing and continue in the role of a wood and water joey for not only factories in Southern Queensland but the whole of Australia and the world. They say that we should be content to till the soil, garner the crops, and ship the produce to Southern manufacturing centres or even to the four corners of the world to be manufactured. The Government want a constructive suggestion—the one I offer will not immediately do something to relieve the position in North Queensland. I remind the Minister for Labour and Industry and the Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads and others who sided with me when the former Government were in power that I urged and advocated that secondary industries be established in North Queensland. Now that they are the Government I hope they will not forget what they said in support of my arguments.

Mr. Morris interjected.

Mr. AIKENS: The Minister for Labour and Industry says that he will do all he can to bring industries into North Queensland but I assure him that words alone will not bring industries into North Queensland. The only thing that will bring secondary industries to North Queensland is actual, concrete and tangible help in having them

established there. The Government will have to unlock their coffers and make money available to help in the establishment of industries in the North. In addition, at least during the formative years of those industries, the Government will have to give them all the concessions they need, in transport and in every other direction.

While North Queensland is purely and simply a primary-producing part of the State, as it is now and as it looks destined to remain unless we in the North can ourselves do something about it, there will be recurrent seasonal unemployment. It is quite true that formerly, when the hon. member for South Brisbane and the late Mr. Hanlon and the late Mr. Cooper filled the office of Premier, a fair amount of money was made available in actual cash at the end of the crushing season for the reconditioning of railway lines, the performance of main roads works, and various other jobs that carried the seasonal worker through from the end of one crushing and meat season to the beginning of the next. But for some reason that has not been clearly disclosed to the House—although the hon. member for Ithaca touched on it—the money fountain has dried up and the Government either has not or is not able to get money to carry the seasonal worker in the North from the end of one season to the beginning of the next.

I remind the Government, of course, that the carrying over of the seasonal worker from the end of one season to the start of the next is merely a palliative. The real solution of the problem lies with the Government. They cheered me until their false teeth fell out time and time again when I attacked the Gair Government on their failure to establish secondary industries in North Queensland. We shall see what they intend to do now that they are the Government. The people of North Queensland have said, "The Government have been in office for only six months and they have struck first a drought and then a flood." However, we do not intend to allow the Government to hide behind a minor flood and a minor drought, which is all that we had in North Queensland.

(Time expired.)

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane) (3.3 p.m.): I have listened with great interest to the debate on this all-important subject of the deterioration in employment in Queensland. It is something that is of vital importance to the people of the State, and indeed to the people of Australia.

I have figures here that are undeniable proof of the great deterioration in employment that has taken place during the last six months. However, as members of the Government have been prepared to admit that there has been a deterioration, I do not propose to take up all my time by quoting the figures.

In all charity, I have never listened to a more pathetic defence than that of the Leader of the Government and members of his

Ministry on the motion, which has been put forward to enable the House to discuss this very vital matter of unemployment. Had the Premier and his Ministers never sat on this side of the Chamber and were their speeches not reported in "Hansard", I could have understood their adopting the attitude, "We are doing the best that is possible under the circumstances." But the pages of "Hansard" reveal that they consistently attacked previous Governments because of their inability to find enough money to proceed with projects or to finish jobs already in progress. When on repeated occasions I, accompanied by my Treasurer, returned from Loan Council meetings and Premiers' Conferences and reported the attitude of the Commonwealth Government to Queensland in particular and to the projects we had in hand, what sympathy did we receive from the Nicklins, the Morrises, the Evanses and others then occupying the Opposition benches? We were invariably charged with making a political football of the question. I repeatedly warned not merely the House but the State generally of the Government's inability to maintain full employment unless the Commonwealth Government recognised their obligation to provide the money to carry out essential works and to keep men and women in employment in the State.

The Minister for Labour and Industry made a great deal of the fact that the present Treasurer was more successful at the recent Loan Council meeting than the former Treasurer and I were when we represented the previous Government. That is undeniably true. Hon. members know it, as everybody else in the community knows it, because there were so many Press statements given out before the Loan Council meeting that they would do better. No-one was surprised when, for the first time since the election of the Menzies-Fadden Government the States were given an additional loan allocation in the middle of the financial year.

Mr. Morris: We put our case well.

Mr. GAIR: The Deputy Premier wants to say he puts his case. I thought he might have argued that we should have taken down some pineapples, as the Premier did, and fed them to the members of the Loan Council to achieve the result that they did. The present Treasurer on one occasion said that we should have used smoother words to get a greater result. It is to be concluded from that that the Prime Minister and the Treasurer and the Treasury officers in Canberra will turn their backs on facts because they do not like the political colour or stature of me or Walsh or Hanlon or anyone else who represents the people of the State at Loan Council meetings and Premiers' Conferences?

The Premier and the Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads said that the position was entirely due to the drought. What a feeble argument! If they are true to themselves they will know very well that that is not so. In 1951 we had a more disastrous drought than the one through which

we are now passing, for it involved the great sugar industry and caused a great deal of unemployment; but there was no increase in the figures of unemployment in 1951 due to the drought because the State Government of which I had the pleasure of being a member was equal to the task of seeing that full employment was maintained. How were successive Labour Governments able to hold off the evil of unemployment? It was no thanks to the Menzies-Fadden Government and no thanks to the Nicklins and Morris. It was because of the foresight and the vision of men like Frank Cooper and Ned Hanlon whom I had the honour to succeed. They built up reserve funds when revenue was buoyant and when we came back from Loan Council meetings ill-equipped, poorly supplied with money, we had funds to supplement those we got from Canberra to keep jobs in progress and men in work, employees of local authorities, employees of the State. When these reserves started to peter out the position became serious, but no-one, not even Cicero himself, could have convinced the political bigots in Canberra that Queensland had a case under Labour Government. Whether it was for flood or drought we had no case. The files in the Premier's office will prove that. Already he has suffered many disappointments from the Federal Government; there are many more to come. Why did not the Premier this morning in the defence of his Government and the unemployment position in Queensland tell the true facts as a responsible statesman would have done? As one who has been in the saddle he knows as well as I do that the truth is that no Government, whether Liberal-Country Party, Country-Liberal Party, or Labour Party, can maintain full employment in this State. It does not matter whether the responsibility of maintaining full employment is in the hands of the Government alone or in the hands of the Government and private enterprise, we have all got to play a part in it. Unless we have the money to carry out essential works for the development of the State and the exploitation of its natural resources, we will fail to maintain full employment. Let us face facts and stand up to the issue. Because of political allegiance let us not try to excuse someone else. Undoubtedly Queensland has been starved for money; repeatedly it has been described as an undeveloped State. It is virtually undeveloped, although a great deal of development has taken place over the years, in spite of what the Government have said. In the last seven, ten or fifteen years much has been done, not with the support of the Commonwealth Government but in spite of it.

(Time expired.)

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer—Minister for Transport) (3.12 p.m.): The hon. member for South Brisbane has probably made a more temperate approach to this important subject before the House than the official Leader of the Opposition. But he has attempted to qualify the actions of his and

previous Governments by endeavouring to belittle what they have received at any time either from the Loan Council or as he terms it, "at the hands of those who were responsible for administration in Canberra." He knows as well as I do that during any of the deliberations in Canberra, and during the period when he and his Treasurer had an opportunity to present a case on behalf of their Government, that at least the N.S.W. Government, a Labour Government of the same political colour as he attached himself to when he was present at Loan Council meetings, came out of the argument much better than the Queensland Government.

Mr. Hanlon: They did not do so bad this time.

Mr. CHALK: They did not do too bad. Because of the presentation of our case, because of the manner in which we pointed out the under-development of Queensland and the necessity for, as the Premier termed it, "a shot in the arm," Queensland did receive a greater amount of money than at any time in the State's history.

It is no use attempting to blame Canberra for the position in which this State finds itself. Let us look at some of the things that have occurred in the past six months. Let us look at the case presented by the Leader of the Opposition. For 10 years I sat on the Opposition benches, and on every occasion we advanced an argument we were charged by the Government with "knocking." The speech delivered by the Leader of the Opposition this morning justifies the allegation that he is the "Prince of Knockers." The hon. gentleman had no other purpose but that of creating panic in the minds of the people and endeavouring to build up the prestige of his own party. I shall examine some of the arguments advanced by the hon. gentleman. The hon. gentleman did not refer to the fact that during the past six months the State has experienced one of the severest droughts in its history. I concede the point made by the hon. member for South Brisbane—that there have been worse droughts, but I do point out that this drought has been very widespread and has affected every section of the State. Drought conditions still exist in many parts. The Leader of the Opposition knows as well as I do the conditions that exist in the sugar industry. The hon. gentleman knows that the introduction of bulk handling has had some effect on employment in the sugar industry. The hon. gentleman made no allowance for that in dealing with seasonal unemployment. The hon. gentleman also overlooked the fall in metal prices. The hon. gentleman should know that development in the industry is tied up with metal prices. There has also been a decline in the price of wool. Are the Government to be charged with the responsibility for those happenings? The Leader of the Opposition has based his arguments on many things over which the Government have no control. I remind the

hon. gentleman of the headlines which appeared in the newspaper in his own city this morning showing what the Government were doing in an endeavour to assist to overcome unemployment in that city. The newspaper stated that the Government have made available money from Loan Council advances which will provide work for 50 jobless men in Toowoomba. Is he not aware of that, or is he for political purposes attempting to create panic and so damn the Government in the eyes of the people.

I shall mention some of the other things that are taking place under his very nose, things of which he should be aware if he is not aware of them. Under the same Vote the Government have made available to the City of Toowoomba other money to relieve unemployment. Money has been made available to the Toowoomba City Council to carry out road work. The Government have also made available to the Abattoirs Board the sum of £11,000.

Mr. Graham: That is normal procedure.

Mr. CHALK: It is not. The money has been allocated out of the special advance that was made to this State. Other amounts of money have been made available for the relief of unemployment within the area of the Leader of the Opposition. Knowing those things he is still prepared to create panic in the minds of the people to gain political advantage.

He said that the Government apart from their sins of omission have done nothing. As the representative of North Toowoomba, the Leader of the Opposition should know some of the things that have been done by the Government. I shall mention some happenings in Queensland in the past six months and some action that has been taken by my department.

Mr. Burrows: Tell us about the sleeper-cutters that you put off.

Mr. CHALK: I shall deal with that as it applies to the hon. member's area. He was one of the Government that occupied the Treasury benches for a number of years. Prior to the defeat of that Government, they built up a reserve of 354,771 sleepers in the Maryborough area which is over five years supply. We cannot go on ordering at such a ridiculous rate.

(Time expired.)

Mr. BURROWS (Port Curtis) (3.23 p.m.): Unemployment is one of the most serious problems to be coped with by any Government, and provides one of the most serious tests of a Government. The statistics for the month of January reveal there were approximately 19,500 unemployed in Queensland, compared with approximately 16,000 in the previous month, December last year. Those figures alone are an indictment of the Government. They have failed to answer the charge that has been levelled at them, despite the fact that statements have

been made by the Premier, the Deputy Premier and other responsible members of the Government. They have merely said that the Opposition has not made constructive suggestions. The Government have a duty to make the suggestions. It is the duty of the Government to govern efficiently.

Mr. Chalk: That is what we are doing.

Mr. BURROWS: The Government are not even trying to do it. The Government subscribe to the theory put forward by Professor Hytton some months ago, that the ideal position from an economic viewpoint is a pool of unemployment. It is the most unchristianlike attitude anybody could adopt and I think the author of the proposition or the man who created the idea is a bigger criminal than Hitler or any of those imprisoned at Nuremberg. I hold no brief for Krupps but he is a gentleman alongside the man who says that it indicates a healthy economy when there is a large percentage of unemployed in the country. Next to war it is one of the worst things we can experience. Unemployment is said to be the mother of all misery. Men have the right to be employed and nobody has a greater duty to see that men are employed than the Government. Cabinet should not pass the buck and say that the Opposition should tell the Government how to do the job. If the Government are not capable of doing it they should have the decency to resign and say, "We cannot handle the present position." The Government want to flounder on. They are not prepared to profit by their mistakes. The Treasurer, who is also Minister for Housing, has made certain statements to indicate his self-satisfaction as to housing but I quote from a letter he wrote me after the Government's election—

"The housing position in Gladstone and Bundaberg was taken into consideration when planning the building programme for the 1957-1958 financial year. However, in view of the limited funds available it will not be possible to erect further houses in those towns during this financial year."

That is a defeatist attitude. It is the attitude they started on and the attitude they have pursued.

The Minister for Transport quoted the sleepers on hand. There are hundreds of thousands of sleeper blocks lying at sidings throughout the State. These blocks have to be cut to make two sleepers. In other words, they have to be processed. I submitted a proposition from an unemployed man with two sons who offered to cut the sleeper blocks for 5s. each. I challenge the Minister to prove that that is not a bedrock and cheap price and one that will compare more than favourably with the price previously paid. The sleeper blocks are still there unprocessed and this man and his two sons are vainly running about the countryside looking for work. There is a constructive suggestion.

The Treasurer knows and everybody with intelligence knows—I give the Treasurer full credit for intelligence—that unemployment begets unemployment just as employment creates employment. If you put seven or eight carpenters off from the building of a house you also put off a number of painters, plumbers, sawmill hands and hauliers. Once unemployment starts it grows. That is what happened in 1929. Only the other day something was said to me that caused me to think a good deal about the subject that is now being discussed. I was discussing the visit to this country of Mr. Macmillan and my friend said to me. "I fear this visit. It reminds me of the visit by another prominent Englishman, Sir Otto Niemeyer, in 1929." What followed that visit? I hope the results of this visit will not be as tragic as those of the previous visit.

The Government have a responsibility and they must face up to it or have the common decency to resign. Bad and all as Artie Fadden may have been, he had the decency to go to the Governor-General and say, "Get Curtin to carry on. He will do a better job than I could." The Government should develop a conscience and follow Fadden's lead.

(Time expired.)

Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg) (3.31 p.m.): I have listened with interest to the remarks of hon. members opposite in their attempt to defend their inability to overcome what has been said to be the greatest curse facing the State. The Government have a responsibility; it is on them to see that planning is so developed that they can overcome the difficulty.

The Premier has apparently reached the stage where he has no faith in his own Cabinet. Unwittingly or otherwise, he came into the Chamber today and threw the responsibility on members of the Opposition to suggest how the Government could overcome the catastrophe. That is no less than a vote of no confidence in his own Ministers.

The Premier has made a point of the treatment meted out to his Government by the Loan Council. I clearly recall that the Premier, and other people associated with the downfall of the previous Government, were loud in their claims about the enormous reserves that the State held, and about the employment that would be created if his party was returned to power. Where are those reserves today? On the Premier's own statement, enough money was available to meet today's needs.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Under the Standing Orders the Leader of the Opposition, as the mover of the motion, has 10 minutes for his reply.

Mr. WOOD (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) (3.33 p.m.), in reply: If anyone had any doubts at all about the necessity for the moving of such a motion as this, they would have been quickly dispelled after hearing the Premier and his

Cabinet colleagues in their shockingly weak defence of their inactivity. A majority of the members of Cabinet have spoken on behalf of the Government, and it can be said truthfully that the mountain was in labour and gave birth to a mouse. We had not one indication from any member of the Cabinet that the Government have the slightest inkling on how the problem of unemployment can be overcome.

The debate has given the Chamber a striking example of the ineffectiveness of the Cabinet. They have given no hope to the 20,000-odd unemployed that they have any plans for them. As one hon. member quite rightly said, the members of the Cabinet are responsible to the State and to its people and the onus is on them to show that they have the ability and the knowledge to lead the State out of the darkness into which it is being taken.

It is significant that not one back-bencher of the Government parties has stood in his place to state his feelings. Frankly I believe many back-benchers agree that the unemployment problem is the most serious one facing us today, but, for reasons of their own, they did not take advantage of the opportunity to stand up in the Chamber and tell the story as it is being unfolded in their own electorates.

The Premier gave, in my opinion, the worst answer I have ever heard from a leader of a Government in reply to charges of inefficiency. Make no mistake, we have charged the Government with inefficiency, with ineptness in their handling of a very grave problem. The Premier spent most of his time questioning the motives that prompted the Opposition in bringing forward the motion for the adjournment. He said we had done the State a great disservice by bringing up the matter and handling it as we had done. I ask you, Mr. Speaker: what are we to do? Realising the menace of growing unemployment, are we to lock the skeleton away in a cupboard and say to the members of the Government, "There is no unemployment. Things are pretty good. You are doing a good job. Just keep on and in six months it will be 50,000 instead of 20,000?" Would not we be failing in our duty to the people if we did not point out to the Government their responsibility for taking positive steps to correct the position instead of coming into the House and in a pitiful plea saying to hon. members and the people of the State "We have done what we can. We cannot do any more. Why do you bring this question up before us?" The Premier said we are setting out to embarrass the Government. When he was Leader of the Opposition I never saw any reluctance on his part to embarrass the Government of the day. I am afraid I must say that I think he is speaking with his tongue in his cheek when he alleges that we have raised this urgent matter simply for the sake of embarrassing the Government. We must bring it to the realisation of the members of the Cabinet,

and the back-benchers who have so supinely supported them, that the unemployment problem is the most serious facing us today. And the people on whose shoulders rests the responsibility for meeting it are those Cabinet Ministers who spoke so pitifully without giving a ray of hope to the thousands of unemployed.

The Premier criticised me for indulging in sabotage in my own electorate. I do not know in what way he means. He spoke of statements I have made. I assure hon. members that no man will prevent me from making any statements that I believe to be in the interests of the people. If the Premier wants to go further into the matter, let me remind him of some of his attacks in the "As I see It" columns of the "Telegraph."

The Premier claimed that something real had been done, but apart from outlining pleas to the Commonwealth Government for assistance and the release of £15,000,000 credit to eight banks, neither he nor any other member of the Cabinet gave any evidence of anything that has been done in any shape or form. All the matters they mentioned, such as the £11,000 to the Toowoomba local abattoir board would be done normally had the State not to approach the Commonwealth Government for special loan assistance. We find the same thing again with main roads allocations. What I said before is true, there are owner-drivers in my electorate who have not had one day's work since last August. Prior to August they were fully employed on main roads carting in the Toowoomba division. There may have been money allocated now but there was something like 40 or 50 men put off in the Toowoomba division shortly after the Government assumed office. I believe that the Government have adopted an extremely cavalier attitude towards the problem. It is like the black sheep in the family—they do not want us to talk about it, or if we do just simply to tell them, "Nobody could do more than you have done." Frankly, we in the Australian Labour Party believe that to all intents and purposes they have done nothing practical.

I agree that the major contribution must come from the Federal Government. The Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Transport are very easily satisfied if they think that because the Federal Government have made a special loan money allocation of £1,778,000 and have released £15,000,000 from the Central Bank that Queensland should be eternally grateful and say, "Thank you very much, we are deeply indebted to you and we do not want any more from you." The Minister for Transport said that I was intemperate and then went back to his old form of hurling everything he could at the party opposite. When he was in Opposition he spent all his time selling himself as a Messiah who was going to put the Queensland transport system on the right basis. It will be very interesting to see how this self-appointed Messiah will produce the railway

accounts after 30 June next. He accused me of attempting to create mass panic simply because on behalf of the Australian Labour Party I made this move to make the Cabinet realise the responsibilities that it owes to the unemployed people throughout the State.

The front page of the Sydney "Morning Herald" reporting a meeting of the Australian Council of the World Council of Churches said—

"As Christians we repudiate the idea that unemployment should be regarded as economically sound or normal.

"The anxiety and suffering of the unemployed and their families are our concern.

"The Council calls for the carrying out of a policy of full employment as essential in a Christian society.

"Now is the time to act before the position worsens and possibly gets beyond control."

Rev. Alan Walker sounded this note of warning—

"Unemployment is the central issue in Australia. We are facing a situation that did not exist during the great depression. Communism stands ready to benefit from the suffering of the people. Any further growth of Communism will bring war nearer."

(Time expired).

Question—That the House do now adjourn—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 28.

Mr. Baxter	Mr. Houston
" Burrows	" Jesson
" Byrne	" Jones, A.
" Clark	" Lloyd
" Davies	" Mann
" Davis	" Marsden
" Donald	" Power
" Dufficy	" Thackeray
" Foley	" Wallace
" Gair	" Walsh
" Gardner	" Wood
" Graham	
" Gunn	<i>Tellers:</i>
" Hanlon	Mr. Adair
" Hilton	" Aikens

NOES, 41.

Mr. Ahearn	Mr. Madsen
" Anderson	" Morris
" Beardmore	" Müller
" Bjelke-Petersen	" Munro
" Chalk	" Nicholson
" Connolly	" Nicklin
" Dewar	Dr. Noble
" Ewans	Mr. Pizzey
" Ewan	" Rae
" Gaven	" Ramsden
" Gilmore	" Richter
" Harrison	" Smith, P. R.
" Hart	" Sparkes
" Heading	" Taylor
" Herbert	" Tooth
" Hewitt	" Watson
" Hiley	" Windsor
" Hodges	
" Jones, V. E.	
" Knox	<i>Tellers:</i>
" Lonergan	Mr. Coburn
" Low	" Hooper

PAIR.

AYE.	NO.
Mr. McCathie	Mr. Roberts

Resolved in the negative.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTS AND
ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

Hon. J. A. HEADING (Marodian—Minister for Public Works and Local Government), by leave, without notice: 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 Local Government Acts, 1936 to 1957, and the City of Brisbane Acts, 1924 to 1957, each in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Taylor, Clayfield, in the chair.)

Hon. J. A. HEADING (Marodian—Minister for Public Works and Local Government) (3.53 p.m.): I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Local Government Acts, 1936 to 1957, and the City of Brisbane Acts, 1924 to 1957, each in certain particulars.”

This is a very small measure which is of an urgent nature because of the elections which will come on very shortly. I have had requests from various local authorities and also the Brisbane City Council to alter the dates of election this year because of Anzac Day falling on 25 April, the day before the election day. The Bill amends the Local Government Acts and the City of Brisbane Acts each for a common purpose. Under both Acts, the ensuing triennial election of mayor and aldermen or chairman and members is set down for 26 April, the day after Anzac Day. In some cases, but not all, because of the use of the main polling booth for Anzac Day services on the previous day, there would be the utmost difficulty in conducting an election on the following day. So far as the local government law is concerned, the day appointed for the holding of the poll is not disturbed. Provision is made whereby, if the local authority so applies, in any particular case, a Proclamation can be made altering the polling date. Any new date fixed can be a Saturday not earlier than 19 April and not later than the last Saturday in May. The matter will thus be one for application by each particular local authority. If it desires to proceed on the day already fixed by law, it can do so. If this day is not convenient, it can apply for an altered date. So far as the City of Brisbane is concerned, the date fixed is 19 April. There is one further alteration in this case. Ordinarily the rolls for the City of Brisbane election close on 31 March. With the election brought forward by one week, it is impracticable to allow the roll to close on the date fixed by law, for rolls could not be printed, erasures made and the rolls put into the hands of the Returning

Officer in time to conduct the election. The closing date for the roll has thus been brought forward to 19 March for this election.

Hon. members can see that there is nothing serious in the Bill and I am sure they will accept it because of the urgency. We want to get the Bill through tomorrow in order to adopt the next procedure so that the councils can carry on with their elections.

Mr. WOOD (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) (3.55 p.m.): This appears a very simple Bill and one that will receive the endorsement of those in whose interests it is being introduced. I have not read any public statement of any objection so far as Brisbane is concerned. For other local authorities, it is a matter for each council to make its own application. There is no compulsion to alter the date but if local circumstances warrant and a council feels that there should be a change of date it can apply to the Minister. At this stage I see no reasonable grounds for objection to the Bill.

Local authority matters are exceedingly important because of their very nature they deal with those things most intimately associated with the personal life of the householder. As a State Government comes closer to the hearts of the people than the Federal Government so I believe a local authority has even a more intimate association because of the subjects with which it deals, the provision of water, street lighting, building of roads and footpaths, water channeling, cleansing services and so on. All these operations come within the scope of local government and affect each householder very intimately. In the City of Brisbane if there is one thing that has great impact upon the people it is the cleansing system. It is strange to see after years and years of local government in this State that we still have the unsightly night-cart operating where no sewerage exists. While no blame can be attached to any single particular council it is a shocking thing that a city of this size, a modern city, has such a small section of its area sewered and such a large section with modern homes still served by the unhygienic and malodorous night-cart. The work could be done more efficiently by sewerage. It is a problem which must be faced in this city or it could quickly get out of hand. Places such as Charleville, Jundah and Goondiwindi are completely sewered and we find the capital of the State with only a relatively small percentage of homes having the convenience of sewerage. In my opinion, the importance of local-authority work will not lessen as the years go by. On the contrary, it will increase. As the community develops, more and more responsibility will have to be accepted by local authorities.

It is undeniable that a good, sound, far-seeing Council, whether municipal or shire, can have a great influence for good on the community. Throughout the State we can see a great divergence of efficiency in local

authority work. A tremendous amount of good can be done by a local authority that is far-seeing, ambitious and energetic. Conversely, a lethargic or inefficient local authority can hold back the development of a community. It cannot be denied that that has happened in some areas, and the local authorities concerned are inclined to throw the blame for the lack of development on the central government.

The time must come when local authorities are given greater autonomy than they have at present. I do not intend in this debate to mention ways in which that could be done, but as local authority responsibility increases so must also the degree of autonomy delegated to it. Unfortunately not sufficient interest is shown in local authority elections throughout the State.

Mr. Aikens: You would not say that if you were in Townsville.

Mr. WOOD: I am speaking generally. While there is an intense interest in State and Federal elections, as a general rule not nearly the same keen interest is shown in local authority elections. We should give just as much attention to our representation on shire and municipal councils as we do to that in the State and Federal Governments.

It has often been said by members of the Government that politics should be kept out of local authorities. Only the other day a visitor to Queensland decried the trend in Australia for party-political matters to enter into municipal elections. I have always held, and will continue to hold, that there is no sound reason why party politics should not be brought into local government elections. Many members of some political parties subscribe to the view that a political party should not enter candidates officially in local authority elections. However, it cannot be denied that party politics intrude into local authority elections even though it may not always be with the official tag of the party concerned.

Mr. Aikens: They call themselves members of the Citizens' Association.

Mr. WOOD: They call themselves by any name, such as the Citizens' Municipal Organisation in Brisbane. I do not wish to be unkind or provocative, but I am not far from correct when I say that to all intents and purposes the Citizens' Municipal Organisation is an offshoot of the Liberal Party of Queensland. While its members may deny the party political tag, the Citizens' Municipal Organisation and similar organisations in other parts of the State are just as party political as if they called themselves the Liberal Party or the Country Party team. I think the hon. member for Toowoomba will concede that even in the city of Toowoomba—and I am not now engaging in any propaganda for the forthcoming municipal election in that city—the trend of the aldermanic team is definitely Liberal. For instance, the

Mayor of the city is the Liberal member for Toowoomba. Another of the aldermen, who is not in the aldermanic team, was the Liberal candidate opposed to me in the last elections. If you take the Council comprising what is called the aldermanic team you will find that to all intents and purpose they could quite easily go as a Liberal team. Let us have none of this hypocrisy of decrying a party's entering the political field, as the Australian Labour Party does. It makes no apology for doing it. It is doing openly what other organisations do with another tag. Let us face it frankly. We are all entitled to our objections if we feel that party politics should not come into it. We are quite entitled to say so. But let us not have those objections from people who are members of a political municipal party in everything but name. It is not my intention to raise anything controversial in the debate. I agree with the Minister that it is a simple measure and on first appearance it would seem that it will have the approval of those on whose behalf it is being introduced. I will reserve further comment till the Second Reading.

Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg) (4.7 p.m.): From the outline given by the Minister the Bill is purely a machinery measure, but I hope he has retained the power to see to it that, where an application is made by a local authority, after the investigation of the request and all the circumstances relating to it, complete power is not put in the hands of the local authority to finally determine the date. Many circumstances apply to country areas that may not apply to metropolitan or coastal city areas. I should think the Minister would have attended to that, but I make the point now. We do not want the local authorities to be given the right to say when they think the date should be altered, say, from time to time in a particular election year.

I have been interested in other remarks by the Minister in statements that have been made and published in the Press and in actions of members of the Government. We of the Queensland Labour Party cannot be blamed if we suspect that the Government intend to alter the system of elections and the adult franchise in connection with local authority elections. I know that the Minister is not in a position to reveal policy, but a first step has been taken. I will not debate the point; I merely refer to it. The Government have already announced that they are going to do away with the present method of elections for representation on the Harbour Boards. They are going to put it in the hands of elected representatives within the local authority areas. That appears to me to be the first step towards a challenge to the adult franchise as it applies to local authority elections generally. We have further grounds for that suspicion in the published statement by the Lord Mayor that he had been given an assurance by the Government that in the future the legislation would

be amended to provide for a more general reflection of the electors' opinion within the metropolitan area.

Mr. Heading: That is a new one on me.

Mr. WALSH: I am not blaming the Minister for it but I cannot help it if his political friends in the Brisbane City Council come out and spill the bucket, as it were, in their conferences, whether they be confidential or otherwise. We still have the clear-cut statement by the Lord Mayor, as published in the Press, that he had been given an assurance by the Government that there would be some alteration in the election of representatives to the Brisbane City Council. We are entitled at this stage to draw the attention of the Government to the seriousness of attempting in any way to interfere with the adult franchise as it applies not only to harbour boards but to local government elections generally.

I do not agree with the Leader of the Opposition when he says that no keen interest is taken in local government elections. A careful examination of local authority elections throughout Queensland over the years since the adult franchise has applied clearly indicates that the electors show the Governments of the day and the parties, whether they be in power or not, that in their own way they are very selective. The Government should carefully examine any proposal submitted to them for the alteration of the adult franchise. We have had adult franchise for nearly 30 years or more in the metropolitan area and local authority areas throughout Queensland, but out of that 30 years—I am not including the three years when the anti-Labour Government were in office—there were only nine years when the electors in the metropolitan area elected a Council with a majority vote for the Labour candidates. It is important to remember that when we come to the State elections in the same wards although only seven aldermen may be returned on the Labour ticket there would be 17 or 20 Labour candidates returned to Parliament within the same boundaries. Another important thing to remember is that although there are 132 local authorities, not taking into account hospitals boards or other public bodies, it would be safe to say that not more than 25 of them are contested on a political basis. Again it clearly indicates that the electors, although the opportunity is there and it is their right, do not seek to engage in party politics in local administration. That is why it is again very difficult for me to understand why the Government should attempt to alter in any way the basis of harbour board elections. Candidates are not elected by any means because of their political affiliations. An examination of the personnel from Bundaberg north will reveal that they are predominately men who are opposed to the Labour Party. I do not see why the Government should interfere with that method.

The Minister says that he is anxious to get the Bill passed. I realise he would be because there is not much time between now and the elections, there are certain machinery provisions in the electoral law. But I was very interested to hear the Minister make the observation about the difficulty of having rolls available for the election, the very argument that the Labour Government used prior to their defeat last year when they pointed out the difficulty in having rolls printed for the whole of the State. All that would be required for Brisbane would be the 24 supplementary rolls. The main rolls as at 31 December will have been printed by 31 March. It is only the enrolments between 31 December and 31 March that will need adjusting.

Mr. Aikens: That applies only in Brisbane.

Mr. WALSH: That only applies in Brisbane. That is the point I am making. We are told now of the great difficulty of the Government Printing Office turning out 24 supplementary rolls and yet there will be such a small number of enrolments that will have taken place between the end of December and the end of March. I was interested to hear the Minister make that point. I accept the hon. gentleman's statement that it is a difficulty, but I point out that when hon. members of the Government were on the Opposition benches they failed to realise the difficulty of our Government in providing for complete rolls for the whole of the State plus the supplementary rolls for the State election last year.

Mr. Heading: You managed it all right.

Mr. WALSH: We managed, due to other things, such as the split in the Labour Party, to put hon. members over there temporarily, but it will not be for long. The Government can start packing up before the three years are up. As far as I am concerned, anything that can be done to get the Labour powers together to put the Government out—I will be in it. The Government have a temporary occupancy of the Treasury benches on a minority vote of the electors.

Mr. Nicklin: We are here; that is the main thing.

Mr. WALSH: That is true. No doubt the Premier will provide an opportunity for us to tell him of those things later on.

I realise that the Minister brought the Bill down in the best interests of the machinery of the local authorities. I have no objection to the Bill as outlined by the Minister.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (4.17 p.m.): After 19 years as a local government representative I think I am competent to talk on a Bill of this nature. The Bill perpetuates preference to Brisbane. Apparently that was the policy of all previous governments. The Bill states a definite date for the Brisbane elections—April the 19th—but

apparently the country can hold elections any time up to May. I do not see why there should be differentiation. I do not see why the election date for the whole State should not be 19th April. The Act should be amended to provide that in future the Minister shall by Order-in-Council, not later than 31 December preceding the election, nominate the date on which the election shall be held. The Minister can then receive deputations from all country areas and decide a date suitable to them. The Act was amended previously to make a date in April mandatory. I was concerned because April is a dangerous month. Easter may occur up to the 16th and towards the end of the month we have Anzac Day. This Bill, however, will do for this year.

The chief function of a local authority is to provide adequate clear and pure water. We have not had that in Townsville for the last three or four years. Recently I brought a bottle of water from Townsville to Parliament. It was analysed at the Department of Health and Home Affairs. I think I made an error in taking it to that department; it should have been taken to the Department of Agriculture and Stock for a soil analysis. The water at Townsville was so discoloured that many visitors complimented residents on their glorious sun-tan. The filthy water was the cause of the colouring. The Ross River water goes through from Ross River to the reservoirs unfiltered except for a shot of chlorine gas to kill the typhoid germs.

Mr. Heading: Where are you living?

Mr. AIKENS: I am living in Townsville. When our Party was in control we had an adequate filtration scheme which was thrown overboard by the present Liberal-Country Party council. The Treasurer visited Townsville the week after I brought the bottle of water to the Department of Health and Home Affairs, and before he arrived the Townsville City Council put on a large force of men over the weekend at overtime rates to flush all the Townsville water mains in order to make the water appear as clean as possible. Later I visited the lower reservoir in Townsville and I saw what was properly described in a radio Press item as an area of foul green slime with huge brown toads indulging in mixed bathing, high diving, fancy diving and all sorts of aquatic sports off the surface of the thick green slime. A week later the Minister for Health and Home Affairs came to Townsville and I let it be known that I was going to take him up to show him the reservoir. Prior to the visit of the Minister the reservoir was cleaned. Our only regret in Townsville is that we cannot get a Minister of the Government up every week so that at least in between times we would have a reasonably clear water supply. The mains were cleared when Hiley came up and the reservoir was cleaned when Noble came up. On one reservoir alone there were two cranes and one end loader used in the cleaning, and seven big truck-loads of putrid filth

was taken from the lower reservoir alone. That reservoir had not been cleaned for about four years, until I spoke about the condition it was in. I thank the Treasurer and the Minister for Health and Home Affairs for the temporary relief we have obtained from our filthy and putrid water conditions in Townsville. I think the Department of Local Government should take an interest in the matter and should ask the Townsville City Council, in view of the fact that it destroyed and did away with the filtration plant that was there when we were in control of the council, what it proposes to do about the filtration of Townsville water in future.

I have another suggestion to make to the Minister. I feel sure he has a fair amount of experience in these matters. At the present time a member of the staff of the Auditor-General goes to the local authorities, the regional electricity boards, harbour boards and various other governmental and semi-governmental authorities to make an audit of the books. If the board or council decided by resolution that a certain amount of money be paid for a certain job, all the auditor can do is to certify to the correctness of the vouchers. He has no means of knowing whether the job has been carried out satisfactorily. The Department of Local Government should appoint an engineering auditor whose duty it would be to inspect the books of the various local authorities and regional electricity boards, which are tied up with the local authorities, and harbour boards, which are also tied up with them, to see that the money was expended in the interests of the people.

I have here probably the most amazing photographs that have ever been produced in this Chamber. I mentioned this matter on another occasion. I refer to Lake Roberts, which is named after Alderman Roberts, the chairman of the Works Committee of the Townsville City Council. It lies in what used to be a little creek between Charters Towers Road and Mysterton Estate. The creek used to run in the wet season, and trickle off and eventually dry up in May or June. It caused a little inconvenience and a few mosquitoes bred in it, and then the Council got the idea that it would put in the bulldozer and level off the banks. The council borrowed scores of thousands of pounds and got a 50 per cent. mosquito subsidy from the Government to do it. The Council bulldozed the banks and made one huge flat expanse that today and for nine months of every year is a putrid, festering, mosquito-breeding swamp. I have here three photographs of it, taken from different angles. The council took this action on the ground that for a few months of the year, that is, October, November, and December, the ground of the swamp was dry and the bulrushes and the guinea grass could be cut down by big mowing machines in order to make a playing field of the swamp area. It is true they had it. For two or at the most three months of the year we have playing

areas after the bulrushes and the guinea-grass and the weeds have been mown and for nine or ten months of the year we have a large mosquito-breeding swamp where once there was a little creek. This area is between Charters Towers Road and the Mysterton Estate. I am sure the Chairman of Committees knows it well.

I shall give another reason for engineering auditors and will not transgress, Mr. Taylor, on your tolerance. The former Treasurer complains that the Government have interfered with the democratic right of the people to elect representatives to harbour boards. His Government interfered with the democratic right of the people to elect representatives to regional electricity boards.

Mr. Walsh: They have no right.

Mr. AIKENS: Because the hon. member's Government never gave them the right. I suggested that they should have it and that representatives of regional electricity boards should be elected on the same day as aldermen and councillors are elected by democratic vote. But the former Treasurer did not agree. He is now up in arms because the Government are going to allow the various local authorities to appoint representatives to harbour boards because he fears for the future of Bill Tomlins who by the way has done a good job. That is probably the distorted reasoning of the hon. member for Bundaberg. At the present time a regional electricity board is part and parcel of a local government, because a regional electricity board is comprised of aldermen and councillors appointed by the local authorities within the regional board area.

Not wishing to digress to any extent, Mr. Taylor, let me say that recently the T.R.E.B. spent £40,000 in putting a submarine electric light and power main from Townsville to Magnetic Island. The Board laid it like a fishing line tangled on a rock by throwing it overboard and it is now in coils and twists. Underwater divers have been down to take photographs of the main and it is in a shocking condition. It has abraded itself at one particular point and it cost £1500 to repair one abrasion and within five years, the line will not be worth a roasted peanut. The same thing happened when the board put a power line to Charters Towers. It imported from Italy, mind you, special steel or iron electric light poles and now that the job has been finished it has £30,000 worth left over.

Mr. Pizzey interjected.

Mr. AIKENS: An extension from Townsville to Charters Towers. The poles were specially imported from Italy and £30,000 worth were left over when the job was finished. It was then decided to have an extension from Home Hill to Bowen and the Board fortunately was able to use a few there.

Mr. Power: Who was the contractor?

Mr. AIKENS: The T.R.E.B. and the brilliant Neil Smith approved of the scheme. If the Treasurer is listening to me he will probably alter his opinion of Mr. Neil Smith. The T.R.E.B. has 15 years' supply in hand of iron pole steps also despite the fact that it sold countless thousands of these to other people.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope the hon. member will proceed to the terms of the Bill.

Mr. AIKENS: Because of your tolerance I will not carry the matter any further. This matter is not connected with a different department because a regional electricity board is in effect a subsidiary of local government. The Minister will tell you that, Mr. Taylor, if you do not know yourself. The members of a regional electricity board are comprised of aldermen and councillors elected to the board by the local authority within the regional board area. I shall not go any further. I think I have told the Minister enough to buttress my assertion that in addition to sending the usual financial and accountancy auditor to examine the books of regional electricity boards and local authorities, he should send an engineering auditor to check whether the money has been wisely spent or whether it has been poured down the drain. I could give example after example of the bungling and inefficiency of the Townsville City Council. It became so bad that the Council the other day had to appoint an efficiency expert at a fee of £3,000 to tell them where money that it could not account for went to. In addition, they are paying the rent of his flat at £10 a week. Incidentally, his name is Woodhead. (Laughter). Of course, that does not signify anything. He is an employee of Scott & Company. It has been suggested to me that some of the aldermen are hoping that Mr. Woodhead will recommend serious retrenchments in the Council staff. That is another reason why I say that now that the Minister who appears to be taking a keen interest in the department under his control, the suggestions that I have made are well worthy of his consideration. I remind the Minister that I have some knowledge of local authority matters. First of all, he should interest himself in seeing whether a local authority is supplying the people in its area with the necessaries of life, such as water and sewerage. The Leader of the Opposition has spoken about the lack of sewerage in Brisbane. Let him come to Townsville. He will find more "little houses", as they call them there, than in any other city of comparable size in Australia. Instead of giving the council its title of T.C. Association, which is short for Townsville Citizens' Association, the people refer to it as the E.C. Association.

Once a council gets into power it seems to be able to pour money down the drain. As long as it can take advantage of a split Labour vote, which has happened in Townsville, it can go on and on and nothing can

be done about it. I have said time and time again that unless there are extraordinary circumstances, I do not believe in ministerial interference in local authority affairs. But I believe that there are some local authorities in Queensland—and I refer particularly to the Townsville City Council—where ministerial interference would be fully justified.

Mr. Walsh: What are Hempenstall's and Perrott's chances of re-election?

Mr. AIKENS: Led by Ben Bloom and supported by the Communists they and the rest of the A.L.P. team will be at the bottom of the list and half of them will lose their deposits. I am almost certain to be re-elected to the Council after an absence of nine years. When I am, I can assure the Minister that I will be sending in a good deal of information that will merit his urgent investigation.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (4.34 p.m.): The Bill, although apparently very simple, has been transformed by some hon. members, particularly the hon. member for Mundingburra, into a very elaborate one. The hon. member for Mundingburra had a good deal to say about the political situation in Townsville. I have always been under the impression that the people who supported him were backers of the Communist Party.

The hon. member for Mundingburra suggested that all local authority elections be held on 19 April.

Mr. Aikens: Only this year.

Mr. LLOYD: It would be rather difficult to provide that for one particular year. I understand that the original Act provided that it could be any Saturday in April that the local authority selected. The Local Government Association reported that many local authorities were having their elections on different dates. In Brisbane, with the Council's huge budgeting, which, by the way, exceeds the annual budget of Tasmania, it was necessary to have an election in April. If an election date were laid down for the City of Brisbane in April and a general allowance of time for other local authorities, they would go from month to month and decide for themselves when to hold their elections. The Minister's proposal is to have local authorities apply for their election date, to be any date between 19 April and the end of May. This is practicable. It will give the City of Brisbane an opportunity to elect a new Council in its own year and it will give other local authorities, especially in the larger outlying country areas, time to decide on their own date.

The Minister raised the question of the printing of electoral rolls.

Mr. Heading: The supplementary roll for Brisbane because it closes on 31 March.

Mr. LLOYD: We must consider the loading of work on the Government Printing

Office once every three years for the State elections. Within 12 months there are the local authority elections again, which, if they are held on the same date, can give the same overloading continually two years in a row. The Bill gives other local authorities an opportunity of having a date later than that of the City of Brisbane and will take some of the strain off the Government Printing Office in printing the main and supplementary rolls.

The hon. member for Bundaberg spoke of the difficulty in printing rolls. As I understand it, the only difficulty has been the interference with the police canvass due to the Queen Mother's visit. The arrangements for the canvass in Brisbane and other parts of the State were suspended for a week, which made it more difficult than it would have been otherwise.

We wholeheartedly support the bringing forward of the election date. I do not think the people of Brisbane should be subjected to an inefficient city administration any longer than can be helped. The hon. member for Mundingburra said that efficiency experts have been employed in Townsville. There are many matters within the City of Brisbane at present that might well receive the very serious consideration of the Minister. The same efficiency experts, Scott & Co., are employed in Brisbane, and they have been paid £88,000 of ratepayers' money by the Brisbane City Council. The manager of the Transport Department of the Council, Mr. Preston, has already recommended in a secret document to the Council that the company's services be dispensed with. They have made numerous recommendations. One in particular reduced the transport services in the city and at the last minute, after having carried out their instructions, the Lord Mayor is going outside them and reinstating the previous services, giving real service to the people of the city at last. If such things go on in any local authority at all so that people can be employed and paid the ratepayers' money up to the amount of £88,000, ignore their suggestions and go against the recommendations of their own administration, it is time that the Minister for Local Government took a hand and made investigations about the real position of Scott & Co. People inexperienced in transport matters are attempting to run the transport services in Brisbane. The ridiculous position can arise of having inefficiency and incompetency within local authority administration.

At the present time there is no great attraction to make people contest local authority elections. However, I would not like to find any suggestion that the Government intended to destroy the adult franchise system at present operating because there are so many matters of very great importance to the ordinary householder, the ratepayer, and the tenants of houses owned by ratepayers, matters which are very close to the health and welfare of people living in all areas of the State. The tenant who pays his rent is

just as much entitled to demand service from the local authority as is the home-owner, the actual ratepayer. If he is paying rent for a property he is entitled to the service in return for the rates he pays by way of rental.

I agree with the provisions of the proposed Bill. If the date were to be the beginning of April we would still support the measure and thus give the people an opportunity to destroy the inefficiency and incompetency associated with the present council administration.

I was rather grateful to the hon. member for Bundaberg for admitting that they were responsible for placing this Government in power. With the type of administration in office at the present time there must always be inefficiency and incompetency and the sooner the council elections are held the better.

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) (4.44 p.m.): I have no intention of delaying the House but because of the way the debate has gone there are several points I want to touch upon.

We support our Leader in his support of the general principles of the Bill. We have no doubt that the Government will see to it that no precedent will be created by what is being done now.

Brief reference was made to statements by Sir Cullum Welch, a former Lord Mayor of London who referred to party politics in council elections. It is very unfortunate that on his visit Sir Cullum Welch allowed himself to be used by the Liberal political party in the council that the Government represent. I believe he set out to mislead the people of Brisbane by stating that in London there were no party politics. Unfortunately the "Courier-Mail" displayed the worst form of journalism by printing a little paragraph at the bottom. The statement in the "Courier-Mail" says—

"Sir Cullum Welch, a former Lord Mayor of London, said yesterday that a local government system was best where there were no politics and where aldermen were not paid."

Sir Cullum Welch also said that aldermen received no salary. He also said, "They are there to give voluntary service to the community and their service is the best. There are also no politics." I think most people know that the Lord Mayor controls an area of about one square mile in which very few people, except caretakers and nightwatchmen, live. The population controlled by the County Council of London is about 7,000,000. There we have party politics just as we find them in the House of Commons. Mr. Herbert Morrison was Labour chairman of the County Council for many years and did a remarkably fine job. The statement that there were no party politics in London council affairs is completely misleading.

Mr. Heading: This has nothing to do with the bill.

Mr. DAVIES: I am merely correcting misleading statements that are used as propaganda by those opposed to the Australian Labour Party. I think the "Courier-Mail", instead of adding to the statement by saying that the Lord Mayor of Brisbane and other aldermen received so-much, should have informed the public that the Lord Mayor of London only controlled 1 square mile of territory. There is the danger that this Government might do what was done in 1929-1932 and rob the people of the franchise in council elections. The hon. member for Mt. Gravatt recently suggested that physically handicapped people should not have the right to exercise the franchise. Many members sitting on the Government benches do not believe in adult franchise in council elections and they may attempt to rob the people of their rights as was done in 1929-1932. In the fixing of rents allowance is made for rates and improvements. The man who pays the rent pays the rates. The people are vitally interested in the activities of the council. I hope the Minister will exercise his influence and defeat any effort to deprive the people of the adult franchise at council elections. I shall not speak at greater length. I hope my comments will be considered by the Minister.

Hon. J. A. HEADING (Marodian—Minister for Public Works and Local Government) (4.50 p.m.): When introducing the Bill, I outlined what was meant by it, but hon. members have travelled all round the world in discussing the provision covering the date of the election. For instance, the hon. member for Bundaberg raised the subject of the franchise. I do not know anything about an alteration in the franchise.

Mr. Power: Will you give us an assurance that the Government will not alter the franchise?

Mr. HEADING: It has never been discussed. The only time I heard of it was when it was raised by hon. members opposite. As Minister, I suppose I would be the first to know of any move in that direction, but I do not know the slightest thing about it. The hon. member for Bundaberg put up a number of Aunt Sallies purely for the sake of knocking them down. We have listened to many statements that have nothing at all to do with the Bill.

The hon. member for Mundingburra made some puerile remarks on the subject. As a matter of fact, some local authorities asked that they be given a date other than 26 April. They did not want the election on the long week-end, because people would be away from home. The Brisbane City Council asked that it be set for 19 April. The Brisbane City Council did not want the election in May because the Budget is to be introduced and it would be too close to the end of the year. The Government have given the Brisbane

City Council what it wants, and have given outside local authorities the right to hold elections on the 19th, on the 26th, or on any Saturday in May.

We have heard a story about happenings in Townsville. Why these things happen only in Townsville I do not know. If conditions are as bad as have been stated by the hon. member for Mundingburra, he is failing in his duty to inform the department that these conditions exist. I have no idea why he should blame this Government for it. The swamp or waterhole was there long before I was a Minister of this Government. I suggest that if the people on the Council in Townsville are not doing a good job, that the constituents can rectify the position on any Saturday between 19 April and 30 May. If people elect a certain Council, why should the Minister interfere? If it is the desire of the constituents that those members should comprise their council, the Minister should interfere as little as possible. There had been complaints about ministerial interference, and when I became Minister the first thing I said to the Director of Local Government was, "We do not want to interfere with local authorities any more than is necessary." These people have been elected to run these shire councils. If anything goes wrong, of course, it is the duty of the Minister to take action.

I assure the hon. member for Maryborough that I am not concerned about what happened in London. I am interested only in Queensland local authorities, and I think they are doing a very good job.

Motion (Mr. Heading) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

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

COMMONWEALTH AND STATE STATISTICAL AGREEMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

Hon. K. J. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Labour and Industry), by leave, without notice: 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 ratify an arrangement entered into between the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Administrator of the Government of the State of Queensland with respect to the collection and publication of statistics, and the supply of statistical information, for the purposes of both the Commonwealth and the State of Queensland."

Motion agreed to.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Taylor, Clayfield, in the chair.)

Hon. K. J. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Labour and Industry) (5 p.m.): I move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to ratify an arrangement entered into between the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Administrator of the Government of the State of Queensland, with respect to the collection and publication of statistics, and the supply of statistical information, for the purposes of both the Commonwealth and the State of Queensland."

The legislation is necessary to confirm the agreement entered into between the State and Commonwealth Governments, and also to provide for the continuance of the operation of the State Statistical Returns Acts, 1896 to 1935, in accordance with the new arrangements that have been made.

The previous Government, when such a partnership was proposed, would not entertain the proposal, apparently because they thought that in some way or other it might lead to a surrendering of some of the State's powers to the Commonwealth. Such an attitude is extremely hard to understand, especially in these times when there is a very great need to co-ordinate the collection and dissemination of statistical data on a uniform basis throughout Australia.

Under the terms of the agreement, a statistical organisation has been established for the collection, publication and supply of statistical information for the purposes of the Commonwealth and State Governments, and of course trade and industry, and the public at large.

Mr. S. E. Solomon, who was the State Government Statistician, has been appointed as the first Deputy Commonwealth Statistician in Brisbane, while still continuing as Government Statistician of Queensland. The staff of the State Government Statistician's office has been taken over by the Commonwealth Government, and forms the nucleus of the integrated statistical service. Business and governments alike depend in a large measure on the speedy supply of a more detailed body of statistics, and statisticians carry an increasing responsibility in satisfying the demand. The agreement will accordingly facilitate the production of statistics necessary to meet the ever-increasing needs of government, trade, industry, and the public at large.

Under the agreement the whole of the financial responsibility for the integrated statistical service will be carried by the Commonwealth, which will reimburse the State the cost of maintaining and conducting the office of the Government Statistician since 1 July, 1957. The cost per annum to the State of maintaining that office has been approximately £100,000, which is a not inconsiderable sum of money.

It is desirable at this stage that I should pay a tribute and express my thanks to the

Federal Treasurer, the Hon. Sir Arthur Fadden, for his co-operation in this matter. The hon. member for South Brisbane has spoken of the need of State Governments for finance. When I became Minister for Labour and Industry I learned that we were spending well over £100,000 a year to keep the Government Statistician's office operating. I discovered also that an offer had been made by the Federal Government to take over the office and provide us with a service at least equal to that which we had been receiving. I am very keen to save money, particularly if we lose nothing by it. In this instance we shall gain. Most of the other States have abolished their Government Statistician's offices and integrated them with the Federal Government's offices. When I put this thought to Sir Arthur Fadden he told me that he could see no reason why such an arrangement should not be made. He later got in touch with me and told me it was possible. I then asked him if he would go the second mile and take over from 1 July and save Queensland not merely £50,000 or £60,000 but well over £100,000 and he agreed to do so. So the Commonwealth took over as from last July. From now on the cost will be borne by the Commonwealth Government and they will pay us rent for our offices. It is very good financial reimbursement and I am perfectly satisfied, from the investigations I have made, that the State will lose nothing at all from the transfer.

Ever since the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics was established in 1906, the State and Commonwealth statistical offices have acted in close co-operation, the State office acting as a branch of the Commonwealth office in Queensland, while the State has had access to all statistics collected directly by the Commonwealth. The Government feel that the position has now been reached where the burden of new statistical collections required for national purposes has become greater than should reasonably be carried by a State Government. In other words, we think much of the information is used by the Commonwealth Government and we cannot see why we should stand the cost of collecting it.

All the publications that have been issued by the Government Statistician in the past dealing with Queensland will continue to appear, and special services to State departments will not be affected in any way. The State Government are guaranteed full access to all statistical information collected from any source. However, in case it should ever consider it necessary, the State retains the right to appoint statistical officers at its own expense to work under the Government Statistician in the integral office on any special jobs the State may require. Every possible loss has been legislated for. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

I raised one matter before and I noticed that the Leader of the Opposition raised his eyebrows but I have the note here. I might

add that I am informed that similar agreements have been, or are being, entered into by the Commonwealth with all the other States, except Victoria, where negotiations are at present proceeding between the Commonwealth and the State authorities.

The Bill is more or less a formal measure and includes the text of the agreement that has been entered into. It is worth while and it will save well over £100,000.

Mr. WOOD (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) (5.9 p.m.): I think the Parliament should regard it as a sound principle that we should very carefully examine any legislation that proposes to hand powers over to the Commonwealth Government. I have listened very carefully to the Minister and I can find no serious objection to passing legislation to ratify the agreement that has already been made. The Minister repeatedly referred to the windfall of £100,000 into the Government's lap. I hope that this £100,000 will be used to supplement other grants that will relieve unemployment in Queensland.

It has been said that figures lie, but again that accurate statistics are invaluable in business, industry, commerce and government. No business, no Government, can function successfully without ready access to accurate figures. For that purpose the Government Statistician operates. I pay a compliment to the work that has been done by the State Statistician and his officers. In my remarks on this measure I express the hope that at least the same standard of efficiency is maintained—I see no reason why it should not be—and if possible that that efficiency be even increased.

The Opposition can have no quarrel with the integration of the State statistical service into the Commonwealth service provided the generally good service which has been available does not become bogged down by red tape when certain information of significant political implication is sought. In other words, we in this House do not want to have a request for statistics specifically relating to Queensland referred to Canberra and the relevant interested Minister before the information is made available to us.

Mr. Morris: It will not be.

Mr. WOOD: I am glad to have that assurance. Up to the present information has been readily available and it has been accurate. By and large the Government Statistician and his officers have given us free and unqualified service. We want things to stay that way. When the Treasurer announced during the Supply debate in October that a change was to be made he said that the saving to the State would be £100,000 a year as the Commonwealth would pay the full cost of the present service. He added that the icing on the cake—they are his words—would be that the Commonwealth would pay the State £4,000 a year in rent, retrospective to 1 July last. The Minister

made reference to that. That certainly appears all right from our point of view, but as I have mentioned, we want to be certain that the present service will not suffer from the change. We would like a complete assurance from the Minister that the service will be maintained, if not improved, and that this piece of decentralisation in reverse by the Government will not be to our cost in the accessibility of important statistical information.

I remind the Minister that only a week ago the Premier, as reported in "The Courier-Mail," expressed himself as being dissatisfied with the Commonwealth Statistician's figures on the intake of migrants into Queensland. In fact, he said that the published result of the Commonwealth Statistician's survey seemed to be all cockeyed to him.

Mr. Morris: I do not recall him saying that, but if he did I do not think it would be about the figures. I think he would be referring to the disproportion that we are getting.

Mr. WOOD: He did question the published statement saying that it seemed all cockeyed to him. We have seen numerous public charges that figures of current unemployment released by the Government Statistician did not represent the true position. From my information I am sure that in some cases these charges were justified, and the truth is that unemployment in Queensland and Australia is far greater than has been disclosed. I enlarge on that by saying that under the old system members of Parliament could go to the district employment office in our own area and get the number of unemployed people in that area. Some years ago the Federal Government changed the system and an official statement was made by the Minister for Labour and National Service. The figures were not acceptable to members of this House. The only information given was that made available by the Federal Minister, and the figures were presented in such a way as to give the brightest aspect. I ask the Minister to give us an assurance that all figures will be quickly available to all members. I am not asking for anything unreasonable. If that assurance is given we may have no real objection to the transfer. The truncated figures were very convenient for the political purposes of the Federal Minister for Labour, Mr. Holt, when he made a survey of the unemployment position. Here are two recent cases in which the figures from the office of the Commonwealth Statistician were found unacceptable. I have not heard any such dissatisfaction with the State Office. That is why we need an assurance from the Minister that not only will we be able to get statistical information without delay, but that it will be as up to date as is practicable, and absolutely accurate. There appears to be no sound argument against the transfer

as far as the statistical machinery is concerned. As the Minister pointed out, all States except Victoria have carried out the change, and an agreement is being negotiated to carry out a transfer in Victoria. With the reservation that accurate information will be made available quickly to us we have no objection to it.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona) (5.19 p.m.): The Bill is for the purpose of ratifying something already carried out. Before expressing an opinion on the Bill, I would like to know exactly what has been done, therefore I shall reserve most of my comments till I have seen the Bill. We should be very careful before handing over a department of the Crown to another Government. We have had previous experience in this regard. It is a question of whether we will get the same efficient service from the Commonwealth Statistician as we got from the State Statistician. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, the hon. the Premier was not satisfied with figures issued by the Commonwealth Statistician's Office regarding the position in Queensland. Apparently there is a difference of opinion on the matter. I do not want the State to suffer as a result of the handing over of departments to the Commonwealth. The position should be carefully analysed before any decision is made. My experience of Commonwealth administration, with the exception of the Department of Social Services, is that it is almost impossible to get an early decision on matters referred to Commonwealth departments. Commonwealth authorities in Queensland have very little or no right to exercise powers or make decisions. Decisions have to be made from head offices in Canberra. There is no system of decentralisation. If the passage of this Bill meant that hon. members would have to wait until matters were referred to Canberra for decision, I should not be happy about the position. If we had a copy of the agreement, we would know more about it.

Mr. Morris: It is incorporated in the Bill.

Mr. POWER: I reserve my further comments until I have a copy of the Bill.

Hon. K. J. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Labour and Industry) (5.22 p.m.): I assure the hon. member for Baroona that a copy of the agreement is incorporated as a schedule of the Bill. As soon as the Bill is printed hon. members will have the details of the agreement.

I agree with the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Baroona that we should consider the position carefully before handing over to the Commonwealth any State activities or instrumentalities. I do not think we should lightly without thought enter on a process of handing over to the central Government our particular activities. I have always subscribed to that opinion and I hope I always shall, but a case such as this is an exception to the rule, when the service is more or less the same throughout the whole

of Australia and as a result of co-ordination or integration can be improved. I agree with the broad principle. I think hon. members will readily agree when they see the Bill that the broad principle is not departed from.

The Leader of the Opposition asked for an assurance that all figures will be as readily available as they have been in the past. I confidently and quite happily give him that assurance. I repeat my earlier statement that Mr. Solomon who has been Government Statistician in the past has now been appointed Deputy Commonwealth Statistician in Brisbane. He is continuing also as Queensland Government Statistician.

Mr. Wood: Can we get the information through Mr. Solomon without reference to a Minister in Canberra?

Mr. MORRIS: Very definitely, yes. I give an unqualified assurance on that. In years gone by when a member of the Opposition I frequently got in touch with the Government Statistician and was given the information immediately. It was a splendid service. I go further and say that it is a very necessary service for members of the Opposition as well as members of the Government. It is perhaps more necessary that members of the Opposition should be able to get figures as we got them in the past. As you know, Mr. Taylor, when in Opposition it was a wonderful help to get the figures required. I give the assurance that this service will be available to the Opposition in the future.

The Leader of the Opposition said that unemployment figures are not always quite accurate. That is so but I do not think we should be critical of the Government Statistician because it is not easy to get accurate figures of unemployment at any stage. There are some who do not register because they consider themselves seasonal workers. They do not register when temporarily unemployed; there are hosts of other factors which enter into the matter. I do not want to leave the Leader of the Opposition under a misapprehension. He said that he required figures that were absolutely accurate. I think that that is asking a little too much of a Government Statistician, whether Federal or State. It is not always possible to get the information necessary to ensure that the figures are absolutely accurate. At least I can say with perfect confidence that the figures will be as accurate as in the past. Personally I never had any reason to be dissatisfied with them.

I thank hon. members not only for the reception of the Bill but their tolerance in permitting me to introduce it without notice.

Motion (Mr. Morris) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

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

The House adjourned at 5.28 p.m.