

Queensland



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[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 1960

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rapidly deteriorating through neglect and, because of its situation on a major traffic route, is a bad advertisement for the city and the State?"

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough) replied—

"On their being vacated by the R.S.S.A.I.L.A. a careful survey was undertaken to determine the best use which could be made of the buildings concerned. It has been approved that they be occupied by certain government departments and sections of departments to relieve overcrowding in their present location. Included in these are the occupants presently accommodated in the South Brisbane Police Building in Grey street, the vacation and demolition of which building has been requested by the Brisbane City Council so as to permit of the continuation of the widening of Grey street. Arrangements are now being undertaken by the Department of Public Works to effect necessary repairs and render these buildings suitable for the accommodation of their new occupants."

COST OF NEW DISTRICT COURTS

Mr. DUGGAN (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) asked the Minister for Public Works and Local Government—

"(1) What is the estimated cost of the current reconstruction of the Police Court building to make provision for the District Court?"

"(2) Is it a fact that deterioration is so great in this century-old structure that the cost of reconstruction is now expected to far exceed the original estimate? If so, what is the revised estimate for the work?"

Hon. J. A. HEADING (Marodian) replied—

"(1) £25,767."

"(2) During reconstruction it was found that serious deterioration to verandahs and clock tower was so great as to constitute a public risk. Demolition and rebuilding of this section remained the only solution. Estimated cost to complete is £30,550."

THURSDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1960

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

QUESTIONS

ANZAC HOUSE

Mr. DUGGAN (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) asked the Premier—

"In view of the fact that the Government-owned building in Wickham Terrace, previously known as Anzac House, was declined in favour of a new £1,000,000 project in Boundary street, Spring Hill, as headquarters for the Main Roads Board and has remained untenanted since September 15 of last year, will he inform the House what the Government proposes to do with this valuable property which is 1960—3w

NEW TEACHERS' RESIDENCES

Mr. DUGGAN (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) asked the Minister for Education—

"In respect of teachers' residences in country areas,—

(1) How many such residences have been put under construction since August 12, 1957?

(2) How many have been completed and where, during the same period?

(3) How many are at present under construction and where?"

Hon. J. A. HEADING (Marodian—Minister for Public Works and Local Government), for **Hon. J. C. A. PIZZEY** (Isis), replied—

"(1) The number of residences which have been put under construction since August 12, 1957, is 52."

"(2) The number completed is 46, and 7 have been purchased, making a total of 53 now occupied, as listed hereunder:—

(a) Primary Schools (41) Cloyna, Balacava, Mother Mountain, Magnolia, Yerra, Brigalow, Shirbourne, Jackson, Peachester, Dirranbandi, Mirriwinni, Berrembea, Cedar Pocket, Yorkey's Knob, Goondi, Cannon Valley, Bushy Creek, Bowenville, Benarkin, Peranga, Quinalow, Inala, Nerang, Prenzlau, Maryborough West, Federal, Oakenden, Prospect Creek, Jimbour, Warwick West, Grosmont, Capalaba, Laravale, Caloundra, Maroochydore, St. Helen's, Tansey, Widgee, Builyan, Eidsvold, Normanton; (b) High Schools (3) Cairns High, Pimlico High, Murgon High; (c) District Inspectorates (2) Mackay, Cairns; (d) Residences purchased during period: Pimpama, Walker-vale, Gladstone High, Nambour High, Kingaroy High, Warwick High, Rockhampton District Inspectorate."

"(3) The number under construction is 3—(a) Serviceton, Coalstoun Lakes, Roma District Inspectorate; (b) Tenders accepted but no advice of commencement 3—Brooloo, St. George, Rockhampton North; (c) Purchase of residence under negotiation—1, Boynewood.

WELDING OF RAILS AND PREFABRICATION WORK, COLLINSVILLE—MT. ISA RAILWAY LINE

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) asked the Minister for Transport—

"(1) Will the welding of all rails for the re-laying of the Collinsville-Mount Isa Line be done at Townsville? If not, why not?"

"(2) What constructional, fabricating or other work in connection with this line will be done in Townsville and, if any of this work is to be done elsewhere, why?"

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

"(1) The Consultants have not yet finally determined whether electrically welded rails will be used, but if so the welding will be performed at a storage site already under construction at Stuart."

"(2) Engineering studies and investigations are still going on. If such indicate that prestressed bridge members are economical for rebuilding existing bridges, it is probable that the successful contractor will decide to erect a plant to do the work either in or near Charters Towers or Townsville. However, the decision on plant location will finally be the responsibility of such contractor. It seems certain

that fabrication of heavy steel for the Macrossan bridge will be performed at some locality where adequate plant facilities already exist rather than involve the project or private enterprise in the huge expense which would be associated with setting up a new plant."

COMMITTEE ON STANDARD BUILDING LAWS

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) asked the Minister for Public Works and Local Government—

"(1) Has he appointed a committee to study the building laws as they operate throughout the State and recommend a basis for standard building laws for the whole of Queensland?"

"(2) If so, why did he not appoint to such committee men from North Queensland who could inform the other members as to the particular building problems that are met with in that very important part of the State?"

Hon. J. A. HEADING (Marodian) replied—

"(1) Yes."

"(2) The Committee is substantially representative of State-wide organisations all of which are expected to have the capacity to present the broad State viewpoint."

NUMBER OF STATE HOUSES APPROVED, TOWNSVILLE, TOOWOOMBA, IPSWICH AND ROCKHAMPTON

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

"Since the Housing Commission first began operations and up to the latest date for which figures are readily available, how many houses have been approved for construction in (a) Townsville, (b) Toowoomba, (c) Ipswich, and (d) Rockhampton?"

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

"As at January 31, 1960, (a) Townsville, 869; (b) Toowoomba, 502; (c) Ipswich, 512; (d) Rockhampton, 699. In the case of Townsville, tenders for a further 27 houses have closed and are being examined; whilst plans and specifications for 2 blocks totalling 96 flats are well advanced in preparation."

TRAFFIC ORIGIN-AND-DESTINATION SURVEY

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) asked the Minister for Labour and Industry—

"(1) Will he advise the House of the extent of the origin-and-destination survey, if any, which was undertaken by the Traffic Commission prior to the introduction of one-way traffic and the ridiculously large number of traffic lights in the City Area of Brisbane?"

"(2) In view of the statement some time ago by the Premier that the planning of a ring-road for Brisbane without first having an origin-and-destination survey carried out was an astonishing feat of traffic engineering and in view of the present chaotic condition of city traffic, will he agree that a thorough survey should have been undertaken before implementing the present traffic reforms?"

Hon. K. J. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha) replied—

"(1) This question obviously arises either from a desire for knowledge or is cheap political expediency unworthy of a Parliamentary Member. I am sure, however, that Honourable Members will realise the motive which prompted the question when I point out that in 'Hansard' No. 23 covering Parliamentary Debates on Tuesday, December 8, 1959, and Wednesday, December 9, 1959, Mr. Lloyd is on record as having made the following statements:—I quote—

"I have made three suggestions to the Minister and they have been incorporated in the plans for controlling the movement of traffic in the City of Brisbane. They were for—

- (1) A system of synchronised traffic lights in the main streets;
- (2) Diagonal crossings at intersections;
- (3) Diamond turns"—end of quote.

Mr. Lloyd is further on record as having stated—I quote—

"In regard to one way traffic, I do not criticise its extension to Albert Street. I understand that the Traffic Commission has ordered lighting systems from overseas for these intersections. It should do much to improve the flow of traffic from the city to the northern areas. It will tend to centralise the avenues by which the traffic will move out. Cars go out by different routes. Some go down the Valley and some go up Edward Street. With one line of traffic going forward you can decentralise it by spreading it out at the outer boundary of the one way traffic area. I do not think the pressure of vested interests should be given any more consideration. Traffic engineering is something new here and it should be given a chance. I am sure it will be successful"—end of quote.

"As for the comment of—I quote—'Ridiculously large numbers of traffic lights in the city area of Brisbane'—end of quote—I inform him that there, will be on completion of this present plan, only 45 traffic lights in Brisbane's 375 square miles as against at present 300 in Sydney and 130 in Melbourne's 11 square

miles where more are currently being installed. The Honourable Member should know that lights give a much more positive protection to pedestrians than do zebra crossings."

"(2) A most thorough survey by several officers extending over approximately 18 months was undertaken before implementation of the present city reforms. Further, these reforms adhere to a pattern thoroughly tried and tested in many cities. Further again, these reforms have been instituted in dozens of cities both smaller and larger than Brisbane and have not in even one known instance, failed to give lasting relief to congestion, but also have saved, in total, hundreds of lives. This latter, i.e., the saving of lives, is of extreme importance to me and if the Honourable Member is insensible to it, I am disappointed. However, reference to his previous statements in this House, as quoted above, suggests that he has either suffered an amazing change of view or that one or the other opinion is expressed with little thought. He would, I am afraid, be a very inefficient administrator if this is a sample of his mental processes.

"In the event that some Members are sincerely interested in the technical background of this matter, the following is a full and carefully prepared description of the system employed—

"In the matter of an Origin and Destination Survey being conducted on vehicular traffic, there is absolutely no information whatever that can be gained from such a survey to ascertain whether or not a street or network of streets should be converted to one way traffic. There are no precise warrants to indicate whether or not a street should be one way. There are, however, a number of technical considerations which must be fulfilled before a one way street network can operate successfully. These conditions are fulfilled in Ann, Elizabeth, Turbot, Albert, Edward, and Creek streets, and in North Quay. An Origin and Destination Survey, however, was carried out in Edward street, the extent of which was to discover the effect that the conversion of this street to one way operation would have in regard to the resultant subsequent re-routing of the outbound bus service, which at present exists in that street, to Albert street. This survey was conducted to ascertain whether or not passengers carried by this public transport service would be seriously inconvenienced by this re-routing. In brief, the survey has shown that approximately 70 per cent. of the passengers using the outbound service originate to the south of Edward street, with the centre of gravity of the collection area being located in Albert street. This conclusively proves that the re-routing of the out-bound service along Albert street will not adversely affect these people and in fact will be to their benefit. The results obtained from the survey were subject to

statistical examination for anticipated reliability, and it was found that the results on a 90 per cent. confidence level were within 10 per cent. of the percentages shown. This means that in the case of the approximate 70 per cent. collection south of Edward street for the 90 per cent. confidence level the results are reliable between 66½ and 73½ per cent. and that irrespective of the day or number of days on which the survey was undertaken, it could be expected that the results obtained would fall somewhere within this range. An Origin and Destination Survey of any sort is never used in determining whether or not traffic lights should be installed."

Honourable Members interjecting—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask hon. members to desist from the practice of engaging in raucous comment in the middle of an answer that has been carefully prepared and which the inquirer is entitled to hear.

RENTAL REBATES FOR STATE RENTAL HOUSES

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

"(1) Was Mrs. X who is the subject of his reply to my representations in his letter of February 12 last advised that she would be allowed to remain in the State rental home at Grovely prior to being moved to Stafford?"

"(2) Was she also advised that, if she chose to remain at Grovely, her arrears of rental would not be charged against her rental account?"

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

"(1) Yes."

"(2) No."

UNDERGROUND WATER SUPPLY, LOWER BURDEKIN

Mr. McCATHIE (Haughton) asked the Premier—

"(1) With reference to investigations being conducted into the underground water supply in the Lower Burdekin, is he in a position to supply any information on the aforementioned question?"

"(2) If no information is yet available, when is it anticipated that a report in full or an interim report will be prepared?"

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough) replied—

"(1) Preliminary investigations into the underground water supplies in the Lower Burdekin Area are being carried out by the Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply in association with the Chief Government Geologist. The investigations involve surveys, collection of information

from boring contractors and farmers as to existing bores, test boring, and measurement of rainfall runoff in the delta area to assist in the location of areas of recharge. This is a preliminary investigation and much further investigation will be necessary before any results can be published."

"(2) A Departmental report on the preliminary investigations will be produced in June next with the object of summarising present knowledge of the area. The investigations will be continued with the object of arriving, as soon as possible, at the measures necessary to make the most effective use of the underground water supplies."

TEACHING STAFF, EAST AYR STATE SCHOOL

Mr. McCATHIE (Haughton) asked the Minister for Education—

"With respect to a letter from Mr. B. F. Doyle, Hon. Secretary, East Ayr State School Parents and Citizens' Association, written to him on the 19th instant (a copy of which has been forwarded to me) in which there is a statement that there will be three grades of fifty pupils or more in single drafts after the 22nd instant, will it be possible for the department to provide extra staff to reduce the size of these drafts as soon as the additional classrooms now under construction are completed?"

Hon. J. A. HEADING (Marodian—Minister for Public Works and Local Government), for **Hon. J. C. A. PIZZHEY** (Isis), replied—

"The staffing position at the East Ayr State School will be reviewed carefully on completion of the classrooms now under construction. An additional teacher will be provided if then considered necessary."

STATEMENT BY MINISTER FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY CONCERNING TRAFFIC CONTROL

Mr. HANLON (Ithaca) asked the Premier—

"(1) Is he aware of a statement of the Deputy Premier as reported in 'The Sunday Mail' of February 21, 1960, 'In future I am going to adopt a policy I learnt years ago in the army—"When you see a head hit it."?"

"(2) If so, is this statement in accord with the dignity and responsibility in office he expects from his deputy?"

"(3) Does he and his Government subscribe to this policy?"

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough) replied—

"As the Honourable Member should know, the Deputy Premier (Mr. Morris) served in the A.I.F. during World War II. His service included Tobruk, Alamein, Syria and New Guinea, and the phrase referred to in the question was one very often used in the Army. Most ex-diggers

are still prone to frequently use Army phrases and the Deputy Premier is no exception in this respect. Also, during his term with the A.I.F., like all ex-Servicemen, he learnt the true meaning of the word 'service.' In the position he now holds he has given an example of that type of service to his State, and has carried out the responsibilities of his office with great credit."

NUMBER OF TICKETS FOR MINOR TRAFFIC BREACHES

Mr. HANLON (Ithaca) asked the Minister for Labour and Industry—

"Can he inform the House of the number of tickets for minor traffic breaches of a standing or stationary nature to which a £1 summary fine applied which have been issued in the Greater Brisbane area for each of the months from June, 1959, to January, 1960, both inclusive?"

Hon. K. J. MORRIS (Mount Coot-tha) replied—

"1959: June, 1,073; July, 1,480; August, 792; September, 984; October, 1,440; November, 1,550; December, 1,538. 1960: January, 1,494. However, minor offenders are frequently invited to attend police traffic lectures, and during the year ended December 31, 1959, the staff from the Lecturing Section of the Police Traffic Branch, Brisbane, delivered twenty traffic education lectures to minor traffic offenders, and a total of 3,050 people attend those lectures. In addition, I would inform the Honourable Member that, during that year, that is the year ended December 31, 1959, the Police from that section lectured, in relation to road safety practices, at a total of 785 schools. Those lectures, which included practical instruction regarding the Traffic Regulations were given to 244,515 children from kindergarten to secondary school standard. A further 45,315 scholars were shown road safety teaching films, making a grand total of 289,650 scholars. Instruction regarding the Traffic Regulations was given also to 11,199 adults, and such instruction was combined with the screening of appropriate films. The lectures were given at country centres, as well as in the metropolitan area. In country areas, local authorities and other organisations have convened public gatherings, for the purpose of facilitating the activities of the police lecturing staff. The National Service trainees at Wacol training centre have received appropriate lectures in relation to traffic safety, and a total of 2,666 trainees were contacted by that means. Lectures and demonstrations were given also to the staff of the Manly Bus Line, employees of the Taxation Department, various sporting car clubs, the Department of the Army at different centres, at Milton, Lieht street and Ipswich road tram and bus

depots, at the City Hall during Health Week, and to various troops of the Boy Scout Movement. Public demonstrations of traffic regulations were carried out at Warwick, Stanthorpe and the Chermiside Drive-in, the latter on two occasions. A total of 8,295 persons attended those demonstrations. Outside centres visited by the lecturing staff include Pomona, Imbil, Kandanga, Ipswich, Bundaberg, Toowoomba, Dalby, Cooroy, Nambour, Caloundra and Kilcoy. Touring parties of young people sponsored by the Young Australia League received assistance from personnel of the staff at the Lecturing Section. The police lecturing staff also assist with weekly Radio Talks for the road safety ranger's session which is taped and broadcast by radio stations throughout the State. Weekly talks which have a wide appeal are also given on a children's session on television, Channel 9."

INQUIRY INTO SUPPLY OF HOUSES AND FLATS

Mr. HANLON (Ithaca) asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

"In view of his answer to my question on August 11, 1959, in which he stated that the measurement of the current lag in the supply of houses and flats in this State was at that time the subject of examination, can he advise if a final determination has yet been made?"

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

"Enquiries disclose that the Department of National Development has not yet made final determination for release."

PORT ALMA ROAD

Mr. THACKERAY (Keppel) asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

"(1) Will he inform the House if the Port Alma road now under construction is to be made a public or a private road?"

"(2) Is the Transport Facilities Tax to be waived on this road?"

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

"The matters raised by the Honourable Member are still under consideration and answers to these questions cannot be given at this stage."

MOTORISTS WHO SMOKE WHILE DRIVING

Mr. MANN (Brisbane) asked the Minister for Labour and Industry—

"(1) Has his attention been drawn to a statement in 'The Brisbane Telegraph' of February 23, 1960, where it is reported that Brisbane police support Mr. Kearney that motorists who smoke while driving are dangerous in busy traffic?"

"(2) Does he consider that Queensland is becoming more and more a Police State?"

"(3) Is it his intention to make it a traffic offence against motorists who smoke whilst driving?"

Hon. K. J. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha) replied—

"(1) I have seen the statements but have made no comment on them. However, the District Superintendent of Traffic at Brisbane has reported that neither he nor any of his senior officers has made a statement to the Press regarding Mr. Kearney's remarks as published in 'The Brisbane Telegraph' nor was the District Superintendent of Traffic or any of his senior officers approached to give a statement."

"(2) I know that this is a totally untrue insinuation as should the Honourable Member. For his information I quote the following figures of Police traffic prosecutions for each Australian State for 1958:— Prosecutions per 10,000 of population: Victoria, 635; New South Wales, 430; South Australia, 220; West Australia, 539; Tasmania, 394; Queensland, 114. These prove the stupidity of talk of 'A Police State'."

"(3) The Commissioner of Police has reported that a study of accident statistics reveals that smoking by drivers of vehicles has had no effect on the traffic accident rates, and this being so, action to make it a traffic offence against motorists who smoke whilst driving would not be warranted."

"As a result of the statistics we are collating we are able to give these facts which were not available to us prior to our taking office."

FORESTRY ROAD TO BLOOMFIELD AND CHINA CAMP TIMBER AREAS

Mr. ADAIR (Cook) asked the Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation—

"(1) Is he aware that in the Bloomfield and China Camp areas there is one of the largest stands of millable timbers in Queensland, both soft and hardwoods?"

"(2) What action is being taken by the Forestry Department in regard to the construction of a forestry road to open up these areas?"

Hon. A. G. MULLER (Fassifern) replied—

"(1) I am advised there is a large area of rain forest in the Bloomfield River catchment area which contains timber of millable size."

"(2) A timber mill situated on the Bloomfield River is operating on the timber stands in that area. Roads are constructed, as required, by the purchaser of the timber. An investigation by the Surveyor-General's Department and the Forestry Department in conjunction, into road requirements in the area, was completed recently. The report of this investigation is now being considered."

LESSEES OF RAILWAY LAND, BYRNE STREET, MAREEBA

Mr. ADAIR (Cook) asked the Minister for Transport—

"Will he advise what action is proposed by his department regarding the granting of suitable long term tenures to lessees occupying land owned by the Railway Department in Byrne street, Mareeba?"

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

"The majority of leases of Railway land at Mareeba are long term tenures up to 20 years. Following a visit to North Queensland and an inspection of the land concerned at Mareeba at the request of and in company with the present member for the area (Mr. T. Gilmore), I agreed that the land considered surplus to future Departmental requirements would be converted to freehold. The necessary amendment to the Railways Acts permitting of this has now been made and action is being taken to determine the area which can be released and to have the necessary survey put in hand as soon as possible for the purpose of having the land converted to freehold, after which the terms upon which it can be made available for purchase by lease holders and others will receive consideration."

COSTS OF LEGAL OPINION, DR. FRANK LOUAT AND BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr. DONALD (Bremer) asked the Premier—

"(1) What was the cost involved in the engagement of Dr. Frank Louat in connection with the drafting and presentation of the Constitution (Declaration of Rights) Bill?"

"(2) If there were any other legal costs, what was the amount and to whom was it paid?"

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough) replied—

"(1) Dr. Louat has not yet submitted his statement of fees."

"(2) No other legal costs were, or will be, involved."

WORK AT MORNINGSIDE STATE SCHOOL

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) asked the Minister for Education—

"(1) Concerning the Morningside State School, does the Government intend to carry out any work during this financial year on the school grounds, in particular the shifting of one house to a new site on the ground and the removal of the other house? If so, what work is to be carried out?"

"(2) If not, when will the work be started?"

Hon. J. A. HEADING (Marodian—Minister for Public Works and Local Government), for **Hon. J. C. A. PIZZEY** (Isis), replied—

“(1 and 2) The proposal to alter the boundaries and to enlarge the site of the Morningside State School, which involves the exchange of two (2) properties and the purchase of a third, has been the subject of protracted negotiations by the Public Curator and enquiry and report by the Land Administration Commission. The exchange of one (1) property has been agreed upon and the Department of Public Works is being requested to re-site the dwelling associated with this transaction. At this stage, it cannot be stated when this work will be completed. Negotiations for the purchase of another property are almost completed and action to remove the improvements thereon will be taken as early as practicable.”

BUILDING OF HOMES BY HOUSING COMMISSION IN BULIMBA, HAWTHORNE, MORNINGSIDE, CANNON HILL, MURARRIE, AND TINGALPA AREAS

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

“(1) During the last two years, has the Queensland Housing Commission carried out any investigation as to the possibility of building homes in the districts of Bulimba, Hawthorne, Morningside, Cannon Hill, Murarrie and Tingalpa? If so, what areas did they investigate and what were their findings?”

“(2) If not, why has no investigation been made?”

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

“Yes. The Queensland Housing Commission has in the last two years carried out investigations as to the possibility of building homes in the districts of Cannon Hill, Murarrie and Tingalpa. The following areas were inspected for housing purposes:—(a) Approximately 35 acres of land situate Marie and Ives streets, Murarrie. This land was considered suitable for a Commission Estate and the Public Curator approached the owner on behalf of the Commission, but she did not desire to sell the land. (b) Ten allotments offered to the Commission in a new Estate situate Molloy road and Camelia and Dahlia streets, Cannon Hill. The majority of these allotments were unsuitable for Commission purposes and price requested for remainder was considered to be too high. (c) Six allotments offered to Commission in a new estate at Creek and Richmond roads, Cannon Hill. These allotments were unsuitable. (d) Approximately 51 acres of land, situate Wynnum and Stanton roads, Tingalpa. A large proportion of this area is low-lying and unsuitable for development. The remainder would be an uneconomical proposition for

the Commission. There are no other suitable residential areas available in these districts. The districts—Bulimba, Hawthorne, Morningside—were investigated in previous years.”

HOUSING COMMISSION HOMES, AND RENT OF ROOMS, HOUSES AND FLATS, SOUTHPORT, LABRADOR AND NERANG

Mr. JESSON (Hinchinbrook) asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

“(1) How many Housing Commission homes have been built in Southport, Labrador and Nerang since 1945?”

“(2) In view of an important event that is taking place in the near future and the announcement that the Housing Commission was negotiating for the purchase of land within one mile of the Southport Post Office to erect twenty-nine homes, will he reconsider the request from the Nerang A.L.P. for the opening up of an obsolete Forestry Reserve adjacent to Southport that is most suitable for a Housing Commission Project of at least 250 homes?”

“(3) Is he aware that workers, especially in the building trade that is booming at the Gold Coast and will continue to do so for many years, have to keep two homes and pay as much as £3 per week for a room for five days per week and those fortunate enough to get a house or flat have to pay as much as £8 to £10 per week?”

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

“(1) At Southport, Labrador and Nerang 80 houses have been completed, 5 are under construction and a contract let for a further house. At Surfers Paradise, Broadbeach and Mermaid Beach a further 7 houses have been provided. All these houses are Worker's Dwellings on land owned by the applicants.”

“(2) I did try to secure part of this Forestry Reserve. The Forestry Department is not agreeable to the alienation of this State Forest Reserve, and while other land is available I do not consider further action in respect of this Reserve to be warranted.”

“(3) Following representations from the Honourable Member for Southport, I searched for sites suitable for rental or purchase by persons in permanent employment on the Gold Coast. A group of 29 sites, situated within one mile of the Southport Post Office has been acquired. I suggest that persons in permanent employment on the Gold Coast who desire homes, consider taking advantage of the assistance available from the Housing Commission for the erection of homes on their own land or on the 29 sites now being acquired by the Commission at Southport.”

LAND RESUMPTIONS, ALBERT STATE SCHOOL,
MARYBOROUGH AND WEST STATE SCHOOL

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) asked the Minister for Education—

“(1) When does he expect resumption procedure to be finalised in regard to areas of land being resumed for school purposes for the Albert State School, Maryborough, and the Maryborough West State School?”

“(2) Will he endeavour to hasten proceedings as a number of years have elapsed and the schools concerned require the additional playground area urgently?”

Hon. J. A. HEADING (Marodian—Minister for Public Works and Local Government), for **Hon. J. C. A. PIZZEY** (Isis), replied—

“(1 and 2) Notice of intention to resume several parcels of land for the enlargement of Albert State School site was given in the Government Gazette of January 23, 1960. After expiry of the requisite period for lodgment of objections and after consideration of the latter, resumption action can be further advanced. An Order in Council has been issued for the reversion to the Crown of a Benevolent Asylum Reserve and the Land Administration Commission is arranging the registration of this Order in Council in the Titles Office and also for a survey. It is proposed, on completion of these formalities to seek Executive Authority to set this area, as well as a road area, aside as a Reserve for school purposes thereby enlarging the Maryborough West State School.”

TOBACCO AND COTTON-GROWING,
MARYBOROUGH DISTRICT

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) asked the Minister for Agriculture and Stock—

“(1) Has his department conducted any experiments in tobacco or cotton growing in the Maryborough district?”

“(2) If so, when and where and what opinions were formed as to the suitability of the soils in the Maryborough district?”

“(3) If no definite opinions have been formed, will he arrange for his department to establish experimental areas in the Maryborough district to test the economic soundness of growing tobacco and/or cotton in the Maryborough district on a large scale?”

“(4) Is it correct that a tobacco firm has been growing cotton in the Bauple district for many years? If so, with what results?”

Hon. O. O. MADSEN (Warwick) replied—

“(1) Limited experiments have been conducted with tobacco. No experiments have been conducted with cotton.”

“(2) During the early 1950's, tobacco was grown experimentally at Tinana

Creek, near Bauple. There are soils suited to tobacco and cotton growing in the Maryborough area, more particularly around Tiaro and Bauple, but availability of suitable water would probably be a limiting factor for tobacco growing.”

“(3) See answer to (2).”

“(4) As far as can be ascertained no tobacco firm has grown any appreciable amount of cotton in the Bauple district. No results are available. Some cotton was grown commercially in the Tiaro district in the period between the two World Wars, but with limited success except in dry years.”

OIL DEPOT AT URANGAN

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

“What information is available in regard to the establishment of an oil depot at Urangan?”

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

“Negotiations have taken place between the Queensland Government and Caltex Oil (Australia) Pty. Limited, for the establishment of a bulk terminal at Urangan, and the Government and the Company have reached agreement on the basis of the establishment. The Caltex Company have secured the necessary land and are now proceeding with the planning for the construction of the terminal.”

NUMBER OF STATE HOMES ERECTED AT
GLADSTONE

Mr. BURROWS (Port Curtis) asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

“(1) How many homes have been erected in Gladstone for (a) rental, and (b) sale or rental, during the current year?”

“(2) Has the Government any immediate plans for erecting more homes in Gladstone?”

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

“(1) (a) and (b) No houses have been completed since 1st July, 1959, but two houses were under construction at 31st January, 1960. An application has been received to purchase one of the houses and the other is available for purchase and if not sold will be rented.”

“(2) The Government's plans for more houses at Gladstone provide for the erection of houses on Commission land where persons select sites and request the erection of houses for purchase by them, and for assistance under the Workers' Dwelling scheme for the erection of houses on land owned by applicants. The number of high priority applications for rental homes at January 31, 1960, is four which is not high in relation to the pool of seventy-nine State Rental Homes in which vacancies occur from time to time.”

TOURIST FACILITIES, GREEN ISLAND, CAIRNS

Mr. WALLACE (Cairns) asked the Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation—

“Will he assure the people of Far Northern Queensland that, when considering applications for the lease of certain land on Green Island, near Cairns, for the purpose of operating tourist facilities, the rights of campers will be preserved and that steps will be taken to ensure that provision is made for ample fresh water supplies and also for an efficient system of sewerage?”

Hon. A. G. MULLER (Fassifern) replied—

“The part of Green Island which has been offered for development as a Tourist Resort contains an area of about 7½ acres, and with the exception of several small areas, the remainder of the Island is National Park. It is not intended to prohibit camping on the National Park, but the area leased will entitle the lessee to exclusive possession. Camping on the leased land or the use of facilities thereon would be a matter for arrangement between members of the public and the registered lessee.”

SCHOOL RESERVE R. 272, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESERVE R. 493, MACKAY, FOR HOUSING PURPOSES

Mr. GRAHAM (Mackay) asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

“(1) Further to my previous request that consideration be given by the Housing Commission to the acquiring of School Reserve R. 272, and the Local Government Reserve R. 493 for housing purposes, and in view of the very urgent demand in Mackay for further Housing Commission homes, will he have further enquiries made through the Mackay City Council to see if a drainage scheme could not be undertaken so that this area could be made suitable for housing purposes?”

“(2) As this area in question is sited in the Mackay Town Plan as residential and must eventually be used for that purpose, will he make every endeavour to secure this area for Housing Commission use?”

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

“(1 and 2) I refer the Honourable Member to my answers of August 11, and September 22, 1959, to his questions in regard to Reserves 272 and 493 when I indicated that I did not regard the areas in the immediate approach paths to aerodromes as being suitable for residential purposes, and when I advised that I considered that from the aspects of noise and safety it was far wiser to choose sites away from aerodrome approaches. The Housing Commission has acquired 37 sites off Burgess, Holack and Valley Streets and tenders for four houses closed on 16th

instant. At 31st ultimo the Clerk of Petty Sessions, Mackay, was not holding any applications of high priority for rental homes.”

MACKAY BASE HOSPITAL

Mr. GRAHAM (Mackay) asked the Minister for Health and Home Affairs—

“(1) In view of the fact that various wards in the Mackay Base Hospital have been subdivided by the erection of small wooden partitions, will he advise why the partitions have been erected?”

“(2) Is it a fact that certain patients occupying these wards are classed as paying patients, whilst some are receiving free treatment?”

“(3) What charges are now being levied by the Hospitals Board for paying patients?”

Hon. H. W. NOBLE (Yeronga) replied—

“(1, 2 and 3) When the present Government took office it found that through the bad condition of the State's finances that had developed under the previous Government free hospitalisation in this State was in a grave danger. In fact, there is good reason to believe that if the previous Government had remained in office it would have been abandoned. In view of the present Government's determination to preserve free hospitalisation it was necessary that every avenue of obtaining additional income for the hospitals should be availed of, whilst preserving a free service for all those who desire it. The amendment by the Commonwealth Parliament of the National Health Act which provided for special fund payments of Commonwealth Benefit for persons suffering from an illness at the time of becoming insured made it possible for long-stay patients in hospitals to insure and obtain a Commonwealth Hospital Benefit of £1 or £1 16s. per day, depending on the type of hospital in which they were accommodated. The Commonwealth legislation, however, provides that such benefit is paid only when a corresponding hospital fee is charged. The premium required to insure for these benefits ranges from 9d. to 1s. per week, and Commonwealth legislation requires that the premium be not paid by a State Government. To enable the long-stay patients to take advantage of this Commonwealth scheme in our hospitals, it was necessary that they be physically separate from the free public patient. Practically every long-stay patient freely and willingly elected to take advantage of this scheme and the Government undertook to provide extra comforts to the value of 5s. a fortnight to patients coming under the scheme. It is left to each patient to decide whether or not he or she participates in the scheme and no compulsion is used. By this means the income of our public hospitals has been

substantially increased without any loss whatsoever to any patient. I confidently state, and feel certain that all reasonably minded people will agree, that it is the bounden duty of the State Government to acquire for Queensland all the moneys which it is legally entitled to obtain from the Commonwealth. The scheme now operating for the accommodation of long-stay patients has given the opportunity to the patient to obtain for the hospitals a substantial payment for their care without any loss to themselves, has obtained for Queensland substantial sums to which this State is legally and morally entitled and last, but by no means least, has guaranteed the continuation of the free hospital system in this State."

ROYALTY CONCESSION FOR PRODUCERS OF TIN AND OTHER METALS

Mr. GILMORE (Tablelands) asked the Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads—

"As confusion exists in the minds of some small ore producers of tin and other metals as to the amount of royalty concession granted by this Government, will he inform the House of the facts and the reasons for this concessional assistance?"

Hon. O. O. MADSEN (Warwick—Minister for Agriculture and Stock), for **Hon. E. EVANS** (Mirani), replied—

"The original Regulations provided that in respect of gold and other minerals royalty was payable by a producer on a sliding scale on profits in excess of £2,000. At Irvinebank I was convinced, after hearing a number of small tin producers introduced by Mr. T. V. Gilmore, M.L.A., and considering their arguments, that there would be much greater encouragement to prospectors and small mine owners if the minimum of £2,000 were increased to £5,000, and also that the small amounts of royalty payable by owners making profits of from £2,000 to £5,000 did not justify the cost of collection. Accordingly, the exemption was increased to £5,000 in September, 1959."

TOWN ALLOTMENTS, BILOELA

Mr. V. E. JONES (Callide) asked the Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation—

"Because of the urgent need and the high price which was paid for the twenty-two town allotments in Biloela which he opened recently, will he make arrangements to have at least another twenty allotments made available for purchase at the earliest possible date?"

Hon. A. G. MULLER (Fassifern) replied—

"Action is being taken to offer a further twenty-five (25) allotments in Biloela which have already been surveyed and it is anticipated the sale will be held at Biloela during May next."

PAPER

The following paper was laid on the table:—

Ordinances under the City of Brisbane Acts, 1924 to 1959.

ROCKHAMPTON HARBOUR BOARD AND THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ROCKHAMPTON BILL

INITIATION

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

"That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself in a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill with respect to an agreement between the Rockhampton Harbour Board and the Council of the City of Rockhampton."

Motion agreed to.

WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. A. G. MULLER (Fassifern—Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation) (11.59 a.m.): I move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the War Service Land Settlement Acts, 1946 to 1959, in certain particulars."

The amendment of the War Service Land Settlement Acts gives effect in part to the Government's decision, to afford relief to war service land settlers in the Clare and Millaroo irrigation areas on the Burdekin River. One provision is to allow any war service settler to transfer his farm to any qualified person, not necessarily an ex-service man, after the first five years of the term of his lease. He will also be able to mortgage or sub-let after such period as though the selection was held under the Land Act. This amending provision will put perpetual lease selections subject to the War Service Land Settlement Acts on the same basis as perpetual lease selections under the Land Act, and will thus bring into uniformity throughout the State the right of selectors to transfer, mortgage, or sub-let after they have completed their personal residence period of five years.

Under the existing law, war service settlers may transfer only to a qualified ex-service man during the first 10 years of the lease unless on application by the selector for permission to transfer, the Land Court certifies that good grounds exist for allowing a transfer owing to the selector's ill-health or

misfortune. Elaborating on that, I might say that an amendment was brought down in 1959 allowing an ex-service man to transfer because he was ill or had financial difficulties and was unable to carry on.

A further important amendment is the insertion of a new section in the War Service Land Settlement Acts under which settlers in the Clare and Millaroo Irrigation Areas may be granted a remission of their rents and survey fees outstanding as at 31 December, 1959. This relief, on top of the Government's decision to write off the loan indebtedness of settlers, will give the soldier settlers in the Clare and Millaroo areas an opportunity for a fresh start free of debt to the Crown. A further amendment, one of a minor nature, will alter the rental periods of the existing perpetual lease selections to 10 years instead of seven years, so as to conform to the amendment in this regard made in the Land Act last year.

The first principle gives the right to the ex-service settler to sell his block on the open market after five years, and this will bring him into the category of a civilian. I could not understand why the ex-service settler should be prevented from transferring or selling his property on the open market to whom he chose before the expiry of 10 years. The civilian, on the other hand, was permitted to sell his land after the expiration of five years. Previously, after the expiration of five years the ex-service settler was permitted to sell or transfer his property to another ex-service man; after 10 years he could sell to anybody. Shortly, the legislation will enable the ex-service settler after the expiration of five years to sell to whom he wishes. There is really nothing extraordinary about the Bill. It brings the ex-service settler under the same conditions as exists in the Land Act inasmuch as he can sell under the same terms and conditions as a civilian can.

Mr. Ewan: It is giving him justice denied him before.

Mr. MULLER: That is so. Recently, an understanding was arrived at between the Commonwealth Government and the State Government in regard to soldier settlers in the Clare and Millaroo areas. It has now been decided to relieve those ex-service men of their commitments. The State has gone further by remitting arrears of rent that have accrued over the years, as well as the survey fees. In addition to contributing towards the relief of distress in the area, the State has made a further contribution by remitting the amounts owing to it. We believe that is only justice to the ex-service men concerned. Of course, some settlers in the area have done reasonably well.

Mr. Foley: Are you going to give them the equivalent of the write-off?

Mr. MULLER: Whom?

Mr. Foley: Those who have come out all right.

Mr. MULLER: They have no debts. I am not dealing with the write-off now, but with the provisions in the Bill enabling the State to make a contribution in addition to the general arrangement between the Commonwealth and the States. The Bill has nothing at all to do with the write-off. All we are dealing with now is the contribution that the State will make in addition to the write-off.

Mr. Walsh: In other words, the State will accept the liability?

Mr. MULLER: This is something additional to the general arrangement with the Commonwealth. All we are doing under the Bill is enabling the State to remit arrears of rents and survey fee charges. I repeat, the Bill has nothing to do with the general write-down arrangement between the Commonwealth and the States. It is purely a State matter.

Mr. Hilton: Are the Commonwealth Government accepting their responsibilities in the write-off under the Commonwealth-States agreement?

Mr. MULLER: The Commonwealth Government have accepted their responsibilities. This is purely a State matter; the Commonwealth has nothing to do with it. It is additional to the general agreement between the Commonwealth and the States.

Mr. Coburn: It is a matter between your department and the lessees?

Mr. MULLER: That is so.

Mr. Walsh: What is the estimated total amount involved?

Mr. MULLER: About £4,900. I have not the actual figures here, but I shall give the hon. member the information during the second-reading debate.

We are also enabling settlers to arrange matters between themselves. Even though this settlement had been arrived at previously, in some cases it would have been difficult for a settler to sell his property. Following this final settlement, I am hoping that those settlers who do not wish to carry on and want to dispose of their farms can do so to neighbours who might want to increase their areas. It is well known that the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply has been trying to make some adjustment of the areas. One of the causes of the trouble, we believe, was that they did not have enough area of good tobacco land. I am not being critical of anyone on that. In some cases the topography of the land appeared to be all right and it was only after working the land and gaining experience that they found that some of it was not suitable for tobacco. That was the cause of some failures but not of all. However, that is beside the question and is purely a matter for future consideration as to whether any adjustment can be made.

This will be a starting point. After the adjustment is made the settlers will be able to arrange transfers if they so desire. All we are doing in the Bill is making it possible.

Besides enabling the soldier settlers to sell earlier than previously, we are bringing the conditions of the settlements into conformity with the Land Acts generally. That is to say, in future a review of rentals will take place every 10 years instead of every seven years. We are aiming at uniformity in land legislation as far as possible for both soldier settlers and group settlers.

The matter is a simple one and I have tried to explain the objectives as clearly as possible. I am sure hon. members will not raise any serious objection to the proposal. I believe it has been awaiting attention for a long while.

Mr. DUGGAN (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) (12.13 p.m.): I do not think any hon. member of the Assembly will have any serious quarrel with the Minister for the way in which he has described what he proposes to do. Any quarrel we might have will be with what might be contemplated at some future stage either by himself or by some other Minister whose responsibilities embrace the settlements in this area. I do not think he deliberately concealed anything but what we lack at present is a proper picture of the general situation as it affects these settlers. There is an obligation on the Minister to take hon. members more fully into his confidence on the total financial obligation involved and on the subject of whether, in addition to the measures contemplated in the Bill, some supplementary action is to be taken by, say, the Minister for Agriculture and Stock or the Treasurer, who has control of the Agricultural Bank.

Mr. Ewan: Is that in relation to Clare?

Mr. DUGGAN: Yes, Clare and Millaroo. In any matter affecting the welfare of returned soldiers the Opposition is most sympathetic. They should be given every consideration. That was the attitude of the previous Government, too. All of us rather regret that the project at Clare and Millaroo has not turned out as satisfactorily as the original sponsors would have wished. Unfortunately the general history of soldier settlement throughout Australia shows that it has not been as successful as we might have liked it to be. Certainly there is an obligation on the Australian nation to give to the men who went away to defend the country the opportunity on their return to participate in ballots for land, so enabling them to share in the general prosperity that their sacrifice made possible. For that reason we are very sympathetic to the general proposal. At the same time we realise that the problem has many complex factors. On the question of the size of the areas the Minister has been fair enough not to attach blame

so I do not criticise him for any action he has taken up to this stage. He has tried to be objective and we try to be objective, too. The infestation of nut grass poses a problem. Then there is the question of the suitability of products attempted to be grown. Those are all factors affecting the economics of the settlement. The screening of the applicants originally determined to some extent the success or failure of the scheme. The fact that some settlers have been able to make a success while others have failed indicates that apparently there was a general opportunity for success to attend the efforts of those who applied proper methods of husbandry in the development of the land. I make no general charges against those who are being afforded relief about whether their own lack of ability contributed in any way to their financial situation. But it is somewhat anomalous that others who have made a success of their operations do not receive any benefit whatsoever. If it is the intention of the Government subsequently to increase the areas it may be that because some of these others have not incurred losses but have demonstrated that they can conduct their affairs profitably, they will not receive the same benefits as those who have so far been unable to succeed in the development of their particular holdings.

Mr. Coburn: They are the most deserving cases.

Mr. DUGGAN: Which are they?

Mr. Coburn: The ones you just mentioned.

Mr. DUGGAN: It is something we have to be very careful about. Apparently the Minister has not been able to understand why the original settlers were prevented from selling for a period of 10 years compared with people with an ordinary leasehold tenure. It must be realised that returned soldiers had first priority of application over the general civilian. I am not quarrelling with that, but it is one reason why there should be some differentiation. They had priority of ballot. Secondly, returned soldier settlers were given an interest-free period. As I recall it returned soldiers who took up land in various parts of the State were given a three-year interest-free period. I am not certain at the moment whether that applied to Clare and Millaroo. If it did it would be an additional reason why they enjoyed a benefit denied to the ordinary outside citizen. Thirdly, this project was developed at tremendous cost to the taxpayers of the State generally. Of course, we assumed that burden ourselves because we did not become an agent State. There were many reasons why that could have been a desirable course except that it may have meant surrendering our sovereign right to determine our own land laws. I think that was the predominant consideration of previous Labour Governments in rejecting the idea of becoming an agent State. From a financial point of

view it would have been very advantageous generally because a great deal of the cost would have been shared but at the expense of surrendering complete jurisdiction over Queensland's land laws. It probably would have meant surrendering certain State constitutional powers. It is a pity that efforts are not made consistently by the States to see that we should not lose sovereign powers merely because of the superior financial bargaining powers and resources of the Commonwealth Government.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I point out to the hon. gentleman that the principle of the Bill outlined by the Minister relates only to Clare and I ask the hon. gentleman not to develop a general discussion on the Commonwealth-States Agreement.

Mr. DUGGAN: I agree, Mr. Taylor. I do not want to develop that argument.

At some stage we should be taken into the Minister's confidence about the expected final financial commitments the State may have to undertake to try to meet the situation at Clare and Millaroo. In the Minister's own interests and in fairness to the Committee generally we should have the full picture. By way of interjection somebody asked about the costs. I had intended to ask that question myself. The Minister said that as far as his memory served him he thought it was in the order of £4,900. There may be other commitments which the Government propose to undertake in some way—commitments to the Agricultural Bank, the Irrigation Commission, or some other department. We should have a clear picture to enable us to see the extent to which it is proposed to make a financial remission or amelioration of the conditions that now obtain. Generally speaking, I think it is the wish of all political parties to be as considerate as possible to these people. If the department is convinced that the financial circumstances of some of these settlers is not directly due to their negligence, we should help them. We have a sympathetic attitude on the general question. We reserve our final consideration of the matter until we hear an amplification from the Minister and we see the Bill. Meanwhile, we are sympathetic to the question of some relief. We must also remember that we are dealing with the taxpayers' money. It is all very well to say it is somebody else's money, but while we are conscious of our responsibilities to the returned men to the extent of erring on the side of justice, we must also be conscious of our obligations to the general taxpayers. Our official attitude will be determined after we hear more from the Minister on the second reading. I am sure he will take us into his confidence and give us as much information as possible. If the Minister does that we will try to meet him.

Mr. FOLEY (Belyando) (11.52 a.m.): I agree with the Leader of the Opposition regarding relief for soldier settlers. The

Minister has pointed out that in some cases the failure has been due to the smallness of the area of the blocks.

Mr. Coburn: You did not do anything to help them when you had the opportunity.

Mr. FOLEY: It is only during recent years that it was discovered that the soil survey made earlier was not exhaustive enough to determine the correct area for tobacco-growing. That information was discovered in recent years and some effort has been made to rectify the matter. I point out to hon. members that there is no comparison whatsoever between the conditions pertaining to soldier settlement and ordinary land settlement under the Land Acts. Under the Land Acts the person who acquires a block of land by ballot or who purchases it has to make his own arrangements about finance to develop the land. In the case of the soldier settler at Clare, Wandoan and other places, provision was made under a Commonwealth-State Agreement to provide funds to develop the selections up to an economic standard; and after a period of years if it was found that the settler could not make a living, through no fault of his own, provision was made to reduce the rent to an economic standard. Apart from the agreement between the Commonwealth and the State, the State is now writing off the debts of certain settlers in the area. I point out that this will cause resentment among those who have battled, worked and slaved to make good on their selections.

Mr. Ewan: They all have debts.

Mr. FOLEY: No. Some have met their commitments.

Mr. Ewan: How many?

Mr. FOLEY: Quite a number.

Mr. Ewan: You could count them on the fingers of one hand.

Mr. FOLEY: Apparently a few of these selectors are being assisted to the extent outlined by the Minister.

Now we come to the matter of transfer. The period of 10 years was fixed because of the peculiar conditions applicable to soldier settlers, and to give them a chance or at least to give the authorities a chance to find out whether the area could be developed in that period, and if an economic write-down was desirable at a later date. That was the reason for the different conditions under the Land Acts and the War Service Land Settlement Acts.

Mr. Ewan: Yet you gave the civilian the right to transfer after five years.

Mr. FOLEY: Because of the totally different conditions applicable to him. The civilian has to find his own money for development and has to comply with certain conditions under the lease within five years. Some may fail and get an extension. After the

five-year period the civilian is eligible to transfer his selection, but the position for soldier settlers was totally different. Up to £15,000 and £20,000 was given to the selector towards the cost of development. In other parts of the Commonwealth the farms were going concerns before selectors went onto them. Now we are proposing to give preferential treatment to the person who has failed, but what about the man who has not failed, who has met his commitments, and there are many of them in the Clare area?

Mr. Ewan: How many?

Mr. FOLEY: I cannot give the exact figure, but I know some have met their commitments on time. What concessions are being given to them? I think that is a pertinent question. No concession is being given to them.

I turn to another point. If we are going to give these concessions to war service land settlers at Clare, Millaroo, and other places in that area, what are we going to do for those who have failed at Wandooan and other parts of the State despite the financial assistance they received? I suggest that, if the concessions are to be given to one section of settlers, the same concessions must be given to settlers in other parts of the State.

The Bill covers the remission of rent and survey fees. It is rather puzzling to think that after years of settlement any survey fees should be unpaid, because the basis of payment was one-fifth a year for five years. As the Minister has pointed out, however, settlers have suffered hardship through no fault of their own, and in those circumstances we must be in agreement with the proposal. The same could be said about remission of rent. On other occasions under the Land Acts Governments have given concessions to settlers who have found themselves in difficulty. I refer to Capella where, a number of years ago—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I take it that the hon. member will not digress.

Mr. FOLEY: I was referring to similar action taken in other parts of the State to meet cases of failure through no fault of the settler himself. If the Government are going to give these concessions to settlers at Clare and Millaroo I think they should give the same consideration to settlers at Wandooan and in other parts of the State where it has been found that they have failed through no fault of their own.

Mr. COBURN (Burdekin) (12.31 p.m.): I am sure that amongst the returned soldiers' organisations in North Queensland there will be general approval of the arrangement entered into between the Commonwealth and State Governments in regard to relief to be given to the Clare settlement. In such a big arrangement there must certainly be a number of anomalies. The hon. member for Belyando pointed out that the settler who incurred

the greatest loss during the period that he operated his farm is the one who is to receive the greatest measure of relief. Many farmers at Clare have succeeded. Perhaps their farms were more suited for the production of tobacco, perhaps they had a greater knowledge of how to produce tobacco and perhaps they were more industrious than some of the others. They are not being afforded the same measure of relief as those who failed dismally. The Government have felt that there is no necessity for them to have relief. I have one particular settler in mind in that area who every year was so successful in the production of tobacco leaf and the sale of it that he was able to pay his way. All rents were paid. Then, as his land became heavily infested with nut grass last year, he found it impossible to produce a crop of tobacco at all. It was known when he was placed on that farm that there was an infestation of nut grass, because the map issued by the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply showed the areas where nut grass was present. This particular settler will get no relief at all under the agreement entered into between the Commonwealth and State Governments for the relief of ex-servicemen settlers in the Clare and Millaroo areas. As he has a title to his land he will be able to transfer or sell his farm, but it is virtually valueless from a sale point of view because anybody with any knowledge of the production of tobacco would know that the land was of little or no value. His suggestion to me is that I place his case before the Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation and ask that consideration be given to him by granting him another area of land, perhaps of the same acreage as the one he had, in one of the other tobacco-growing areas—Millaroo, Dalbeg or Tinaroo. He has been a particularly industrious man, an exemplary citizen, and he feels that he has about another 10 years of industry left within his physical make-up, and he wants to make his position financially strong in those ten years. Unless relief is afforded to him, and he is well worthy of it because of the great effort he made during previous years, he will not benefit one iota from the arrangement entered into in regard to the others. I do not want to detract one little bit from the merits of the scheme to be implemented for the relief of those at Clare.

Many factors over which the settlers had no control operated at Clare. In some cases the land was unsuitable for the production of tobacco; in others, it was heavily infested with nut grass. Again, on one occasion the Department of Agriculture and Stock published in its journal a formula for a poison spray for use on the tobacco leaf. That spray was much more potent than was necessary and when the farmers used it, even though some of it was less potent than was suggested, they found that the buyers of tobacco leaf rejected the whole crop because it was too heavily impregnated with the poison spray.

Mr. Aikens: The buyers would never have rejected it if some "dill" at Mareeba had not blown the gaff.

Mr. COBURN: Because of that, the growers at Clare lost the whole of their crop that year. There is no need for me to point out that losing the value of one crop is enough to put a man on the road to bankruptcy.

The large scheme covering most of the farmers has already been implemented. It has been very acceptable not only to those engaged in the industry but to the ex-service men organisations who fought so strongly to have it implemented, for many years without success. Although the former Minister for Public Lands said that he had intended to do something for them, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. He did nothing for them. The credit must go to those who were responsible for the scheme, and I am sure that the farmers at Clare are more grateful to them than to those who promised to do something but did nothing.

If the anomalies that have cropped up are brought to the notice of the State Government, representations on the highest level should be made to the Federal Government. Perhaps some of them can be ironed out by making available to the people concerned suitable tobacco-growing land in other areas, either close to their present properties or even as far distant as Tinaroo. I hope that the Minister will take cognisance of the cases of successful farmers at Clare who, through the overgrowth of nut grass, which is economically impossible to kill, are not now able to earn a living unless the Government make available to them land in some other suitable tobacco-growing area.

Mr. McCATHIE (Haughton) (12.38 p.m.): The Labour Government set up a committee of inquiry in 1957 to get things moving in the Clare area and ascertain the real position. I know there have been failures on the area—quite a number of them. However, there have also been a number of successes. While I was in Ayr recently I spoke to one grower who told me that while he did not expect to grow A-class tobacco on his farm, he would be able to grow enough to give him a reasonable living. He is one of those who stayed on the area and battled along over the years. He has never come to me complaining that he has been badly treated.

I know that the area is infested with nut grass. I know, too, that in the early stages when the survey was made the Government were anxious to do something for returned soldiers. Without placing any blame on departmental officials—I do not think that would be fair—they endeavoured to carry out the Government's wishes on the Clare area and get it under way as early as possible so that the first 10 settlers could be placed on farms. Some of those first 10 have gone. They vacated their farms many years ago, and they would be entitled to some measure of compensation.

Mr. Ewan: Did your Government drive them off there?

Mr. McCATHIE: No.

Mr. Walsh: If you want to play dirty politics on this we will have you on.

Mr. Ewan: I think that is the truth.

Mr. McCATHIE: I am not attempting to play politics in any way. I have stated quite definitely the attitude of the departmental officials in the early stages of the settlement when they were anxious to get returned soldiers settled on the land, and I know as well as any hon. member in the Chamber the help that was given the settlers by the Agricultural Bank. I know, too, from the letter written to the settlers by the Premier, that those arrears of rental, survey fees, water dues and any debts that may be owing to the Agricultural Bank are to be remitted and that the settlers will be advised by the various Government departments of the position when it has been clarified. I have a copy of the letter in my possession. I do not say that it is not desirable that they be helped. I have put up a case for those who were still in possession of their farms at the date of the setting up of the committee of inquiry and I think some consideration should be given them, particularly, when they found that they could not carry on because of nut-grass infestation. Against that might I say that my recent advice about nut-grass is that the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission has a farm in the area and it expects this year to produce a crop equal to the average crop at Clare on a nut-grass-infested farm. While some may say that Government money was poured into the scheme, might I say that the manager of the farm is on a basis similar to that of a selector and he is not expected to do any more than one of the selectors would be expected to do. Any money that has been poured into that farm for capital expenditure is not charged against the crop and the crop, which will be harvested and sold almost immediately, is expected to bring in the same average as a farm in the Clare area.

Mr. Hiley: What effect would you expect the heavy infestation of nut grass to have on the costs of production?

Mr. McCATHIE: I have been advised very recently that the cost will not be any greater than it would be to a selector in the area following the same methods.

Mr. Nicklin: It is an economic proposition?

Mr. McCATHIE: That is the statement that has been made to me. I am simply repeating what I have been told without mentioning anybody in particular. However, the nut grass fear is in the minds not only of the selectors but also of any of those who are likely to come into the area to buy farms from the existing settlers. If the

Irrigation and Water Supply Commission can prove, by experiment and by an analysis of costs, that tobacco can be grown with nut grass, it will have done something for the Clare area and for Queensland. We know that the write-down will be considerable and if the matter is taken further, as I have suggested, to those who were in possession of their farms at the time of the setting up of the committee of inquiry, it could be even more. Those who went off their farms earlier are not particularly happy about the present situation. Some of them consider that they should be given consideration, just as those mentioned by the hon. member for Burdekin who have made a success of their farms think that they should be given a great deal of consideration because of the very fact that they have been successful. One farmer who was particularly successful left his farm because of the nut grass fear. He thought that the farm would be finished. It has been conceded that there is not sufficient tobacco land on some of the farms to allow for the rotation of crops, 40 acres of tobacco land having been envisaged. Therefore something will have to be done to give it to them, but at the moment that "something" is not being done. I have here a letter from the Minister for Public Lands stating that it has been decided not to adjust farm areas at Clare, Millaroo and Dalbeg, and that the decision means that no priority of allotment of additional areas or transfer to other irrigation areas will be made. It is also stated that the vacant land at Clare will be advertised and that the existing settlers at Clare will be given an opportunity to ballot for it—not only the soldier settlers but other settlers there who want to take additional area. From information that has come to me from the area I know that already some of the farmers who have been waiting for the write-down are looking forward to selling their farms as early as possible. Some have asked me to make inquiries on their behalf about other fields of employment for them. Some have asked what can be done with the machinery on their farms if a sale has not been effected by the time they leave the area. All in all, there are many thorny problems associated with this settlement. I give every credit to the Labour Government for their attempt to settle these soldiers on the land as early as practicable. It has been admitted that the settlements further up the river at Dalbeg and Millaroo have been more successful, but even there some settlers say that they cannot grow tobacco on the area that has been allotted to them. It is very obvious that a further survey must be made. Quite frankly, I consider that there are a number of areas that will be available for tobacco-growing.

Whether through the action of the Irrigation Commission and the Department of Public Lands more can be done for the farmers to decrease the salinity of the soil by tile irrigation methods I am not prepared to say at the moment. All these matters must

be considered because of the tremendous amount of public money that has been sunk into the Burdekin Valley. At the moment something of the order of £3,000,000 has been spent in that area on farms, roads, irrigation and electricity. I am not for one moment saying that the move made by the Minister to remit arrears of rentals and survey fees will not help, but there is a great deal more to come. We shall all be very interested to know the final amount remitted because, as the hon. member for Belyando has stated, a precedent will be created which definitely will cause a great deal of concern not only amongst soldier settlers but also in the minds of other settlers in Queensland.

Hon. A. G. MULLER (Fassifern—Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation) (12.50 p.m.): Mr. Taylor, I ask that you report progress and ask leave to sit again. My reason for doing so is that I am obliged to leave Brisbane this afternoon. I have listened carefully to the debate, and I hope, when I return later this afternoon, to make my reply.

Progress reported.

STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE (QUEENSLAND) BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (2.15 p.m.): I move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to provide for the incorporation of the State Government Insurance Office of Queensland to authorise such corporation to carry on the general business of insurance and to transfer to and provide for the carrying on by such corporation of all business of insurance being carried on by the Insurance Commissioner immediately prior to the commencement of this Act."

In introducing an earlier Bill I outlined to the Committee the purpose which was being reflected in three Bills the Government were bringing down—this is the second of them. Legislation which established the office of the Insurance Commissioner and the business carried on by the Insurance Commissioner is withdrawn and in its place comes a Bill which establishes a new office for the Commissioner and gives him his duties as such. This Bill establishes the State Government Insurance Office to take over the insurance business presently being conducted by the Insurance Commissioner, but it does it in a different form. The office of the Insurance Commissioner was not an incorporated body. The result is that we find that all such matters as the right to be the registered holder of land for branches of the office are in doubt.

There is some doubt as to whether existing registrations in the Titles Office in the name of the Insurance Commissioner are really authorised under the law.

Mr. Walsh: It has taken nearly 50 years to find it out.

Mr. HILEY: Yes. A person was laid down by the Statute rather than the office of the State Government Insurance Office. This Bill will remove that doubt by establishing the State Government Insurance Office as an incorporated body. General managers can come and general managers can go, but the State Government Insurance Office will go on as an incorporated body for ever. It will have the right to secure registration in the Real Property Office, the right to sue and the right to be sued in the courts of the State, a right commonly enjoyed by incorporated bodies. The Bill will transfer all the existing business of the Insurance Commissioner to the State Government Insurance Office; everything will go over unchanged. The several funds of the Insurance Commissioner established under the existing Act will be exactly the same under the new Act. The moneys at credit, reserves, debts, liabilities, policies, securities, properties, existing regulations, staff, and branches will all go over so that the State Government Insurance Office under the new Bill stands, precisely unchanged, in the shoes of the Insurance Commissioner under the existing Act.

Mr. Walsh: You would regard those as saving clauses?

Mr. HILEY: They are continuity or transfer clauses. However, they not merely transfer the existing position but also lay down the rule to be followed in the near future. The new State Government Insurance Office must carry on in the same way as the Commissioner was doing previously. The provisions not only transfer the existing position but adopt it as a rule of practice for the future.

Mr. Walsh: If all members of the staff go over under the measure, will they still be subject to the provisions of the Public Service Act?

Mr. HILEY: Yes.

The new administration of the State Government Insurance Office will be by a general manager, a deputy general manager, and an assistant general manager, assisted by the staff of the Office. The powers of the Office in conducting the business of insurance will be as wide as can be drawn. There will be no class of insurance business that the State Government Insurance Office will not be authorised to handle. As far as I can discover that is the existing charter of the Insurance Commissioner, and it will be the new charter of the State Government Insurance Office.

Mr. Gair: You are preserving the status quo?

Mr. HILEY: Yes.

Mr. Burrows: Will it be mandatory for the Commissioner to accept insurance that he does not want, for instance, rain insurance?

Mr. HILEY: It is merely a power. Of course, he may not choose to exercise it. There are a few specialised fields of insurance that tend to become a specialty of one or two houses. Rain insurance is one, while machinery-breakdown insurance is another. I have had complaints from one or two shire councils to this effect: "The Insurance Commissioner takes all our other business but he will not take machinery-breakdown." There are very good reasons for that. If the Commissioner started to take machinery-breakdown business he would have to engage engineering advisers, and for the small volume of business available it does not pay every insurance office to engage in specialised business like that.

Mr. Gair: Some companies refuse to take storm and tempest insurance in the North.

Mr. HILEY: That is so. There is also insurance against multiple births. Only about two or three insurance offices will insure against the birth of twins and triplets. It would not pay the average insurance office to enter that restricted and specialised field.

Another field of insurance that Mr. Grimley, to the best of my knowledge, has refused to enter is that on the components of television sets. That is a specialised field in which only one or two companies are interested. However, it has been within the province of the Insurance Commissioner to engage in any type of insurance business, and that will still be his right.

Another principle of the present law that we are preserving is that the State Government Insurance Office represents the Crown, and all its contracts are guaranteed by the Crown. That is the existing law and is being re-written in the Bill in exactly the same terms.

The State Government Insurance Office is subject to all State taxes and occupies no position of privilege. It pays exactly the same financial contribution to the State as does any other insurance office. That has always been the position. There is a widespread feeling among the general world of insurance that the State Government Insurance Office is in a specially privileged position in matters like stamp duty and so on. That is not so. In fact, the Insurance Commissioner for years past has paid exactly the same stamp duty as any other insurer would pay on the same volume of business and he makes a contribution to Consolidated Revenue of the equivalent of land tax. It is not assessed as land tax because the Commissioner of Land Tax has no right to make the assessment as State Government Insurance properties are the

property of the Crown, but in fact, the State Government Insurance Office makes a payment over to Consolidated Revenue of the amount of land tax it would have to pay if it were a private corporation instead of a Crown corporation.

Mr. Aikens: And is it working the racket of the double stamp duty that the private companies are working on fire policies?

Mr. HILEY: He does not recover it as an addition to the premium. He elects to absorb that.

Mr. Aikens: The private companies take it twice. They take it in the premium and then they take it again separately.

Mr. HILEY: In addition to the very handsome bonuses the State Government Insurance Office allows, it carries the stamp duty whereas the great bulk of the outside insurers pass it on, so there are two advantages to the State Government Insurance Office policy holder.

The Bill is drawn in such a way that there is no political control of the functioning of the State Government Insurance Office. The Government do not think there should be and, in fairness, I want to make it clear that I cannot see any evidence that there has been political control over its insurance business.

Because it is a public corporation the Bill repeats the provisions of the old law that the office must prepare an annual balance sheet; it must be examined by the Auditor-General; those documents must be tabled in Parliament and, in addition, there must in the report of the Commissioner be tabled in Parliament a report annually showing how the surplus is disposed of by the Governor in Council.

Finally, instead of the restricted power of investment that is contained in the existing law, there is a wider power of investment enabling the general manager of the office to invest in a wider field and to get a better spread for the whole portfolio of investments if he considers it wise so to do.

Mr. Walsh: Would not that have the effect of reducing the amount available for investment to semi-governmental bodies?

Mr. HILEY: To the extent that you spend £1 in direction A, it is not available for spending in direction B; but let me observe that for the past two years the local bodies in Queensland have raised 100 per cent. of their programme and they will do so again this year, and of that programme, which runs into the order of £20,000,000, the Insurance Commissioner's contribution has been about £3,000,000. It is only something under 20 per cent. of the total—14 or 15 per cent. I do not think that, with the growth of the office, the annual investment by the State Government Insurance Office in the local authorities field will be less but rather that, as each year its capacity for investment increases, there will be a slow and progressive trend to put out more of its investment funds to get a wider foundation for its investment portfolio. As I

pointed out yesterday, once an enterprise gets to the tremendous size that the State Government Insurance Office has now attained, where it has already over £30,000,000 invested, it is not the wisest policy to limit investment to too rigidly narrow a basis. In these days when inflation is apparently part of the ordered experience of Australia, and indeed of many other countries throughout the world, there is some wisdom at any rate in spreading part of the investment portfolio into fields where inflation can run with you instead of leaving you with a fixed money value of security whereby inflation only runs against you.

Mr. Aikens: Just a matter of leaving a little bit to play around with.

Mr. HILEY: It is the old principle of not putting all your eggs in one basket. There is no direction. The State Government Insurance Office will itself develop its competent teams of officers. I am going to suggest to the general manager of the office that he might be wise, in the early years at any rate, to look for some advisory committee drawn partly from experienced public servants and partly from people with experience outside to help them in taking the first steps in what can be under wise guidance a richly rewarding field but, without that wise guidance, quite a dangerous field to enter.

Mr. Walsh: Do you expect that the general manager will be selected from within the present organisation?

Mr. HILEY: Yes, he will. It is not thought that there will be the slightest need to import anyone from outside for the top executive positions of the office.

Mr. Walsh: I am glad to hear that.

Mr. HILEY: Taken in conjunction with what I said yesterday that gives the Committee a fair indication of the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. Aikens: Will you tell us why a person has to take out the same amount of storm-and-tempest cover on his home as fire cover? If a man insures his home against fire for £5,000 then he must take out £5,000 worth of storm-and-tempest cover. He cannot take out a lesser amount.

Mr. HILEY: I must confess that I cannot give the hon. member an answer to that.

Mr. Aikens: Will you find out and let us know?

Mr. HILEY: Yes. The thought that crosses my mind is that when the rates are being fixed for storm-and-tempest cover—

Mr. Aikens: They are pretty high too.

Mr. HILEY: Yes. They may be fixed on the basis that there will be a full cover. The hon. member will realise that through storm and tempest the more common happening is to lose the roof of a house. It is only in a severe cyclone that the whole house is thrown down and wrecked.

Mr. Aikens: I had to take out £4,000 in storm-and-tempest cover to provide against the loss of my roof.

Mr. HILEY: The hon. member must remember that in a bad cyclone he might lose the whole house. Whether there will be mild storm and tempest which takes your roof or a severe cyclone which flattens your whole house is quite unpredictable. At least the hon. member is totally covered against storm and tempest. I expect that conditions some of the thinking of the insurance office. In any case I shall find out and let the hon. member know.

Mr. Roberts: In the event of a fire and a person has not full cover, averaging applies and that person becomes his own insurer for the balance. If the loss represents 20 per cent. he has to carry his share of it the same as the company.

Mr. HILEY: Averaging does not apply under £50,000. It is only with the bigger risks. Once the cover exceeds £50,000 then averaging automatically applies. Below £50,000 the averaging does not automatically apply unless it is a saving condition of the policy.

Mr. Hanlon: The loss of a roof can lead to a great deal of subsequent damage which would not be covered if you only covered the roof.

Mr. HILEY: Exactly. Floor coverings could be ruined. Most of the furniture these days is built out of plywood. I was in Bowen just after the cyclone. The hon. member for Burdekin can tell the Committee how much of the furniture was ruined by the deluge. The plywood peeled and suites were ruined.

Mr. Aikens: That is not covered by storm and tempest.

Mr. HILEY: It could be.

Mr. Aikens: Damage by rain is not covered by storm and tempest.

Mr. HILEY: It could be.

The answer to the hon. member's question on storm-and-tempest cover is that he can insure for less but at a different rate. If he insures at the lowest rate he must insure the total house but if he elects to insure for less than the total value of the house he can do so but at a higher rate on the fraction he insures. I think that is quite logical. I can see why the office would do that.

Mr. Coburn: I do not think that information is given by the agents to people taking out insurance.

Mr. HILEY: I assure the hon. member that every branch of the State Government Insurance Office will have these points drawn to their attention so that those who deal with the office will not be in any doubt.

Mr. Aikens: Most people are happy to take storm-and-tempest cover but they object to being forced to take an amount which they think is excessive.

Mr. HILEY: They will not be forced to take the full amount; if they want to insure for only part of the value the higher rate will operate. I think that when they study the arithmetic of the matter they will insure for the lot.

I think I have given the Committee a fair idea of the contents of the Bill and I commend it for the consideration of hon. members.

Mr. DUGGAN (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) (2.36 p.m.): In view of the statements made by the Treasurer yesterday, some of which he covered again today, I do not think there is much occasion to speak at length on this Bill. There was a tendency on the part of some speakers yesterday to use the introductory stage for a speech that would be more appropriate on the Estimates of the department, rather than on the Bill.

Mr. Hiley: There was an exceptional reason for it because it was in relation to Mr. Grimley's retirement.

Mr. DUGGAN: I do not think it is necessary to recapitulate what has been said. The Treasurer introduced the matter of the powers of the general manager. We went into that pretty thoroughly yesterday when I drew attention to the different problems and no useful purpose will be served by repeating or amplifying those arguments.

The Treasurer mentioned yesterday the reason for the three Bills of a complementary character. It is only necessary to direct attention to the specific one referred to today. As far as I could gather the Bill is largely a re-embodiment of what the law is at the present time, except that it is necessary to define more accurately the powers of the Commissioner, particularly in relation to the declaration of the Insurance Office being a body corporate. There seems to be some doubt about that. The Treasurer proposes to extend the powers to enable the Commissioner to engage in a wider field of operations. I suppose one could talk perhaps usefully on the investments to which the Treasurer has referred. I think that insurance is largely a statistical business. I was surprised when in Sydney three or four years ago—I suppose I should not have been—when I had lunch with the directors of an Australian company who were accompanied by the company actuary. I learned that the actuary was being sent on a world trip. After the actuary left, I remarked to the other gentlemen that the actuary's figures appeared to be of the greatest importance, and one of them said that the whole operation of the insurance company more or less hinged on the accuracy of the actuary's forecasts. I suppose, irrespective of the type of

risk the insurance company may initially engage in, after a period of time it can calculate with mathematical accuracy the degree of risk involved. In the case of storm-and-tempest I agree that the location would change from time to time. Regarding the defective tubes in television sets, with improvement in quality, the risks would be less. Generally speaking, they would charge a premium that would cover the reasonable calculated risks involved in the particular field engaged in. Certain companies do not compete in a particular field of insurance only because they think the volume of business is not sufficient to warrant their attention or to be profitable for them. There may be some other reason. They are prepared to leave that type of insurance to certain specialist insurance companies.

The Bill will provide for a reorganisation of the State Government Insurance Office, a revision of powers, and will give opportunity for development in each field of responsibility.

I spoke yesterday of the likely appointees to these particular vacancies, and the Treasurer indicated that he hoped they could be filled, that it was intended that they should be filled by promotions within the office. The fact that they are still subject to the provisions of the Public Service Act is a safeguard that the people generally will be happy to note. Generally speaking the Bill was well received yesterday, and I cannot envisage any situation at the present time that would cause me to offer any objection to the introduction of this complementary measure.

Storm-and-tempest cover has been mentioned by way of interjection. In a State such as Queensland it is perhaps of greater importance than in other States in the Commonwealth. It has been suggested from time to time that there should be some form of national insurance against damage through storm and tempest. I think perhaps it is a reasonable suggestion. In times of war we had general cover for war damage. That was uncontrollable as far as the individual and the area were concerned. I think the same thing may reasonably be said to apply to storm and tempest. It could not be due to any negligence on the part of an owner of a dwelling or property. A fire perhaps may be due to neglect, failure to re-wire premises, or to carelessness in leaving inflammable material in the dwelling. In those instances there would be some degree of culpability, but that would not obtain in storm-and-tempest damage, except to the extent—and I make this observation in view of what was said by the hon. member for Mundungburra—that in my view the contents of a dwelling are covered by storm and tempest if the damage to the windows or doors was occasioned by the storm and tempest itself. However, if a person deliberately left the windows and doors open—and that

could be proved—and rain or hail came through the open door or window and damaged the contents of the dwelling the owner would not be entitled to reimbursement for the damage.

Mr. Coburn: It would have to be covered for storm and tempest damage.

Mr. DUGGAN: Yes, but there would have to be a physical breaking of the window or blowing open of the door and if damage was caused to the contents through the entry of the elements it would be covered. If the damage occurred through the culpable negligence of the owner, that is, through his leaving open the door or window, the position would be different. I agree with the hon. member for Burdekin that the contents would still have to be covered separately against storm-and-tempest damage.

At same appropriate time this Parliament in conjunction with other Parliaments may try to draw up a plan for national insurance of some kind against this type of damage. Of course, the southern States are not subject to the same degree of storm-and-tempest damage.

Mr. Coburn: They have one in New Zealand.

Mr. DUGGAN: Yes, but it is not subject to the Commonwealth Constitution. Such a scheme should be canvassed, but until such time as it is brought into operation the State Government Insurance Office alone could not be expected to bear this heavy responsibility.

To complete my submission on behalf of the Opposition, the outline of the Bill follows very closely that given by the Treasurer yesterday. It is a complementary measure to the one approved by hon. members yesterday. For those reasons and because it strengthens the capacity of the insurance office to engage in general insurance, and should result—in time, with assets being built up further—in increased capacity to loan to local authorities and to help generally in the development of the State, we commend it and accord the proposals our general support.

I mentioned yesterday that the experience of the Treasurer is that there is need for flexibility in the Office and therefore nothing should be done to prevent him giving effect to it. I was glad to hear the statement made by the Treasurer yesterday before I resumed my seat that the business will be extended so as to enable us to match the efforts of other companies.

I think the staff can be assured of their prospects in the office; their careers will be assured and they will have the opportunity of participating in a very worthwhile service on the part of a State instrumentality. They will have the chance to advance in status, both professionally and from the point of view of salary. Therefore I think that they should be satisfied with the Bill.

Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg) (2.46 p.m.): On previous occasions the Treasurer has said

that I had a suspicious mind. I will admit that I have had a suspicious mind in regard to a lot of the legislation brought down by this Government this session, and will have it in any other subsequent Parliament if they are still the Government. The Treasurer has allayed my suspicions somewhat by the manner in which he has introduced this Bill. It is remarkable to think that an office of the magnitude of the State Government Insurance Office, which has been carried on for 44 years, should have continued business in such a manner as to raise any doubt as to its ability to carry on the business in the way expected or anticipated by Parliament that gave it its charter. I realise that by making the Office an incorporated body it will have the right to hold property. I take it that it will have the right to sue and be sued. I am surprised that there should be any doubt that that was not already the position so far as the present law was concerned. Numerous amendments have been made to the Workers' Compensation Act and various other Acts in relation to the administration of the State Government Insurance Office. In those amendments it was made plain that the Commissioner would have power to recover certain financial adjustments after court decisions, particularly that relating to common law where an employer refused or failed to insure his workmen.

It is remarkable that the Government have had to bring down three Bills for the purpose of amending one Act, the Bills being necessary to carry on a business which has been conducted for 44 years. It is widely accepted that the State Government Insurance Office is a very efficient organisation that has brought much good to the community and the people of the State, particularly in respect to public bodies where financial help has been forthcoming from the Insurance Commissioner. It appears that the Treasurer has in mind the dividing up of the responsibilities of the various offices of insurance administration, workers' compensation coming under one heading and general insurance under another.

Mr. Hiley: Workers' compensation will be with the State Government Insurance Office.

Mr. WALSH: As it is now. The Treasurer is extending power and authority under the new measure to enable the Office to conduct its business in the same way as private insurance offices.

Mr. Hiley: With the exception that it will be the sole body conducting workers' compensation insurance.

Mr. WALSH: Whatever the Treasurer may think about the socialisation of industry and State enterprises, I cannot imagine his Government—or any other Government of a similar colour—ever attempting to destroy the State Government Insurance Office with its monopoly of workers' compensation.

Another matter to which I wish to refer is the provision for the appointment of a

general manager, a deputy general manager, and an assistant general manager. I was very glad to have the Treasurer's assurance in reply to my interjection that the general manager would be appointed from within the present organisation. Had that not been so, he could have expected quite a blast from this side of the Committee. We would have regarded it as a reflection on such an organisation if there was not within the office somebody competent to take on the job.

In passing, I point out that at a previous stage the Treasurer amended another Act to provide for the deletion of the title "Chief Commissioner". I said on that occasion that a man who had served as a chief deputy commissioner should be fully qualified to assume the responsibilities of a commissioner. It would appear that the Treasurer recognises that principle in this measure and is providing for the appointment of an assistant general manager in addition to a deputy general manager. Of course, I am not questioning the necessity for doing that. I know that I am not allowed to refer to the other matter, but the Treasurer will remember that when the Government amended the law to provide for the appointment of an assistant commissioner, the Government abolished the position of Chief Deputy Commissioner. I am, of course, referring to the Stamp Duties Office. On this occasion the Treasurer is agreeing that a man who occupies the position of deputy general manager should be fully qualified eventually to hold the office of general manager.

I was not in the Chamber yesterday to contribute to the debate on the Insurance Bill, so that I take this opportunity of paying my tribute to Mr. Grimley. I have no objection whatever to the Government's continuing him in a position where they can avail themselves of the knowledge that he has acquired over the years in administering the State Government Insurance Office. If he left the office it would be a great loss both to the Government and to the large numbers of people in the community who depend on a sympathetic administration of the workers' compensation section of the office. It is a great pity that some Governments has not had the courage to see that men of similar calibre are retained in their positions despite pressure from outside groups. The State is losing many good men with valuable experience in public administration, and it is a pity that some of them have to retire at the early age of 60 or 65, as the case may be.

Another provision of the Bill is that the Crown will still carry the responsibility of guaranteeing the liabilities of the State Government Insurance Office. That is more or less a machinery provision. However, I wish to refer particularly to the provision that the Treasurer referred to as giving wide powers to this incorporated body to invest moneys. It is a provision about which I

have some very serious doubts. I know that Mr. Grimley on previous occasions showed a very keen desire to launch out into a wider field of investment but the previous Government, and, I take it earlier Governments still, took the view that it would be far better for the development of the State to encourage the Commissioner to invest any moneys he had available in local authority or semi-governmental loans. I realise that if the Commissioner enters the wider sphere of investment he may be able to attract 7 per cent. or 8 per cent. or even more. He might even compete with the hire-purchase companies. From the point of view of the policyholder that could be regarded as good business and it might be argued that the Commissioner has an obligation to the policy holder to get the very highest return for the moneys available to him for investment. On the other hand, the Treasurer knows from his experience that the wider sphere of investment carries greater risks. Investment in Commonwealth securities or in semi-governmental or local authority loans carries no risks because in the first place the bodies concerned have certain statutory powers to recover their revenues to meet their financial commitments and, in the second place, all their loans are guaranteed by the Government, so the Commissioner can lose only when the Government are in complete default.

I remember once when the electricity people were in a bad way financially and the transaction—which I will allow the Treasurer himself to inquire about—was such that it received the approval of the Government of the day and it enabled the Electricity Commissioner to proceed with his plan when he could not get sufficient money from other sources.

Today the Treasurer is in the fortunate position of being able to say that local authorities and semi-governmental bodies are raising 100 per cent. of their approvals but he will admit that he does not expect that to continue for all time. They may be faced again with circumstances similar to those of 1952 and 1953 when the Commonwealth in effect turned them adrift and the banks likewise. Who can say that that will not be next year in view of the recent announcements by the Federal Government on the country's financial economy? The Treasurer has admitted that of the investments in semi-governmental and local authority loans at present the State Government Insurance Office's contribution represents about 20 per cent.

Mr. Hiley: Under 20 per cent.

Mr. WALSH: The total is about £20,000,000 and roughly one-seventh of that would be near enough.

Mr. Hiley: About 15 per cent.

Mr. WALSH: Near enough. Anyway, it is a very substantial contribution and, as the previous policy was to encourage the

Commissioner to invest in that direction, I am wondering whether the local authorities may not at some future date suffer from the new policy of allowing wider investments in real estate or other ventures with a higher return. The Treasurer himself does not seek to invest his surplus funds, when he has any, in such a direction. He has shown that he has made investments in Commonwealth securities and he would not dream of going outside and investing at 8 per cent., 10 per cent. or even more. He would know that the Government would be more or less obliged to invest any moneys available under Commonwealth agreements, from Loan Council etc., in Commonwealth stock. The decision to give the State Government Insurance Office wider power to invest its money is the only part of the measure I have any real quarrel with. Being a good financier in his own way Mr. Grimley would want his pound of flesh in the interests of his office and for the advantage of his customers and clients. I can foresee the propositions that may be put up to this new authority. The State Government Insurance Office will be inclined to make investments that will give a higher financial return, therefore there must be less money available to semi-government and local government bodies.

Various questions were posed by hon. members about storm-and-tempest cover. I am not saying that all hon. members should do what I have done, but any insurance I have taken out since the State Government Insurance Office commenced operations has been with that office. I do not expect to go anywhere else. It is not so long ago that I took out storm-and-tempest cover. I realise that what the hon. members for Mundingburra and Burdekin have said is not quite correct.

Mr. Coburn: It is, in our area.

Mr. WALSH: The Commissioner might have a different policy for the northern area because the risk is greater.

Mr. Coburn: Much.

Mr. WALSH: Much greater. The answer the Treasurer gave is along the lines of the deal I made with the local agent in South Brisbane in insuring my own home.

I know that there are saboteurs who spread propaganda about the State Government Insurance Office. I am not saying that the relationship between that Office and the private companies has not been a happy one, but there is that undercurrent inasmuch as there are salesmen who want to do damage to a State enterprise like the State Government Insurance Office. They might tell a story a little removed from the truth. My experience has been that you can do what the Treasurer has outlined.

Apart from the qualification I have made about the wider investment powers of the State Government Insurance Office I have no serious objection to the Bill.

Mr. HANLON (Ithaca) (3.3 p.m.): Unlike the hon. member for Bundaberg I am not going to quibble because the Government take the opportunity in these three measures covering the re-organisation of insurance business in Queensland to clear up any slight doubts. Like previous Governments the present Government submit proposed legislation to the Solicitor-General and accept his advice when he suggests that the opportunity be taken to clear up any doubts in the Acts being amended, thus saving further amending legislation at a later date.

Mr. Walsh: My only point is that it took 44 years to find it out.

Mr. HANLON: The hon. member for Bundaberg may set himself up as a legal authority—

Mr. Walsh: I don't, you do.

Mr. HANLON: Only recently the Minister for Labour and Industry had to introduce emergency legislation to validate alterations made to awards by the State Industrial Court over a period just as long as the State Government Insurance Office has been in existence. It may have been only a legal quibble in that instance, but a legal quibble can lead to a great deal of trouble. What appears to be so, judged by the common sense which generally predominates on both sides of the Chamber, may not always be held to be legally valid in the courts. Legal interpretations may lead to all sorts of trouble. I think it is a sound practice to clear up these matters when opportunity offers thus obviating the necessity to bring down special Bills in the future to deal with small matters.

I wish to make some comment on the matter of the widened investment powers of the State Government Insurance Office. Some concern has been expressed regarding the effect this might have on the contributions to semi-Government loan raisings by the insurance office. The Treasurer had much to say about the loan raisings being 100 per cent. during the two years this Government have been in power and the lower percentages when Labour Governments were in office. We know that the situation can change very quickly and the position can deteriorate as quickly as it improves. We know that the loan position has improved during the last couple of years. In the Federal Budget figures last year the Federal Government cut their deficit substantially because of the improved loan raisings. If the State Government Insurance Office alters its investments it may have some impact on its contributions to local authority and semi-governmental loans. The Treasurer has indicated that the position has improved to such an extent that perhaps we should be prepared to agree to a change in the policy in that respect. I do not say that the position has not changed. There has been an Australia-wide swing in improvement in loan raising in recent years, but that was

not influenced by this Government. Some of the measures taken by the Treasurer in making use of allocations that had been lying idle has been an improvement.

The Treasurer remarked that the general manager of the State Government Insurance Office, in making outside investments, would possibly be helped with the advice of other people, presumably some financial institutions or public companies. That is something that deserves attention. I am not one who likes the idea of setting up boards or committees. This Government have created a record in establishing advisory boards during their two years of office. Yesterday the Treasurer referred to the tremendous sums available for investment by the State Government Insurance Office. We often see the names of people in the business world among the list of directors of mutual insurance companies, although there is very little financial reward, but merely an expense allowance of £200 or £500 a year. Some people say, "Why did Sir so-and-so agree to take that position when he is so busy?" No doubt many of these directors have a keen community interest and public spirit. The position may be part-time and may attract very little financial reward, but in some instances sums of £20,000,000, £30,000,000 or £40,000,000 may be available for investment. I am not suggesting that all the funds of the State Government Insurance Office will be made available for this purpose, but in certain mutual societies and other insurance companies tens of millions of pounds are available and the directors have to make a decision where that money will be invested. Board members of those societies without in any way securing any improper advantage can more or less play quite a powerful part in the investment of funds in certain companies. The State Government Insurance Office is a Government body or a public body. I do not know whether the people who are going to advise the general manager will play a big part in the selection of avenues of outside investment. I am not generally in favour of setting up boards, but I would like information as to the extent or the importance of the advice and what weight will be given to it by the general manager. If it is going to be very extensive, we should have a definite indication as to who these people will be. It may be advisable to set up a small advisory board, a public investment board, or something of that nature, so that Parliament and the people would know the people who are giving advice to the general manager and indirectly, I suppose, to the Government, as to where these investments should be made.

I want to make it clear that I am not suggesting there would be any improper procedure on the giving of advice, but I do think the public and Parliament would have more protection and a chance of supervising these matters if we had an indication of the people who would be called on to advise the general manager in his investments. I suppose he already gets a certain

amount of advice on financial aspects from persons whose advice he considers may be helpful, but when it comes to investments in companies I think we should have a little more information.

The Treasurer happened to mention in passing that the Government may provide the general manager with some assistance and advice from outside people on what investments he should make.

Getting back to the effect this policy may have on contributions to semi-governmental bodies and loan raisings, I point out that investment in shares often leads to further investment in those shares. Particularly since the war we have seen much more investment in small amounts by retired people with limited savings. Many people find they have, say, £100 to put into shares. They may buy at the wrong time, and then they have to buy more shares to level off the average price. They may have to take up more shares if they want to get full capital benefit from further issues and so on. I might be exaggerating the position, but if the State Government Insurance Office, even to a limited extent, invests in private companies, outside companies, it may find at a time when it wants to direct more funds to semi-governmental loans that it is called on to protect the investments it holds or to extend its investments in particular companies, or, in the case of further issues, take up those issues if there is no possibility of selling rights.

The only other matter to which I shall refer is the Treasurer's statement that there will be no restriction whatever on the type of business to be carried on by the State Government Insurance Office.

Mr. Hiley: That is, insurance business.

Mr. HANLON: I understand that if the Office was going to enter into some other type of business the position would be entirely different. Many people would like to see it enter the field of hire purchase to give other companies some real competition, but I realise that if that was contemplated, completely new legislation would be required. The Treasurer mentioned the fairly limited type of insurance business which the State Government Insurance Office might not want to take up, and with his statement I somewhat agree but the State Government Insurance Office as a State office has some responsibility in a comparatively limited field—if it is considered a necessary field—to see that there is no exploitation of the public by the people carrying on that more or less narrow type of insurance business. It might mean that there would be a slight loss, but there would be some responsibility on the State office to enter that field and attempt by competition to bring the other companies to heel.

There are other matters on which I could speak but I think my remarks will be more appropriate during the second reading of the Insurance Bill.

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Cooorparoo—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (3.16 p.m.), in reply: The Leader of the Opposition discussed at some length the practice of insurers in selecting certain risks. I should say that the compelling basic reason why some insurers will not take certain types of risk is that you cannot conduct a proper insurance business unless you can command a satisfactory width of cover. Insurance is an average risk, and you must get enough volume before you can strike an average. There are the rarer risks in which it is impossible, in a limited field, to get a sufficient volume to strike an average. There is a risk that nobody in Australia insures against. Earthquakes are unknown in this country. It is a type of cover where it is not a series of small regular losses. A business could go on for years with earthquake cover and during those years there would be no claims, but it might strike a major catastrophe in which the pay-out would be tremendous. That is a very good illustration of the risk cover. The State Government Insurance Office in rejecting machinery-breakdown cover and multiple-births cover feels that it cannot get sufficient width to justify its embarking in the field. It would be on such a small scale and it would run the risk of a lucky year with all profit or an unlucky year with calamitous loss, because it has not a big enough spread of risk.

There is the new type of cover concerned with television. Television is something new in Australia, and the people with television insurance in Australia are mainly people with a similar experience in other parts of the world. Our conclusions in regard to T.V. insurance is that those who have gone into it have burned their fingers badly. We happen to know the loss ratio that some businesses have experienced already in the limited field in the southern States. Premium rates have been increased and there appears to be ample evidence that premiums will go higher still. As to coming into a completely new field, the State Government Insurance Office will let this type of business settle down to see what the experience is rather than go blindly into a field where we have not had the advantage of experience to guide us.

The third type of insurance that the office avoids is business that would force it to employ immediately additional staff with only a trifling increase in the volume of work. That is what keeps the office out of machinery-breakdown insurance. Only two companies make a regular practice of accepting that type of insurance, and each of them retains a consulting engineer on its staff. A person does not take out machinery-breakdown cover like one would buy a pound of butter at the corner shop. The whole of the ramifications have to be surveyed by a man who is trained and experienced to advise first of all, on the type of policy to be taken out, secondly, the insurable hazards that should be written into the policy, and, thirdly, the appropriate rate for the type of mechanical undertaking carried on.

Mr. Power: You would want more than one engineer.

Mr. HILEY: Even if there was only one, he would have to be a good man. Two or three local authorities are breaking their necks to get machinery-breakdown cover from the State Government Insurance Office, but I know that if I told Mr. Grimley that the Government wanted him to cater for that type of insurance he would tell me that it would cost more to employ an engineer than he would get in premiums. I have been in consultation with them on this matter. I have never detected any over-selective activity or any running away from public responsibility in the State Government Insurance Office. On the contrary, I should say that it goes a good deal further than some of the private insurance companies, particularly in the field of compulsory third-party insurance. The State Government Insurance Office takes a good deal more of its share of that type of cover, while some of the private companies take a good deal less.

On the subject of storm-and-tempest insurance, I point out that if a person wants to insure a building only, he can do so. Again, if he wants to insure a building partly, he can do so at an extra premium rate. He can also insure a building and its contents against storm-and-tempest damage. If he insures only the building, the contents are not covered. Anyone who has storm-and-tempest cover should examine his policy and see that he has the type of cover he wants. It is no good his insuring only the building and then grizzling if the contents are damaged, and he finds they are not covered by the policy.

Mr. Coburn: The same remarks apply to fire insurance.

Mr. HILEY: That is so.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to a scheme of national insurance. The Premier raised that matter at a Premiers' Conference in the hope that there might be an all-Australian approach along the lines of the war-damage insurance that we remember from the war period. However, he quickly found a complete absence of encouragement from the other States. There is no hope of getting a common approach to the subject of national insurance from States that experience serious bush fires but know nothing of serious cyclones, such as Victoria and Tasmania. Queensland really knows nothing of destructive bush fires, but it knows a good deal about the ravages of cyclone and flood. Victoria and Tasmania, on the other hand, do not experience those two evils. After a short talk with the other Premiers, we realised that there was no hope of getting a common approach by the States to the subject of national insurance. Short of an all-Australian approach, we despair of evolving a satisfactory scheme for Queensland alone.

Mr. Coburn: The mistake was in not continuing the war-damage insurance as was done in New Zealand.

Mr. HILEY: Exactly. If it had been kept alive and called disaster insurance, it would have been a good thing for the whole of Australia.

Mr. Walsh: It would have been necessary to include drought damage, too. People in the West could not be expected to contribute towards the cost of damage on the coast caused by floods and cyclones.

Mr. HILEY: That is the difficulty we face in the matter.

The hon. member for Bundaberg had something to say about the 44 years it has taken for this doubt to arise about the lack of corporate assistance for the Insurance Commissioner. I think I can put it simply in this way: the Insurance Act created the State Government Insurance Office but gave the office no powers; all the powers were vested in the Insurance Commissioner. The public do not think they are insuring with the Insurance Commissioner. How do we advertise? The State Government Insurance Office! What do we put at the head of our policies? The State Government Insurance Office! The public believe they are dealing with the State Government Insurance Office whereas actually in law they are dealing with the Insurance Commissioner. All we are doing is making the law accord to the public view and we are doing it on a basis whereby the State Government Insurance Office becomes an incorporated body with perpetual succession recognised as such by the courts, the Titles Office, and everyone else. Whilst the Insurance Commissioner had the power to enter into insurance contracts and whilst he had the power to sue and be sued, there was some doubt at any rate as to whether he really had a right to have properties recorded in his name in the Titles Office because he was not a corporate body. That doubt has been resolved.

But it was not the compelling reason for the introduction of the three Bills. The real compelling reason, as I outlined at great length yesterday, was that the very success of the office, the very size it has attained, makes it necessary to separate the office of Insurance Commissioner, who regulates all insurance for the whole State, from that of the State Government Insurance Office's general manager, who will conduct the business of the State Government Insurance Office. It has become too great a task, too tremendous an administrative responsibility, to concentrate it on the shoulders of one person.

On top of that it has an added virtue. I indicated to the Committee yesterday that Mr. Grimley has now passed the extended retiring age for the Public Service. Unless this step had been taken at this time, to the regret of the Government—and, I am satisfied, to the regret of every hon. member

of this Assembly—we should have been compelled to terminate his services. We have already carried him on beyond the six-monthly period after he attained 66 years and, by the device of making a separate office of the Insurance Commissioner, we make it possible to retain his services in that capacity for an extended period. I made it quite clear yesterday that I do not think the State can afford to lose Mr. Grimley's services at this stage.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. HILEY: He has such a wealth of knowledge and such a respect does he command in the world of insurance that the Government want to retain his services as long as his mental and physical health allow him to do justice to his task.

Mr. Walsh: Would you say any one of the major insurance offices works to a similar plan to the one you have outlined here—say the A.M.P., or the C.M.L., or any of those?

Mr. HILEY: We put the State Government Insurance Office exactly on the same basis as the Australian Mutual Provident Society.

Mr. Walsh: Would you say it divided its managership, too?

Mr. HILEY: The A.M.P. has no general control over the world of insurance.

Mr. Walsh: No, but it has its own branch of insurance and management.

Mr. HILEY: The General Manager of the State Government Insurance Office will have no division of his responsibility. He will conduct the entire business of the State Government Insurance Office.

Mr. Walsh: As distinct from workers' compensation?

Mr. HILEY: He will also run workers' compensation. The Insurance Commissioner will regulate the general conduct of insurance throughout the State by every insurer, including the State Government Insurance Office; but the management of the State Government Insurance Office will vest in the General Manager, and that will deal with life, fire, marine, accident, motor vehicle and all other types of cover plus the monopoly of workers' compensation. That will all be in the State Government Insurance Office and under the general manager.

Mr. Walsh: What you have just said amounts to this: all this is necessary to continue Mr. Grimley in office.

Mr. HILEY: More than that, the size of the office has grown. This is a problem that has arisen from the great degree of success by the office. It has become too big to ask one man simultaneously to manage a great undertaking like the State Government Insurance Office and to supervise 100-odd other

insurance offices conducting business in Queensland. We are dividing those two responsibilities. The Insurance Commissioner will supervise the whole conduct of insurance throughout the State by every insurer, including the State Government Insurance Office, while the general manager of the State Government Insurance Office will conduct that office. That is the division of the responsibilities.

I discussed the wider powers of investment at very great length yesterday, and I do not propose to repeat it. But I say in all seriousness that I do not think that local authorities will suffer. I am confident that if the situation again arises where the general support for local authority loans becomes tender we can count on the maximum support from the State Government Insurance Office, irrespective of the fact that in better times that office will have a wider power of investment available to it.

The hon. member for Ithaca asked a question about a thought I casually expressed about assisting the general manager with some advisory committee on investments. One other State office in Australia went into this field of investment without such assistance, and it ran into some very serious trouble. Because I recognise that I propose to suggest to the general manager of the State Government Insurance Office that he might be wise to seek the assistance of an advisory committee in the early stages while his office is gaining experience.

Mr. Walsh: That would be identical with what happened to the Public Curator.

Mr. HILEY: Exactly. I have no notion and I never intended to convey any notion that that advisory committee would be drawn wholly or dominantly from outside the State Service. We have a number of public servants who would be ideal men to serve on such a committee.

Mr. Power: The new Auditor-General would be one of them.

Mr. HILEY: He could well be although there could be a conflict there. As Auditor-General he has to deal with the investments of the office; it may be that that would disqualify him from taking any part.

Mr. Power: He would still know whether the investments were sound.

Mr. HILEY: That is so. Because of his qualifications Mr. Petersen would be ideally suited to serve on an advisory committee.

Mr. Walsh: You could have a body similar to the Assistance to Industries Committee.

Mr. HILEY: Exactly. That is the type of thing I had in mind. We could choose most members of such an advisory committee from within the Public Service. Perhaps two suitable men from outside might be included to give a broader background to the committee.

Mr. Hanlon: I was thinking that perhaps somewhere in the State Government Insurance Office report you could tell us who were on that committee.

Mr. HILEY: If the general manager decides to appoint such a committee I shall certainly suggest that he ensures that that information is conveyed to Parliament as early as possible.

I think that deals with the various points that have been raised and I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Motion (Mr. Hiley) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Cooorparoo—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (3.37 p.m.): I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Workers' Compensation Acts 1916 to 1959, in certain particulars.”

This Bill is almost completely a corollary with the last one. It contains a great number of amendments. When members of the Committee study those amendments they will find that in almost every case they reflect the earlier decisions that have been made, and they simply take out the words “Insurance Commissioner” and put in the words “general manager of the State Government Insurance Office.” They reflect the fact that it is a corporate body now and refers to “it” instead of “him”. That constitutes 95 per cent. of the contents of the Bill. I indicated when I presented the first Bill, that opportunity had been taken to amend the provision on the last occasion when the workers' compensation law was under review relating to the constitution of a medical board to examine compensation claims for mining disease sufferers. It was then prescribed that the Director of the Tuberculosis Clinic should be a member of the board. Dr. Abrahams is unable to go on the board and it is necessary to appoint another doctor in his place. As indicated, the Government propose to appoint Dr. Rathus who was attached to Dr. Abrahams' clinic and who has now taken up the position of Director of Industrial Hygiene. He has just returned from a world trip in the course of which, knowing this was in prospect, he made a special study of silicosis in many parts of the world. I am

informed that he possesses the greatest knowledge of any medical man in the Government in the field of miners' phthisis. From time to time there have been suggestions that it would be in the good interests of Queensland to throw the field of workers' compensation insurance open to the functioning of private insurance companies. I have examined that matter very thoroughly indeed and the conclusion I have reached—and one the Government accepts—is that if we were to do so one of the immediate steps would be the rates of premium to the employers would be higher, as is evidenced by the rates of compensation premiums being paid in New South Wales and Victoria where the field is open to private insurance companies.

Mr. Walsh: Why would that be?

Mr. HILEY: First of all, when the business is conducted by a multitude of private insurance companies, there is a higher average overhead. The second thing is that with private insurance companies brokerage commission is paid on those premiums. That is another expense factor. Then in regard to the machinery necessary to examine claims and settle claims, instead of having a single body for that purpose there is a hydra-headed instrument which increases the cost factor to a much higher level than under the Queensland system. I am satisfied and the Government are satisfied that the public of this State, those who are engaged in industry and employers, are best served by a continuation of the present system. Consequently, the Government propose no change whatever in what has been the practice for 40-odd years, a practice which we are satisfied has worked successfully, satisfactorily, and economically in the interests of employers and for the benefit of the people of the State. In our view the workers' compensation section functions in effect as a mutual insurance organisation. It is conducted as a separate department. The employers are charged a premium which is found necessary to meet the claims and expenses. If the underwriting experience is good, the employers get a rebate; if the underwriting experience is bad, it is necessary to adjust premium rates upwards. This doctrine of a completely mutual benefit approach in which every employer in the State shares, and not one of whom has any advantage over the other, we believe is a perfectly good approach, and the Government propose to make no change.

Mr. Power: I do not think any worker in Queensland would want it handed over to private companies, after years of experience.

Mr. HILEY: The view of the Government is that we should retain the present system.

I think this is an appropriate occasion to make a forthright declaration on the subject, although it is not dealt with in the Bill.

Mr. Windsor: Would the profit from new business tend to reduce the premiums for workers' compensation?

Mr. HILEY: Workers' compensation neither draws anything from the other business of the office nor gives anything to the other business of the office. The section is a watertight compartment.

Mr. Davies: Have private companies made any representations to you recently?

Mr. HILEY: Collectively, they have not. Some individual concerns have, but I have left them in no doubt as to my view and the view of the Government.

Mr. DUGGAN (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) (3.41 p.m.): We have heard a most extraordinary declaration by the Treasurer in defence of the action taken 40 years ago by a Labour Government to establish a system of workers' compensation in this State. The Treasurer has said that although it is not covered by the Bill the time is appropriate to make a declaration of Government policy regarding the efficacy of the system and the fact that it is essential to preserve workers' compensation as a State monopoly.

He certainly waxed very eloquent, and I hope he will not mind if on some future occasion I quote his words about one very much criticised socialised Government service that has proved to be very successful.

Mr. Hiley: As long as you quote my words about State butcher shops and fish shops.

Mr. DUGGAN: Yes, but exactly the same criticism was levelled at the Government of the day when they introduced the Workers' Compensation Act as perhaps is being levelled now by the Treasurer and others about the failure of some State enterprises over the years.

I did not expect to hear the Treasurer get up and say that it had all the advantages he mentioned, that it was a more compact organisation, a more economic organisation, that we thus avoid the costly duplication of specialist sections to examine claims and that any profit that may be made is rebated back to employers, and any losses overcome by equitable adjustments upwards and so on. What he had to say made pleasant hearing and I am certain his remarks will be used to reinforce our arguments on appropriate occasions to show that in cases like these there is every justification for the State to have a monopoly in the interests of the public. We hear much twaddle from time to time from hon. members opposite—I do not particularly accuse the Treasurer of it. I am referring to some of the less responsible members of the Party behind him, who speak about the dangers of socialism and socialistic ventures and so on. I say that the development of any socialistic undertaking can be gauged when public demand for it has demonstrated the efficacy of it. On this occasion, I agree with the Treasurer in his declaration. It was rather refreshing to hear him say what he did, and I

take the opportunity of registering, for record purposes, that we will cite his views on this matter.

It is obvious that the Bill only involves the re-drafting of definitions in accordance with the adjustments effected in two previous Bills. The Treasurer intimidated by way of interjection that he was not re-examining compensation benefits at the present time. He made a very firm declaration and stated his views on the matter and perhaps his sympathetic attitude, but I should like him to reconsider whether he might be prepared to incorporate in the Bill some safeguard to satisfy the great body of people in regard to heart-failure cases. I know, from his attitude, that there will be no departure from the policy of the Insurance Commissioner and that he would proceed in the way which is normal for the State Government Insurance Office in this State.

Mr. Hiley: What change, exactly, would you like?

Mr. DUGGAN: I am speaking completely off the cuff on this subject. The Treasurer said yesterday that he had not seen the amendment made in New South Wales. From memory I think it was made to Section 3 of the New South Wales Act. I know that the Labour Movement has made submissions to the Treasurer.

Mr. Hiley: Is it your case that heart disease should be declared an industrial disease?

Mr. DUGGAN: I would not go so far as that. The Treasurer himself used the expression, "abnormal circumstances," but there should be some point between a normally degenerative development of a disease and the abnormal development caused by a person lifting heavy weights or something of that kind. There should be something between the normal and the abnormal. The Treasurer's colleague, the Minister for Labour and Industry spoke yesterday about the word "institution", and here it might be a question of defining "normal" "abnormal" and "intermediary" stage. I do not want to be unreasonable in making the request nor do I want to impose upon the State Government Insurance Office something which would be unfair. The Labour Movement does not want any departure from what they believe is the protection afforded them.

Mr. Hiley: They have had it.

Mr. DUGGAN: I do not know their answer to the hon. gentleman's statement. If they are prepared to accept it, so am I.

Mr. Hiley: I received a letter from them indicating that they intend to circulate my assurance to all trade unions, but they are still asking for more to be done. I cannot see what more can be done.

Mr. DUGGAN: If the decision is fair, I would be the last to cavil at it.

The chief purpose of the Bill is to make the workers' compensation section of the

State Government Insurance Office an incorporated body, and obviously there is no need for an extended debate. Until we see the Bill, I know of no reason to object to the proposal.

Mr. DONALD (Bremer) (3.51 p.m.): While I have been very pleased to hear the Treasurer on numerous occasions speak in glowing terms of the State Government Insurance Office, and particularly the workers' compensation section, I assure him that I have never expressed the opinion that workers' compensation was ever intended as a health benefit society, as he implied in answer to my question yesterday. No-one realises more than I that the Workers' Compensation Act is a very humane piece of legislation and that it has been administered over the years by the various Insurance Commissioners and their staffs not only successfully, but very sympathetically. However, that does not prevent me from trying to improve the legislation, or from protecting people who work in industry or their widows and dependent children. It was for that reason that I directed my question to the Treasurer yesterday.

For many years prior to entering Parliament I was in almost daily contact with the State Government Insurance Office in Ipswich, and frequently with Mr. Watson, the then Insurance Commissioner, and his successor, Mr. Grimley. The manager and the staff of the Ipswich office have always given courteous and sympathetic service. In addition, they have conducted the business of the Ipswich office in a very thorough manner.

Since entering Parliament, I have frequently had to seek the assistance and advice of Mr. Grimley, which have always been very willingly given. However, I have been informed by quite a number of trade-union officials that to have a claim for workers' compensation accepted now is much more difficult than it was years ago. I am not implying, of course, that previous claims were admitted when they should not have been. I would never support a claim that I did not think was warranted. Never have I treated the workers' compensation scheme as a health benefits scheme. As a matter of fact, I myself have used exactly the same words as those uttered by the Treasurer in answer to my questions. All that I was seeking yesterday—and I repeat my request now—was an amendment of the Act to overcome the High Court's decision in the Hussey case. Irrespective of the Treasurer's claim, that decision has resulted in many widows and children being deprived of compensation.

I have not seen the proposed amendment to the New South Wales legislation, but I quote the following from the "Sydney Morning Herald" of 20 January last.

"N.S.W. Government Decision.

Same Point of Law Involved.

The decisions might well result in the cessation of continuing compensation payments now being made to workers, otherwise than pursuant to an award of the Workers' Compensation Commission, on the basis of what now appeared to be a mistake in view of the law."

I am well aware, of course, that in New South Wales workers' compensation insurance is conducted largely by private enterprise, whose chief motive is profit rather than to assist an injured worker or the widow and family of a deceased worker. Consequently, it is probably more difficult for an injured worker to get sympathetic treatment in New South Wales than in Queensland.

The "Sydney Morning Herald" article continues—

"There were many cases pending before the Courts in which the same point of law was involved."

"Cabinet has decided to amend the Act to provide expressly for payment of compensation in all cases of death or incapacity through the aggravation of a disease or any acceleration of its course to which the employment was a contributing factor.

"Mr. Heffron said the amendment would be made retrospective to apply to claims for injuries received since the beginning of the amending Act of 1942."

I appeal to the Treasurer to take some action along similar lines in Queensland.

Mr. Walsh: There may be no necessity for it.

Mr. Hiley: That is the law now.

Mr. DONALD: The Minister has given us an assurance that he is going to do something like this but we want more than an assurance; we want it in the Act so that it cannot be challenged in the court.

Mr. Hiley: That is the law.

Mr. DONALD: That is all the unions are asking for and it is all I am asking for. We want to place beyond doubt the right of the dependants of the worker who has a heart condition that can be aggravated not only to cause incapacity but to cause his death. Everyone who has anything to do with industry knows that many a death has been caused by the nature of the work, by hurrying to work, by extra heavy lifting or by extra exertion in the course of a man's occupation, and the State Government Insurance Office has paid compensation in full in those cases; but this decision means that it may not.

Mr. Hiley: No, it does not.

Mr. DONALD: That is what they think in New South Wales and there they are acting to cover that possibility. The Treasurer should do the same here and keep the good name that the State Government Insurance Office has won throughout the world, particularly in the

compensation field, for being a sympathetic and just body to deal with. If there is any possibility of a just claim, either for incapacity or for death, being rejected because of that court decision, then it is the duty of the Parliament to see that the position is rectified so that it cannot happen. If New South Wales has seen fit to close the gap it is necessary here.

Mr. Gair: Why do they not bring workers' compensation under the State?

Mr. DONALD: The answer to that has been given very eloquently and truthfully by the Treasurer when answering an interjection. He explained why compensation is administered so much more efficiently and so much more cheaply in Queensland than in any other State in the Commonwealth.

There is another section of the Act that should be amended and that should have been amended years ago and it relates to the loss of a limb. If I am engaged in industry and I receive an injury to a finger the doctor may say, "We will not amputate it. There is a chance, though a lean one, of saving it. We will try to treat it so that you will have the use of it in the future and we will not amputate it at this stage." Say that finger when I was hurt was worth £250. Then the Act is amended and someone who loses a finger at work three months after my accident gets the full value of the new provision and is paid the increased amount of, say, £300 while I am paid only £250 because the medical people in their wisdom tried to save me the loss of the finger. I am not sure of the figures in the Act but I use those to illustrate my point. I think compensation should be paid to the injured worker as at the date when the limb is amputated and not the date of the accident. No argument can be advanced about the rate of premium because very seldom are premiums increased after an Act has been passed to increase benefits to injured workers. It is grossly unfair that a man who loses a leg or an arm or an eye after an Act is amended but who was injured before it was amended should be paid at the rate prevailing when he was injured and not at the rate prevailing when he lost the limb or eye. I appeal to all concerned that in common justice the Act be amended to give effect to what I have suggested.

I would hate to think that the decision of the Government to constitute a medical board to examine claimants for phthisis compensation is to make it more difficult for these unfortunate victims to have their claims admitted. I am more inclined to think that it is to assist them. Anything that we can do to alleviate not only their suffering but also their economic position should be given the closest attention. I am not going to say for a moment that they are not given sympathetic treatment but my information is that they are not given the same sympathetic treatment as they received some years ago.

I am not speaking from personal experience but from what has been told to me by people who have done business with the compensation office.

It was argued for years that coal-miners could not contract miners' phthisis but that has been disproved again and again. The metalliferous miner is attacked in a different way. His lungs are gradually eaten away with the silicosis dust that he breathes in. The lungs of the coal-miner become a hard mass. The effect is the same with both types of miner—sooner or later death, with a very painful existence meanwhile. Anything that can be done to ease their suffering and increase their remuneration is worthy of the support of this Parliament.

These people receive very little compensation but in addition they receive free medicine, supplied from the State Government Insurance Office, through phthisis committees. As far as I can remember there are only two such committees in the coal-mining districts. There is one at Howard where for some peculiar reason a bigger percentage of coal-miners suffer from phthisis than in any other district. There is another at Booval. They are given a great variety of free medicines to try to ease but not cure their disease. Again let me emphasise that it is our obligation to see that these people are treated in a manner that will make their existence more comfortable. We in this State say that we will not relieve the Commonwealth Government of their obligation to pay invalid pensions. Not many people drawing compensation for miners' phthisis are unable to get an invalid pension although there are some who do not qualify because of their financial position. With the compensation we pay to them plus the invalid pension they receive the equivalent of the ordinary compensation rates.

I know from my long experience with the State Government Insurance Office that it has trained many outstanding administrators thereby proving that it is not necessary to go outside that Office for future commissioners or managers. I do not confine my remarks to these positions, because again from practical experience I have found that officers of the State Government Insurance Office have always done credit to that institution.

I did not have an opportunity to speak on the previous Bill, but I should like to say that I agree with the decision of the Government to retain the services of Mr. Grimley, one with outstanding administrative ability. It will be to the advantage of the people of Queensland to have the services of such an outstanding officer as Mr. Grimley. I am sure that very few people, if any, who have done business with the State Government Insurance Office would disagree with the action of the Government in this respect.

I sincerely thank the Treasurer for his reply to the private insurance companies who wanted to share the workers' compensation business. It was a very truthful one, and I hope it will be very effective. We of the Miners' Federation know how much more difficult it is to establish a claim for compensation with a private company and how much greater is the legal cost to the union of fighting such claims. At one time it cost some of the coal-mining companies on the South Coast of New South Wales more to insure their mining employees than it cost air companies in Queensland to insure their pilots. The cost to members of the Miners' Federation in Queensland for fighting compensation cases is almost nil. There is little other cost than the retainer which we pay to our legal man. In New South Wales a levy is paid by members every pay-day to meet the legal costs involved in fighting compensation claims. In each district in New South Wales there is a compensation office. On many occasions I have outlined the procedure adopted in compensation cases in New South Wales, and I shall not weary the Committee with the story again, although it is a very interesting one. I thank the hon. member for Bundaberg and the hon. member for Burdekin for allowing me to follow the Leader of the Opposition, as I have to leave shortly to attend a farewell to a man in the coal-mining industry on the eve of his departure overseas.

Mr. Gair: He is not a mine worker, is he?

Mr. DONALD: Candidly, I am proud of the fact that I have the respect of the mine owners as well as the respect of the workers in the mining industry. I am happy to accept the invitation.

The only occasions on which I have met the man to be farewelled were when I was trying to take something from him in the interests of his employees or in preventing him from obtaining what he considered were his just and legal rights.

Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg) (4.9 p.m.): The Treasurer intimated that the amendments were simple ones, and then made some interesting statements in relation to the administration of the Workers' Compensation Acts. I think that every hon. member, irrespective of his politics, will be pleased to have the assurance that it is the policy of the Government to continue the present system under which the State Government Insurance Office controls the workers' compensation. I asked the Treasurer to give his own idea as to why the State Government Insurance Office would be able to conduct the business more cheaply and more efficiently than it would be conducted if outside insurance offices were allowed to participate. I think the Treasurer gave a sensible answer. On behalf of the previous Government I mentioned in the Chamber the premiums for different industries in other states, compared to the

premiums in Queensland. Take coal-mining as an example. I think the premiums in the South are two or three times the premiums in the coal and mining industry in Queensland. I should like the Treasurer to give a comparison of premiums, if he feels disposed to do so. I mention the mining industry as an example to show that in other States industry is burdened with very high premiums because of the multiplicity of insurance companies that give workers' compensation cover.

The only other point I want to deal with, as it has been bandied about, is the recent decision of the High Court in what has become known as "the heart case." It is not the first decision that has been given in a heart case. As a matter of fact I recall, and I have no doubt Mr. Grimley recalls a case being taken as far as the Privy Council, on the wording of the Victorian law. The insurance company saw fit to challenge the decision of the Australian courts. After the Privy Council had given its decision, it seemed that every white-collar worker in industry was entitled to workers' compensation if he collapsed on his way to work. That was never the intention, consequently the Victorian Government, I think, amended the law to define the intention clearly. In New South Wales a similar situation has arisen through the wording of the workers' compensation law of that State.

In Queensland, if my memory serves me correctly, if the Commissioner rejects a claim by the dependant of a bread-winner taken to the Industrial Magistrates Court who dies while working, and if the magistrate upholds the claim, the Commissioner may exercise his right to appeal to the Industrial Court and vice versa. There have in fact been appeals of that type. I cannot understand why people are continually rolling along this New South Wales case when there is evidence that over the years the Industrial Court has given decisions against the Commissioner on claims that have been submitted. I am not putting myself up as a legal man, as the hon. member for Ithaca might think, but from memory I do not think there is any appeal from the Industrial Court. Therefore, the question having been determined by the Industrial Court, under State law it becomes final, unless someone wants to go to the trouble of hawking it along to some other court. Of all the cases that have been before the Industrial Court and have been determined in accordance with State law, I do not know of any appeal to any other court in Australia in an attempt to upset a decision of the Queensland Industrial Court.

I agree with the answer given by the Treasurer that the law already covers the position. Over the years the office has sympathetically administered the law and there have been very few cases taken to the courts. Rather than raise a fear in the minds

of many dependants of bread-winners that they have not this protection, I should think it would be better if we conveyed to them the history of administration of the law in this State, and the decisions that have been given in the Magistrates Courts and Industrial Court on appeals.

My opinion is that quite frequently on the evidence submitted to me a decision should be given in favour of the claimants for compensation. I could quote cases in Bundaberg, although there have not been many, and I could refer to the Christesen case. This man collapsed at work in a sugar mill and was rushed by ambulance to a doctor's surgery. In that case it did appear to be a good case for sympathetic consideration on the part of the Commissioner, and I say that quite frankly after examining the facts, although I did not have all the medical evidence before me. The widow, who came to see me, was not prepared to submit a claim, but I strongly advised her to consult a legal man and for him to submit a case to the Commissioner for further consideration. I am expressing my feeling about the matter. I know that many cases go before the Commissioner where a person might have had a chronic heart condition. Some argument might be put up that compensation should be paid on the death of that worker. The Commissioner is largely guided by the medical history of the deceased. He does not make a decision without being fortified by expert medical advice, independent altogether from the Insurance Office doctor. The Commissioner has access to the best medical brains in the State, and in that direction he has had some very worthwhile advisers who have been accepted not only in this State but in other parts of Australia as knowing their work in connection with the respiratory organs particularly. I think it would be a good thing if the Treasurer could issue a statement to say that an appeal can be made to the Industrial Court. These cases have been dealt with under State law and it should be sufficient to convince everybody that there is complete protection for the dependants of the breadwinner.

Mr. Hanlon: Did not the magistrate quote a High Court ruling?

Mr. WALSH: It may be he referred to a particular case. All I can say to the hon. member is what I have outlined, that there is provided the machinery to go to the Industrial Magistrates Court and then to the Industrial Court presided over by a judge from which there is no appeal. I have no knowledge of there ever having been an appeal. The whole matter is finalised in the State without going to the High Court or the Privy Council.

Mr. ROBERTS (Whitsunday) (4.19 p.m.): Without doubt the amendments proposed are simple, but there are one or two points I

should like to mention. The matter was freely discussed here this afternoon. Death from heart causes is indeed a very difficult question to determine without some real knowledge. I realise that the workers' compensation section of the State Government Insurance Office frequently admits liability if the result was aggravated by the occupation of the worker. It is always difficult to determine it. At the time of a bereavement perhaps a widow would not be too happy about the conduct of a post-mortem examination. If she had some doubt she could perhaps help herself by that method. If the insurance office had an idea that a claim was coming from her it may like to have a post-mortem too. Heart disease takes a number of forms, and many people die from it in their sleep. It is frequently a very debatable point whether the attack that caused the death of a worker was due to his occupation. While we all have very great sympathy for the widow and children of a deceased worker, we must never forget that workers' compensation is not a form of life insurance.

I should like now to refer to a matter that has caused widespread concern during recent years. The State Government Insurance Office should give serious consideration to including what is commonly called sun cancer in the list of complaints for which workers' compensation is payable. There are many occupations in which workers are exposed all day to the sun's rays, and the contracting of skin cancer could rightly be attributed to the nature of their employment. Although as a rule people do not get seriously ill from skin cancer—at least for some years—treatment of the complaint frequently means absence from work for long periods. At times it is necessary for a sufferer to travel some distance from his home for treatment.

Mr. Coburn: Many sufferers are disfigured by the treatment.

Mr. ROBERTS: That is so, but I know of no provision in the Act covering the loss of good looks.

I do not think that claims in respect of skin cancer would be very heavy. As a matter of fact, I do not think there would be any claim for lump-sum payments, except perhaps in the case of an aged person whose death is attributed to the complaint. We have been speaking of miners' phthisis and other diseases contracted during the course of employment, and it is obvious that a cane-cutter, a field worker, a truck driver, or any other class of employee who works in the open and is exposed to the rays of the sun all day would be much more liable to sun cancer than an employee who usually works indoors. Of course, there is always the danger that an employee who works indoors during the week may indulge in surfing, sun bathing, or other types of open-air sport at the week-end and so contract sun cancer. However, we must be prepared to face that problem.

According to the annual report of the Queensland Radium Institute, the number of new cases of skin cancer and rodent ulcers treated at the main centre were as follows—

	Skin cancer	Rodent ulcer
1957-1958 ..	537 ..	1,370
1958-1959 ..	435 ..	1,269

I should have liked the figures dissected for other areas but the only ones available are those giving the number of patients treated or examined in sub-centre clinics. I assume they cover all sorts of cancer—malignant, pre-malignant and benign. It is interesting to note from the report that as one goes further north the incidence of skin cancer rises. I assume that most of the cases are of skin cancer or rodent ulcer. The figures for 1957-1958 are as follows:—

Sub-centre	New cases	Old cases	Total
Maryborough ..	288	1,007	1,295
Bundaberg ..	275	580	855
Rockhampton ..	439	1,330	1,769
Mackay ..	251	1,892	2,173
Townsville ..	612	1,746	2,358
Cairns ..	273	596	869

The figure for Cairns was well down because the clinic had been open only nine months.

Mr. Power: We have all this in the report.

Mr. ROBERTS: The hon. member cannot read so what is the good of his saying that? The figures for 1958-1959 are—

Sub-centre	New cases	Old cases	Total
Maryborough ..	293	431	724
Bundaberg ..	277	445	722
Rockhampton ..	366	945	1,311
Mackay ..	378	2,302	2,680
Townsville ..	567	1,314	1,881
Cairns ..	476	799	1,275

I know it is boring to have to listen to figures like that but when hon. members read them in "Hansard" they will be able to see the danger signs. Unfortunately I have not had time to go back through other years, as I should have liked to do. The matter is far too serious for levity; otherwise I would not waste the time of hon. members in bringing it forward. There are great difficulties, particularly as most of the figures are for sun or skin cancer. Perhaps it would throw a greater burden on industry than it could bear; but the complaint is becoming very serious and it is highly desirable that sufferers receive attention as early as possible to prevent it becoming more serious. For some of these cases it is common to get a 10-day course of treatment at the Queensland Radium Institute and if the patients can get compensation and so can afford to be off work for that time the trouble may be cleaned up. I sincerely hope that the Minister and the powers-that-be in the State Government Insurance Office will give serious consideration to my suggestion.

Mr. COBURN (Burdekin) (4.31 p.m.): I rise to place certain facts before the Minister
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so that he may be able to clarify a position that is causing a good deal of embarrassment to claimants for miner's phthisis pensions and to the doctors who are treating them. Although mining has never been carried on in the Ayr-Home Hill area, many former miners have come to live there since the decline of mining in the great mining centres of Charters Towers and Ravenswood. Unfortunately, some of them have contracted the dreaded disease of miner's phthisis. Since the Treasurer introduced amending legislation last year eliminating the 15-year period which was previously the time limit for making application, some have become eligible for the pension. But some of them are now in such a condition because of their disease or because of their advanced years that they are unable to travel to Brisbane for examination by the special panel of doctors that has been set up. Only these three chest experts can pronounce whether a claimant is suffering from silicosis. I have one case in mind of the inmate of a hospital who is in such an advanced stage of the disease that his doctor thinks that between now and the time of his death it will not be possible for him to leave the hospital to travel to Brisbane for examination by the panel. Many of the doctors up there have little or no knowledge of silicosis. They do not know what is required of them when patients cannot travel to be examined by the panel. In reply to an interjection this morning, the Treasurer said that the costs of travelling to Brisbane for examination would be borne by the State Government Insurance Office. I am sure that the Treasurer will give us a full explanation of what is required in the case of a claimant who was not previously eligible for the pension but because of his present condition is unable to travel to Brisbane for examination. It is possible that some miners who died before the Act was amended would have been entitled to a phthisis pension. I hope that the Treasurer will make a pronouncement as to what is required of doctors when they are faced with cases like that. It could mean that a widow would be granted a miner's phthisis pension after the death of her breadwinner.

I know of two heart cases in which compensation was granted. The heart condition was regarded as a factor which contributed to the death of the worker. In one instance it was considered that the effort that had to be made by a man climbing a hill to his residence on a hot day caused such deterioration in his heart condition that death resulted, and compensation was paid in full. In another case a man rode his bicycle home at dinner-time. The temperature was high and he had to push it through the sand, which called for greater effort. He died shortly after and it was considered that the special effort caused the deterioration in his heart condition. In another case men were engaged in unloading heavy bags of produce. The heart seems to be affected more particularly in hot weather. In all these

cases the claim was allowed. It seems that because of some decision in New South Wales many people have been stampeded into thinking that no compensation claim, where the heart is involved, will be allowed. I think that things will go on as they have gone on in the past. I have known of claims on behalf of persons who dropped dead returning home being disallowed because medical evidence disclosed that the persons concerned could have died just as quickly in bed or while sitting reading the paper on the veranda. If it can be proved that any special effort incurred at work or in going to or from work was responsible for the deterioration in the heart condition there would not be much doubt about the Commissioner's granting the claim.

Mr. HANLON (Ithaca) (4.39 p.m.): I share the concern of the Trade Unions in regard to the questions that have been raised by the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Bremer. Some time ago—I do not know whether it was before the High Court ruling which has been referred to—I had a talk with the Treasurer outside the House and followed it with correspondence regarding the attitude that should be adopted by the Commissioner in these cases. I drew his attention to one case—admittedly the strain was of a mental nature rather than of a physical nature—in which the Insurance Commissioner was calling medical evidence by Dr. Kurt Aaron to the effect that stress, strain or effort of some description has no effect as far as the aggravation of heart trouble was concerned. I did not realise this matter was coming up and I have not the exact wording. I wondered if that was the official view of the Commissioner and if it reflected the attitude of the Government—that aggravation was of no account at all in a case of death from heart disease. I am not prepared to accept the assurance of the Treasurer that the interpretation of the High Court is not going to make any difference, nor that there has not been any change over the last couple of years in the attitude of the Commissioner to heart cases. I do not want to be unfair to the Treasurer or to make a political point, but yesterday the Leader of the Opposition directed a question to the Minister in which he asked for figures for heart cases for the last three years. The information sought by the Leader of the Opposition may have been for a longer period, but I think the years were 1957, 1958, and 1959. The Treasurer in his reply said a considerable amount of work would be entailed in extracting the figures and that he did not think it was warranted. We cannot reasonably expect Ministers to have information collated on any odd subject that may come into an hon. member's head, but I do think these figures would have been worth the effort of officers and the expense to the department. They may not have reflected any trend one way or the other, but they

would have at least shown whether there has been a decrease in the percentage of successful claims in these cases.

I do not want to be unfair to the Treasurer, but I think his answer leaves some room for doubt that the figures may reflect a change over the last few years. I ask the Minister to reconsider his decision not to have those figures taken out. They may show an improvement, which would be all to the good, but the trade-union movement and the Opposition will not be satisfied unless that information is supplied. It is easy for a Minister to say that it costs money to collate certain information. Other Ministers, for instance, the Deputy Premier on traffic matters, have sidestepped on the ground of expense the giving of details that were reasonably sought. The Minister has assured us that these cases will be dealt with as they have been dealt with in the past, that aggravation will be fully considered, as well as exertion at work and the effort of getting to work, but I cannot reconcile the assurance with the calling of evidence by the Insurance Office that aggravation has no connection whatever with these cases. If the Commissioner is calling that evidence, he is openly admitting that he supports the opinion that aggravation in heart cases should not be considered. As I understand it, that was the main effect of the judgment given by the High Court. I should like a further explanation on that aspect.

Mr. Hiley: Every judge said that when injury or aggravation could be demonstrated the claim would lie. That particular man died or was on his way to death from the time he woke up that morning. His work had nothing to do with it. Every judge said where the work caused or aggravated the heart injury that he would clearly get it.

Mr. HANLON: I realise that in the case taken on appeal to the High Court aggravation may not have had any effect, but we must bear in mind the interpretation that could be placed on the decision of the High Court, if I may put it that way, by men like Mr. Sellwood, Industrial Magistrate, or the Industrial Court. It is a matter on which there could be some doubt.

Mr. Hiley: The particular case Mr. Sellwood tried was exactly the same as the Hussey case. His work had nothing to do with it.

Mr. HANLON: In recent times there have been certain indications. I do not want to refer to any particular magistrate, but there has been an indication of a readiness to accept the type of medical evidence put up by the Commissioner, to which I have already referred. I should like the Treasurer to explain how he and the Insurance Commissioner can reasonably consider a case on the basis of aggravation and at the same time call medical evidence to claim that aggravation is not a factor at all. The

Commissioner can call evidence to show that in a particular case the extra aggravation did not have the effect of bringing about the fatal collapse, but I do not see how the Commissioner can call a medical man to state his opinion that aggravation had nothing to do with heart condition. In the case I referred to the Treasurer, Dr. Kurt Aaron said that the man would not get compensation in any other State or country, or something like that. It is not a matter of what is got in other States but what is to be got in Queensland. I cannot reconcile the assurance given by the Treasurer with the attitude of the Insurance Commissioner in calling Dr. Aaron to put forward this view. On the surface it might appear that everything was all right and that there was no change in the procedure, but as the Treasurer took the opportunity of clearing up some difficulties in a previous Bill about the right of the Commissioner to hold a title to property he might clear up the doubt in this matter.

I support the statement of the hon. member for Bremer about the case of a person suffering an injury and much time elapsing before he loses a joint, as the result of deterioration in the condition of the joint over a time. Between the time of the injury and the loss of the joint there has been an amendment to the Act and the person concerned only gets compensation at the rate in the Act at the time he suffered the injury. With the fall in value of the £ a man might get something out of all proportion to the loss he suffered at the time. He might work on and have the use of his hand for 18 months before the joint is removed. The hon. member for Bremer has raised this issue on about 50 occasions. The more times it is brought up the greater the possibility of something being done. If something is not done by the Government I am prepared to suggest that a future Labour Government will do it.

Mr. ADAIR (Cook) (4.50 p.m.): Over the years I have spoken repeatedly on behalf of people seeking miners' phthisis pensions. It is through my efforts that the 15-year period was taken out of the Act. It was a ridiculous time. In the early days of mining in remote places like Wolframcamp and Irvinebank no doctors were available to treat miners who contracted miners' phthisis. I know many former miners who are suffering from it at the present time.

The medical board that has been set up to determine whether a man is entitled to a miner's phthisis pension will not be of very much value. If a man has miners' phthisis, an X-ray will show it. That was proved during the recent tour of the North by the portable chest clinic, when several old miners were found to be suffering from miners' phthisis. However, a sufferer's big difficulty lies in furnishing evidence that he previously worked in a mine. I received a

claim from a man who mined for years in the Wolframcamp area, but he has been unable to establish his entitlement to a pension despite the fact that at least 40 miners can verify that he worked in the Wolframcamp, Irvinebank, and other areas. Another difficulty faced by men with miners' phthisis is that the people for whom and with whom they worked as miners are now dead, which means that they are unable to get satisfactory proof that they worked in a mine.

I point out, too, that in years gone by many miners worked two or three in a party for themselves. I claim that they should be entitled to a pension if they have contracted miners' phthisis. Any man who is a former miner and has contracted miners' phthisis should be eligible for the pension. Years ago many mines were worked by teams of two or three men. It is almost impossible for them to get a pension if they have miners' phthisis.

Mr. Hiley: They would be self-employed. They would not be employees.

Mr. ADAIR: That is so, but I stress the point that miners' phthisis is much worse than tuberculosis. There is no cure for it. The silica gets into the lung and gradually eats it away. It is a slow and painful death.

Mr. Hiley: There is no doubt about that, but they are not insured persons.

Mr. ADAIR: I claim that they should be.

Mr. Hiley: Who would pay the premiums on their insurance policies?

Mr. ADAIR: Those men who contracted miners' phthisis in the early days, even if they were working tribute or on backing money, should be entitled to the pension.

Mr. Hiley: If they were workers within the meaning of the Act and they can show it, they get it. If not, they do not. After all, this is a Workers' Compensation Act.

Mr. ADAIR: Would the Minister say that a man on backing money should get it?

Mr. Hiley: A self-employed person is not a worker within the meaning of the Act.

Mr. ADAIR: A man on backing money is on half-wages. Would he be entitled to it?

Mr. Hiley: I should think he would be a worker.

Mr. ADAIR: But a man on tribute would not be entitled to it. That is the hard part of it. Many of the old miners who suffer from the complaint now are not eligible for the pension.

The medical board that is being set up will not function as expected. Even though a miner has the complaint he is required to prove that he worked in a mine for a certain time and he will find that difficult to do. One man who has made a claim cannot get

evidence that he worked for the mine owner because the mine owner is dead. The medical board will serve a useful purpose, it will tell whether the man has the complaint, but that is as far as it will go.

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (4.58 p.m.), in reply: On the subject of heart diseases, I will make a very full statement shortly. It is the more necessary because of some statements that have been made that are calculated to mislead and to frighten people badly. In today's "Telegraph" there is reported a statement by Mr. Dawson of the Building Workers' Industrial Union as follows—

"Heart cases which had been covered by workers' compensation for years were not covered due to a High Court decision."

That is a perfectly true statement for some parts of Australia but it is quite untrue for Queensland. He then says—

"This new policy was applied in Queensland by the State Government Insurance Office."

That is not so. He goes on—

"The Commonwealth Government had ceased payment of workers' compensation to heart cases decided in a worker's favour nine years or more ago."

That may be quite right under the Commonwealth Act. In New South Wales in a number of heart cases compensation payments were terminated following the Hussey decision but not one of our cases has been terminated on account of it. What Mr. Heffron has said he will do by amending the New South Wales law will make the New South Wales law what the Queensland law now is.

I will make a very careful statement and I will make it not only to allay fears that are being spread because of misreading what is happening in the South and trying to apply it here but also for a more important reason. A danger may arise from a great deal of loose talk about these heart cases. At present any number of employers have a man working for them who has had a heart attack. It is clear that the man has a degenerative heart. To the credit of many employers in such a case, they take the man off onerous work and arrange an easier job for him and he spends years and years of useful life in that less onerous job. I guarantee that man after man in the Chamber can call to mind an instance of an employee who has run into that sort of situation and his employer has found an easier job for him.

Mr. Wallace: That is the exception rather than the rule.

Mr. HILEY: I know of any number of them. The very case that went to appeal was one. A man who had been doing hard work was told by his doctor that he had to give up hard work. Arrangements were made for him to get an easier job as a watchman. He had a badly degenerative

heart. He died while walking leisurely home from work one morning. There was no sign of abnormal exertion. There was clear medical evidence that he had a severe heart attack of such a nature that he had to give up the onerous work that had been his regular occupation. He was given an easier job as a watchman, but the poor old fellow, instead of dying in his bed as might have happened, finished his life walking easily along the road. There was no sign of special exertion.

Mr. Baxter interjected.

Mr. HILEY: The hon. member has a jaundiced outlook of his fellowman when he says that. Quite a number of cases have come under my notice where employees have been found easier work.

Mr. Houston: The Department of Harbours and Marine did not find an easier job for a man who could not carry on his normal occupation.

Mr. HILEY: It may depend on the circumstances. When did this happen?

Mr. Houston: About 12 months ago. I took it up with them.

Mr. HILEY: With me?

Mr. Houston: No, with the Department of Harbours and Marine.

Mr. HILEY: I ask the hon. member to let me have a look at the case and I will see what the circumstances were.

Mr. Aikens: I know of compensation being paid in two heart cases, firstly that of a man who died on a bowling green, and secondly, that of a man who died in bed, because it was proved that their heart condition had been aggravated by their employment.

Mr. HILEY: That is stretching it.

Mr. Aikens: They are genuine cases. I will give you the particulars.

Mr. HILEY: That is stretching it to a really liberal point. There are the rare cases where a heart condition is occasioned directly by an injury in the course of employment. Mostly a heart condition is the result of a progressive heart disease. In most cases in which we pay, employment has aggravated the condition.

Mr. Aikens: These two men were engine-drivers who had strained their hearts from levers and regulators. One died in bed in the quarters and the other on the bowling green but the Commissioner gave decisions in favour of them both.

Mr. HILEY: I am very glad to hear it.

Mr. Power interjected.

Mr. HILEY: If there is no evidence of abnormal exertion but there is a background of hypertension and other indications of a progressive coronary condition—

Mr. Power: A man may get one occlusion that can be cured and he gets another later on.

Mr. HILEY: If there is no evidence of abnormal exertion and there is nothing to suggest that his work aggravated the condition, the presumption is that the second occlusion occurred as a result of progressive heart disease. That second occlusion would have happened in any case. There has to be some abnormal exertion to link it with his work.

Mr. Lloyd: Would you say that a man employed as a panel beater would have sufficient reason to get compensation?

Mr. HILEY: You need more than that. What was the state of the man's heart before?

Mr. Lloyd: He had no heart condition.

Mr. HILEY: That is purely hypothetical.

Mr. Lloyd: It is not a hypothetical case but one that I raised some months ago.

Mr. Aikens: The nature of a man's work could bring on a heart attack that is not fatal at the time. He might knock off work and die some days or weeks later. Surely to goodness he should be entitled to compensation.

Mr. HILEY: If there is the abnormal effort of work followed by an attack and subsequent death I think you have a clear link.

Mr. Power: What about the man walking up steps to go to work?

Mr. HILEY: There are any number of cases in which the courts have held that the effort of walking up a great number of steps has been abnormal effort and the State Government Insurance Office has met the claims.

Mr. Walsh: I hope that the Press give the widest publicity to your statement.

Mr. HILEY: I shall prepare a full statement.

Dealing with the question of skin cancer, where it can be shown that it has been occasioned by the employment the claim is granted. I have had a few skin cancers which I have had burnt off every two or three years. The last time I attended a doctor for this purpose he prescribed some cream, and I have been using it ever since. The bottle of cream costs about 15s., and I think I could live till I was as old as Methuselah without using it all. I do not know that anybody could possibly tell whether I got my skin cancers surfing, bowling, fishing, or digging in the garden. I did not get it in the occupation I was practising in the T. & G. building; I did not get it here, and I certainly did not get it in the Treasury.

Take the cases where you have to look for a clear indication as to whether the

nature of the work led to it. Let me give some cases where claims were recognised. One claim was by a railway fettler who had been working under the blazing sun all day. Another concerned a western station worker, and another a policeman who was stationed at a western centre. As a result of information that has come to me, I think the Commissioner of Police would be wise not to post men with reddish hair and brickish complexions to western centres, because invariably after two or three years they develop a crop of skin cancers. The fair type of complexion is much more subject to skin cancer, and if you send a person with that type of complexion out to Thargomindah he will undoubtedly return with skin cancer.

The hon. member for Burdekin asked for some elaboration of what the Act requires regarding miners' phthisis. The applicant must be able to show that he worked in the industry since 1916, when workers' compensation first came in. He must also prove that he had 300 days actual mining in Queensland within a period of five years, or 500 days mining in Queensland, within a period of seven years. He has to show that service in the mining industry.

Mr. Coburn: Since 1916?

Mr. HILEY: Since 1916. He could have got his experience up to 300 days by 1918. As long as he has the 300 days he is qualified. He may have been out of the industry ever since, but if he can establish that occupational background his claim is met. On the question of the detection of the disease, with the assistance of the specialists in Brisbane, travel will rarely be necessary. The evidence in cases of silicosis is almost invariably radiological. At one time much notice used to be taken of sputum tests, but I am told that now the X-ray is relied on.

Mr. Coburn: Many doctors do not know that and therefore do not take action.

Mr. HILEY: I am giving this information so that hon. members may spread the word to any cases they meet, particularly now that we have a mobile X-ray unit. We take the X-ray unit to the people and they have their chance of an X-ray. They can go to the base hospital or to the mobile X-ray unit, and the X-rays are then sent down for examination by the committee. These cases have to move quickly. They have to establish their claims while the unit is there. A man's claim dies with him.

There is one type of case that this will not meet, the silicosis that a coal miner contracts through coal dust. It cannot be detected satisfactorily by X-ray. It throws out an entirely different sort of chart. If a man has had experience in a coal mine and it is suspected that he has this particular form of silicosis, travel will probably be necessary. I advise any hon. member who has knowledge of a case of that nature to go to the trouble of making application and having the man brought down here for examination.

There is no need to take that action hurriedly. I advise hon. members who know of such cases to raise them and ask for guidance as to how it is desired that we should satisfy ourselves in fact that he has silicosis, but I give the warning that reliance must not be placed on X-rays alone if the sufferer has been working in a coal mine.

Mr. Gair: In the case I am putting up on behalf of the widow of a deceased phthisis sufferer the Commissioner has said, "It is so long ago when your husband was employed in the mining industry that records are not available. It is up to you to produce the names of some miners with whom he worked." They have probably died of miners' phthisis just as he did.

Mr. HILEY: The Mines Department records go back a long way. If we can get a lead as to where he was working, we can at least check the existence of the mine, and in some instances records are available in the Mines Department that will help us to establish the position, but we must have some lead. If a man merely says, "I was working in the mining industry," where can we turn to get verification of the claim?

Mr. Aikens: Suppose he said, "I was working in the Bonnie Dundee mine, Charters Towers"?

Mr. HILEY: Then we have something to work on. From the records of the Mines Department we can check on the period of operation of the mine, and we have some confirmation of the fact, but if a man merely says, "I was working in the mining industry 30 years ago," we have no check on his statement. I realise that some of the older cases are difficult. On the question asked by the hon. member for Cook about self-employed miners Mr. Grimley has assured me that tributors are workers within the meaning of the Act, and always have been. I put the same question to him. I said, "How do you check if a man was a tributor?" He said, "If he was a tributor, that record will be available at the Mines Department." If it can be established that a man was a tributor, and we are given a lead, as to the name, we will try to check. I do not say that every case can be met. Time which is often described as a great healer is also a great concealer, because memories dim and records go. We cannot throw the door open and admit the claims of all those who make them. We have to get some confirmation, but I can assure hon. members from my experience of the office that it recognises the difficulties created through the passage of years. Hon. members will not find the office unreasonable if some evidence is presented to enable a check to be made.

I do not propose to launch into an examination of matters that are not dealt with in the Bill such as what should be paid and whether we should disturb a practice that Labour laid down and adhered to for over

40 years, of relating the benefit to the date of the injury. That has been the set practice for 40-odd years. I followed the argument, but I do not think this is an appropriate time to deal with it at any length. Apart from that, the Bill appears to be acceptable to the Committee.

Motion (Mr. Hiley) agreed to.
Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE— RESUMPTION OF DEBATE

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

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (5.16 p.m.): The question of the settlers at Clare has been a long drawn-out one and there has been quite a lot of public controversy about their plight, and in addition, quite a number of people have attempted to make political capital out of it. I am not interested in making political capital out of the plight of the settlers at Clare but I am very interested in the desire of any Government or person to do something to alleviate their lot. It is true that they were put on farms at Clare, that the farms were prepared for them and that they were given what might be termed an "open go". I really think that therein lies most of the trouble that confronts the farmers at Clare. I do not want my remarks to be taken as condemnation of the workers and those actually engaged in building the homes, drains, fences and various other facilities and things for the farmers at Clare. It must be admitted by any fair-minded man that due perhaps to lack of administration or other causes the men who went on the farms at Clare were saddled with a capital debt out of all proportion to the assets they took over.

Mr. Gair: In other words, it cost more than it should have?

Mr. AIKENS: Yes, and I am not blaming anybody for that. I have spoken to many men on Clare. Up to 1950 the area was in my electorate; I have retained a keen interest in the Ayr district because Townsville relies on the Ayr district for trade and commerce and naturally I have taken a keen interest in the Ayr district. I have spoken to many people who have been to Clare, men who are competent to speak on the subject, and each and every one has said that the Clare farmers carried the burden of over-capitalisation which bespoke financial ruin from the start.

Mr. Gair: Contributed to by their comrades.

Mr. AIKENS: I am not saying anything about that. I do not want to criticise or condemn anybody, certainly not the workers who built the houses, drains, barns, and fences, because, like all workers, they would give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay.

Let me raise now what could be regarded as a similar case. I refer to the hon. member for Gregory, who recently was fortunate enough to win a selection in a land ballot. Let us suppose that the Crown said to him, "Before you go on your land we will build your house for you, sink your bores erect your windmills, put up your sheds, your boundary fences and your subdivisional fences. You can go onto a completed property, and we will hand you the bill." Experienced sheepman though the hon. member for Gregory might be, I am prepared to say that he would never make a financial success of his selection on that basis. Fortunately for him, he will go onto his 21,000 or 22,000 acres of bare, almost virgin land—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I should like the hon. member to come back to Clare.

Mr. AIKENS: I am coming back to Clare.

The hon. member for Gregory will build his own home to suit himself, erect his own windmills and fences, and sink his own bores, and consequently will not be saddled with anything like the capital debt that he would be if the Government did the job for him.

That was the position at Clare. If the settlers had been allowed to go onto the land in its virgin state, and if the Government had given them the finance they needed to build their homes, barns, fences and everything else they required, they would not have been carrying the capital burden that they are today. From the disaster at Clare, every hon. member can learn a very useful lesson. Let a man go onto the land and build for himself, or arrange to have built, the home that he needs for himself.

Mr. Graham: How long does it take him to get into production?

Mr. AIKENS: Any farmer who knows his job realises that production is his first consideration. He would not be concerned about building a palatial brick home and sitting back watching television while his land was still uncultivated.

Mr. Coburn: They could have gone there under the same conditions as the returned soldiers who were given cane assignments.

Mr. AIKENS: The hon. member for Burdekin makes a pertinent and very relevant interjection. They could have gone there under exactly the same conditions as the returned soldiers who were given cane assignments a few years ago. Those men did not go onto farms that were provided with homes and all the other requirements.

They were given the land and were told, "Go to it!" Each of them made a success of it.

Mr. Roberts: Some of them lived in tents.

Mr. AIKENS: As the hon. member for Whitsunday says, some of them lived in tents while they cultivated the land.

The hon. member for Haughton, who would know a good deal about the matter, has said that there is an agricultural farm at Clare, and that it is demonstrating to the farmers that tobacco can be grown successfully despite a heavy infestation of nut grass. I do not want to criticise or condemn anything that he has said, I do not want to criticise or condemn the officers of the Department of Agriculture and Stock at Clare, nor do I want to criticise or condemn some members of the Department of Public Lands who say that tobacco can be grown despite a heavy infestation of nut grass. However, there is not one practical tobacco farmer in the world who will agree with the departmental officers. I have read a considerable amount of literature on the subject, and I have never read or heard of any experienced farmer who has successfully grown tobacco and brought it to maturity where there is a heavy infestation of nut grass. I am not criticising anything the hon. member for Haughton said. Probably he was informed by the office of the Department of Agriculture and Stock at Clare, but I would venture the suggestion that they are working at Clare with everything loaded in their favour. They are not working under actual farming conditions. I venture to suggest, too, that much of the expenditure on the experimental farm is not being taken into consideration. If they want to do it, if an officer of the Department of Agriculture and Stock or of the Department of Public Lands and Irrigation wants to demonstrate that to my satisfaction, I suggest that he be given an area of land just like the settler and be allowed to work just as the settler would work and under exactly the same terms and conditions, and if he can grow tobacco successfully on land that is heavily infested with nut grass I will take my hat off to him and apologise to him. There is not a practical farmer who knows anything about the growing of tobacco who will agree with any theorist, even though he may have some practical experience, that nut grass and tobacco plants can grow together. I do not know what their motive is and I do not suggest that the hon. member for Haughton is involved in any motive. But if it can be proved theoretically, at any rate, that tobacco can be grown successfully irrespective of a heavy nut grass infestation, there is no need for this Bill; there is no need to give them any financial assistance; it is only necessary to go to them and say, "Huh, you do not need any financial assistance. You do not need any wiping off of your arrears or capital costs or anything

else. All you need to do is to be taught how to farm properly, how to grow tobacco properly despite the nut grass infestation." If tobacco can be grown despite nut grass, what is the purpose of the Bill? I have not spoken to the Minister about it but I will bet that the Minister, as a practical farmer, would have the same opinion as I have about the growing of tobacco where there is nut grass.

Mr. Gair: Have you any evidence that he is a practical farmer?

Mr. AIKENS: I will say this: he is a better practical farmer than I am, and that is a pretty high compliment coming from me. If the hon. member for South Brisbane were to see the abundance and the variety of crops I grow on a very small area of land in my backyard in Townsville, I am sure he would be amazed. However, that is my attitude to the Bill.

Mr. Davies: Have you discussed the nut grass problem with the agricultural officers at Clare?

Mr. AIKENS: I have not but I accept the assurance of the hon. member for Haughton that he has been informed by them, or on their behalf, that they are successfully growing tobacco despite a nut grass infestation. He is not responsible for it. He is only telling us what he was told in all good faith. I do not disbelieve the hon. member for Haughton but I think someone is trying to pull someone else's leg. I would say those men who went there had the rosier picture in the world painted for them as to their rehabilitation as soldier settlers and farmers. They were led up the garden path, perhaps not wittingly. Nevertheless they have been led up it. Many of them are in a terrible plight and I congratulate the Government on doing something to alleviate the conditions under which they are struggling today.

Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg) (5.30 p.m.): I did not want to take part in this debate but the hon. member for Burdekin sought to introduce the political aspect by way of interjection. The hon. member for Roma wanted to indulge in something similar, too. He is not in the Chamber now.

The hon. member for Burdekin interjected that the previous Government had done nothing to assist the Clare settlers. He knows that is not true. It is not customary for the hon. member to talk in that way. There is ample evidence to justify the claim of the previous Government that they did everything possible to alleviate the conditions at Clare. In fairness to the Minister, I point out that when he introduced the Bill he said very emphatically that he was not going to criticise anybody. I take it that he made that statement after perusing all the information at his disposal from the early days of the settlement right up to when his Government took office. From my knowledge

of the Clare settlement it was proceeded with after a very exhaustive investigation by Commonwealth and State officers, men who were supposed to be experts in all phases, whether on the land settlement side, the agricultural side, or any other aspect of land settlement. They recommended to the Government the basis for settlement. They were the people who recommended how the land should be subdivided, the acreage, and so on. They proceeded to recommend the basis of financial aid. The Government of the day acted on their advice, as I assume the present Government in matters of this nature would act on advice tendered to them by public officers who they think are qualified to advise. Again, it has to be remembered that a selection committee was appointed to screen the applicants for the blocks of land. Apart from the departmental heads, that selection committee also included a returned soldier with wide experience in land settlement. I think his name was McConachie, or some name like that. Some of the applicants went through a special course of training at Gatton College. Applicants had to satisfy the committee that they either had previous experience in the industry or had gone through this special course. All these settlers were selected on the basis that they were practical men who could go on to a piece of land and make a success of the venture.

Mr. Coburn: Despite all that, they failed miserably.

Mr. WALSH: Not all of them.

Mr. Coburn: Nearly all.

Mr. WALSH: There are many sides to it if we are to go into the failures. The hon. member for Burdekin is not quite correct when he says that the officers of the Department of Agriculture and Stock were responsible for the destruction or the eventual destruction of the tobacco crop in Clare in 1953 or 1954 because the settlers had followed their advice. That is what some settlers say, but on the contrary, there would be sufficient official evidence to show that in many instances the settlers did not follow their advice. They thought that an easier way to get rid of the pests on the tobacco would be to give them a stronger charge of the spray than that recommended by the departmental officers. Had the hon. member for Burdekin followed this matter as closely as the hon. member for Haughton he would know that is what happened. Eventually, when tests were made the destruction of the tobacco leaf was recommended because of its high arsenical content. Much of the blame can be laid at the door of the settlers themselves. I think the hon. member for Haughton would say that quite a few did not lose their crop because they followed departmental instructions. Many of the settlers, as a result of the decision of the previous Government, were allowed to exceed the maximum that

would be advanced through the Commonwealth Bank. Advances were made through the land settlement section of the Department of Public Lands. If they had been called on to meet that indebtedness under rural loans they would not have been eligible for the higher advances eventually approved by Cabinet in Rockhampton in 1953. If the hon. member for Burdekin looks up the newspapers of that date he will see that a decision was made by Cabinet which sat in the Town Hall at Rockhampton.

As to whether tobacco-growers can grow tobacco where there is a heavy infestation of nut grass I am not going to say. It takes up enough of my time trying to keep it out of my garden, therefore I know what a pest it is. I know that land adjacent to creeks or river flats is very subject to infestation from nut grass. Many crops can be cultivated on similar land.

Mr. Coburn: Sugar-cane is one.

Mr. WALSH: Yes, it can take charge of the nut grass very rapidly, but in the early stages it has to be looked after to a greater extent than if there were no nut grass there. I do not think it is desirable to drag party politics into this. No charge of neglect against the previous Government can be sustained. No-one was more insistent in representation than the hon. member for Haughton on behalf of the settlers at Clare. As a result of the hon. member's representations the previous Government decided to appoint the Co-ordinator-General. Mr. Holt, as chairman of a special committee to investigate the position at Clare. When Mr. Holt was sent to the United States on the Mt. Isa job Mr. Sewell undertook the position of chairman of the committee. The Minister has the report. The Minister would know that there were faults in many directions, and many of them lay with the settlers themselves. There was abundant evidence in the cases—maybe in the greatest number—the hon. member placed before me to show that in some cases the settler was responsible for his failure. I do not expect the hon. member for Mundingburra to know—that many have been settled in that area, Millaroo and Dalbeg, on the very basis advocated by the hon. member for Mundingburra. Tobacco blocks were thrown open for settlement and people were invited to go in with their own capital. They did so and many of them made a success of it. We are still left with the problem that in some cases we advanced to the extent of £10,000 to finance the growers at Clare and other places, and they did not succeed, and in cases where settlers went in on their own capital they made a success of it. There are many problems to be considered in this matter.

Getting down to the Bill, I do not think anybody will cavil at the action of the Government in bringing down legislation to give the settler the right to sell after five years, thus making it uniform with other

land settlement legislation. The Minister has said that under the Bill a settler will be given the right to sell to a civilian, whereas previously he had the right to sell only to a returned soldier within a period of 10 years, unless special conditions certified to by the Land Court, such as ill-health or something of that nature gave him permission to sell at any time after he had taken up the land.

Having given these concessions to returned soldiers, special assistance in the way of finance and priority for blocks, even to the exclusion of other returned soldiers who could not satisfy the selection committee that they had practical experience, the Government now propose to give them a substantial equity and the right to sell to anyone in the community, thereby destroying the objectives of Governments, that is, returned soldier settlement. If all the Clare settlers decided to take advantage of this provision and were able to make a substantial profit, it could be said that that would be the end of the soldier settlement. Where is the justification for the demand that Governments should give concessions, priority and substantial financial assistance, if the scheme is to end in this way? I am sorry that the Government have not retained the provision restricting a sale to another returned soldier, because the other returned soldier will be in open competition with others for the selection of any other type of land throughout the State.

If I understood the Minister correctly, the Government are seeking power to remit certain charges or certain revenue that would ordinarily come to the State by way of rent. I do not know if there is any other charge or whether the Minister is seeking power to remit arrears other than arrears of rent. That brings me to the point that was raised earlier. Some of these farmers have been successful. They cannot avail themselves of the provisions of the Bill, because they have met their indebtedness and have successfully carried out their farming operations. The farmer who has failed through his own fault, inefficiency, or because the land is unsuitable, is going to get the benefit of this legislation. I question the wisdom of it. It could be said that the farmer who is inefficient is going to get a bonus for his inefficiency and that the farmer who is efficient is going to be penalised indirectly because he is efficient.

I should like the Minister to give us some idea of the total amount that has been remitted to Clare settlers under all headings. I suppose we could get the information in reply to questions, but I would rather have the Minister give it later in the debate. What has been the total amount that has been invested in the Clare settlement, and how much of it has been made available by the State and by the settlers. I should like to know how much has been written off, what proportion the Commonwealth Government have borne and what proportion the State Government have borne. I should also like

to know how much the State estimates will be written off under this legislation and also what is the average individual loan assistance to the settlers from all sources. That information would give a picture to the Committee as to whether the legislation is really justified. The Committee is entitled to information regarding the success of the other two areas, Millaroo and Dalbeg, and the reasons why they have been successful. We should also have information as to how much capital was put into those areas by the settlers themselves, what was given by the Government, and how many settlers in Clare will remain and be regarded as having succeeded? There are many factors to be considered, the unsuitability of the land for instance, and it all comes back to the recommendations of the officers who, I should say, probably made them in good faith, thinking the land could grow tobacco. If there was one mistake made by the Committee that advised the Government it was the absence of a recommendation that there should have been an experimental farm in the area to prove to the settlers that tobacco could be grown successfully within that locality.

Mr. Hilton: The first year's operations were outstanding.

Mr. WALSH: As the hon. member for Carnarvon reminds me, the first or second year's operations were outstanding and were publicised in the Press. There was one case where the income from the farm was £12,000 for the year. I am not stating the expenditure.

Mr. Hewitt interjected.

Mr. WALSH: I am saying that the Government should have put in an experimental farm as the Government have done for other industries. Experimental farms are not expected to make a profit.

There is so much material on this subject that I should like to go over it all. If the Government's relief can be justified for the Clare settlement or any other land settlement it will have the full approval of this Committee. I say again that there could be a lot of evidence produced to show that returned soldier organisations, and the head centre, have commended the previous Government for their sympathetic administration of land settlement matters. Whatever may be said by individuals is another matter. I should say that the Government of the past would be acting in good faith on the recommendation of competent officers.

Hon. A. G. MULLER (Fassifern—Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation) (5.48 p.m.), in reply: It is the desire of the Premier to have the Bill printed tonight, and any point I am not able to cover now will be dealt with during the second reading stage. The question was asked by the Leader of the Opposition as to how much was involved in the write-off to the State. The hon. member for Bundaberg mentioned

another point about the write-off cost to the Commonwealth and State Governments. The information will take time to prepare and I propose to leave the answer until later. Replying to the Leader of the Opposition, let me say that there were 40 settlers at Clare. The arrears of rent to be written off is £4,344 and the arrears of survey fees £218, making a total of £4,562. For the Millaroo area, with seven settlers, the arrears of rent are £322 and the arrears of survey fees £22, making a total of £344, or in all a grand total of £4,906.

The hon. members for Haughton and Belyando spoke about the Government's responsibility towards those settlers who have left the area. In my opinion, they are not entitled to any further consideration. They have walked off their properties, some of them owing rents and survey fees. We cannot deal with them at the present time, although we have power at common law to claim the amounts owing if we so desired.

We are doing our best to straighten out a sorry mess. I am not blaming anybody for what has happened. We all realise that it has happened and that something must be done. Only a few days ago a young man with 40 acres of tobacco land said to me, "If you could give me 40 acres of good, clean tobacco land I would think I was made." I said to him, "What do you mean by 'good' land?" He said, "Look at the land on the surveys. It is alluvial land, but it has not sufficient drainage and it is impossible to get results. Not far away there is proper drainage and you can get results." I am quite prepared to accept that statement. I then said to him, "What do you mean by 'clean' land?" He said, "Clean of nutgrass."

Anyone who knows nutgrass country realises that it is possible to have a light infestation until the land is cultivated. However, as you cultivate the land, you thicken the infestation and reach the stage where it is impossible to grow any crop. I had the idea that as tobacco was a rotational crop, it would be possible to follow the practice adopted by potato- and onion-growers. With the use of mechanical power, by frequent cultivation they keep the nutgrass down until the crop is harvested. However, this young man said, "We could not do that. If we work the land intensively we quicken it so much that we damage the growth and consequently spoil the tobacco. We can cultivate the land only once before we plant the crop."

Mr. Aikens: As a practical farmer, would you say that it would be possible to grow tobacco with a heavy nutgrass infestation?

Mr. MULLER: No. I would not try it, anyhow. The officers of the Department of Agriculture and Stock and the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply hold the view that it is possible, but there is a doubt in

their minds. From my own experience, if the weather was hot and steamy, it would be impossible to grow a delicate crop like tobacco economically. Nevertheless, the C.S.I.R.O. are working on the problem and it may be that they will find a means of eradicating nutgrass. Until that day arrives, however, it is my opinion that it would be uneconomic to grow tobacco where there is nutgrass infestation.

I shall deal in greater detail with the other matters that were raised during the second reading stage. The hon. member for Bundaberg inquired about the amount written off. I point out, however, that anything relating to the arrangement between the Commonwealth and the State on the amount written off has nothing to do with the Bill. What we are concerned about is the contribution the State might make.

Two or three other points were made by other hon. members. A very important one was made by the hon. member for Bundaberg and I should like to deal with it in a general way, but hon. members will realise that time does not permit me to do so now, so I shall deal with all those matters more fully in the debate on the Second Reading.

Motion (Mr. Muller) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Premier): I move—

“That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until Tuesday next.”

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 6 p.m.