

Queensland



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[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 3 MARCH 1960

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

QUESTIONS

RETURN OF BRISBANE DOMAIN TO BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL

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

“(1) In view of the undertaking given to Parliament on October 29, 1957, that the Brisbane Domain would be handed back to the Brisbane City Council for public use as soon as alternative accommodation for the Central Technical College was available, what steps have been taken during the intervening twenty-eight months to secure or provide such alternative accommodation?”

“(2) In respect of his statement in the House on September 15, 1959, ‘the future of that piece of Crown—I repeat, Crown—land known as the Domain is receiving consideration in conjunction with the formulation of a master development plan for the whole of the surrounding area,’ does this mean that the Domain may be subject to further excisions such as that made to accommodate the new Morgue?”

“(3) Is his emphatic insistence that the Domain is ‘Crown land’ to be interpreted as meaning that if the Government elects to excise any part or use all of the Domain in implementing its so-called ‘master development plan,’ neither the Brisbane City Council nor the people will have any say in the matter?”

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

“(1) A number of contingencies are involved in making provisions for alternative accommodation to that in the Brisbane Domain including accommodation for certain department or sections of the University of Queensland. The Government has contributed substantially in the

provision of accommodation for the University at St. Lucia. As buildings on the previous site of the University of Queensland are progressively vacated adjustments of accommodation can be effected which will assist in freeing the Domain of the temporary buildings which it will be remembered were placed upon it by the Government previously in office. Neither the University nor the Department of Education wishes to continue to use the accommodation on the Domain any longer than is necessary.”

“(2) I would remind the Honourable Member that the decision to excise portion of the land known as the Domain for the purpose of accommodating a new Morgue was made during the term of office of the Government in which he was the Deputy Premier. The master development plan of the present Government with respect of the area surrounding the Domain is for the purpose of undertaking long range planning in which aesthetic and utilitarian aspects will be carefully considered. This plan will be considered in conjunction and in consonance with the proposals of the Greater Brisbane Town Planning Committee upon the portion of the City area concerned. So importantly does the Government view this that a special Cabinet Committee has been formed to deal with the matter.”

“(3) My reference to the Domain being Crown land was intended to convey that the area has not been alienated under leasehold or freehold title. The area commonly known as the ‘Domain’ forms part of the Botanic Gardens Reserve, and any land reserved for a public purpose is Crown land within the interpretation of the Land Acts. The Government retains the right to amend a Reserve by excising any part thereof or including additional land therein as may be deemed advisable or desirable in the public interest. The Honourable Member can rest assured that any action taken by the Government with respect of the land in question will be for the general benefit of the community.”

SALE OF CROWN FORESTRY LAND TO PRIVATE INTERESTS

Mr. DUGGAN (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) asked the Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation—

“(1) Has he been approached by private timber merchants or milling interests with proposals for the purchase by them of a large area of Crown forestry lands on the basis of land value plus current valuation of standing timber?”

“(2) Has he received from any source proposals which would involve the sale by the Government of Crown forestry land and/or the timber thereon?”

“(3) If so, what action has been taken or is proposed to be taken in respect of any such proposals?”

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

“(1) No.”

“(2) No.”

“(3) See (1) and (2) above.”

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO WOOLLOONGABBA SPORTS GROUND

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

“(1) Did the Government grant a loan or any other form of financial assistance to those in control of the Woolloongabba Sports or Cricket Ground for the purpose of effecting improvements, &c., and, if so, to what extent and on what terms?”

“(2) If any assistance was given, will similar assistance be given to the Trustees of the Townsville Sports Reserve for the same purpose?”

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

“(1) Under the provisions of ‘The Brisbane Cricket Ground Act of 1958,’ repayment of a loan of £22,000 by the Australia and New Zealand Bank Limited for the purpose of effecting improvements at the Brisbane Cricket Ground was guaranteed by the Government. The guarantee is regarded as being of a temporary nature as the loan will be repaid from proceeds of sale of the Fiveways Service Station which at present forms part of the Brisbane Cricket Ground.”

“(2) In the absence of any such application, I am unable to indicate what the Government would then decide.”

TOWN ALLOTMENTS, ARMSTRONG-GULLIVER AREA, TOWNSVILLE

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

“With reference to my previous questions on the matter and assurances given that the problem would be attended to, is he aware that many allotments in the Armstrong-Gulliver area in Townsville have not been filled in and that the Housing Commission tenants are experiencing considerable inconvenience and hardship due to water-logged yards? If so, will he personally interest himself in the matter?”

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

“Filling has been provided to houses where filling was warranted. A recent inspection of all rental homes in this area following a fall of approximately five hundred points of rain in thirty-six hours revealed that no water was lying under the houses while minor ponding was found in five yards. Such cases of minor ponding will receive attention. As the Honourable Member will be aware, this is very level country and no advantage is to be gained by filling one allotment to such an extent that stormwater is

dammed on adjoining sites. The Commission’s allotments now compare favourably with privately owned allotments in the vicinity.”

TRANSFER OF RAILWAY LAND FOR TOWNSVILLE SHOW SOCIETY

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) asked the Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation—

“(1) Has the Railway Department transferred to the Lands Commission the railway reserve adjacent to the show grounds at Townsville West preparatory to that land being granted to the Townsville Show Society for grounds expansion purposes?”

“(2) What steps are being taken to protect the owners of homes on the land from precipitate ejection and to give them adequate time to make satisfactory arrangements to secure other accommodation or to move their homes?”

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

“(1 and 2) A proposal to excise for showgrounds extension purposes an area from Railway Reserve R. 293, Townsville, was submitted by the Secretary, Commissioner for Railways. There are five existing informal leases on the land on which dwellings have been erected. It is a preliminary requirement of the department that the Townsville Pastoral, Agricultural and Industrial Association should effect a settlement satisfactory to the occupants of the land and the association before action should proceed to excise the railway land in question for showground extension purposes.”

WIDOW'S PENSION, PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION SCHEME

Mr. GARDNER (Rockhampton), for **Hon. V. C. GAIR** (South Brisbane), asked the Premier—

“(1) Has his attention been drawn to the editorial in the State Service Journal, headed ‘This is a Pernicious Tax?’”

“(2) Is it a fact that the widow’s pension, as provided in the Public Service Superannuation Scheme, is capitalised and taken into account to determine the rate of succession duty to be charged on the estate of a deceased officer?”

“(3) If the answer to part (2) above is in the affirmative, will he give an undertaking to bring the matter before Cabinet for reconsideration at the earliest possible opportunity with a view to protecting widows from this imposition?”

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

“(1) Yes.”

“(2) Yes.”

“(3) The relevant provisions of the Succession and Probate Duties Acts governing this matter have been in existence for many years incorporating the

whole period in which the Honourable Member held ministerial office, including that of Premier. It seems strange that, with such ample opportunity to do so, he took no steps to remove what he now describes as an 'imposition'."

GIFTS TO CUSTOMERS BY OIL COMPANIES

Mr. GARDNER (Rockhampton), for **Hon. V. C. GAIR** (South Brisbane), asked the Minister for Justice—

"In view of the growing practice of certain oil companies and petrol resellers of making gifts to customers in the form of treasure-chest prizes, television sets, ice-creams and pens, the cost of the latter often representing more than 10 per centum of the customer's purchase, will he (a) order an immediate investigation by the Prices Branch into the wholesale and retail marketing of petroleum products in Queensland, with a view to determining more economic and just price levels; (b) examine the legality of the sales promotion scheme known as Ampol Treasure Chest, the legitimacy of which is being queried in other States; and (c) ascertain whether these practices do, in fact, constitute unfair or restrictive trading practices by the more powerful oil companies and resellers to the detriment of the smaller operator?"

Hon. A. W. MUNRO (Toowong) replied—

"The legal aspects of these various matters are being examined."

TRANSPORT OF CHILDREN FROM BESSIE POINT, CAIRNS TO MAINLAND

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

"In view of his refusal to grant assistance to enable the children of Bessie Point to travel to the mainland to attend school, does he not consider this is discrimination against these children, when children attending State schools are receiving free road transport?"

Hon. J. C. A. PIZZEY (Isis) replied—

"There has been no discrimination against the children who are travelling from Bessie Point to Cairns. Approval was given for a transport service whereby these children were conveyed free of charge. The Department of Harbours and Marine advised that the vessel being used for this service was not seaworthy and the service had to be discontinued. When a suitable vessel is available this service will be reinstated. The availability of a suitable vehicle or motor boat has always been regarded as a prerequisite to approval for the institution of any transport service. In the meantime, the parents of these children are being paid conveyance allowance to assist them in meeting the cost of private arrangement whereby their children are now being conveyed to school at Cairns."

LEVELLING OF AREA, NEW STATE SCHOOL, PORT DOUGLAS

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

"Will he indicate when work will be commenced on the levelling of area for the building of the new school at Port Douglas?"

Hon. J. C. A. PIZZEY (Isis) replied—

"The Land Administration Commission has advised that formalities associated with a road closure have delayed completion of the action taken for the creation of a new school reserve at Port Douglas but notice setting aside the area in question as a reserve under the control of the Minister for Education will appear in the 'Government Gazette' of the 12th instant. Action will now be taken to ask the Department of Public Works to make an inspection and arrange for such ground improvements as may be found necessary."

MANUFACTURE OF FERTILISER, UREA

Mr. COBURN (Burdekin) asked the Minister for Labour and Industry—

"As the recently introduced fertiliser, Urea, has gained favour with sugar producers in other countries of the world and it would appear that there is a demand by Queensland cane-growers for its production in this State, will he kindly arrange for officers of the Secondary Industries Assistance Department to discuss with representatives of the cane-growers organisations the wisdom and the possibility of the manufacture of this fertiliser at Ayr, where unlimited water and cheap electric power are available?"

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

"Urea is one of the recommended products from the proposed fertilizer works and the Director of Secondary Industries has been working a great deal on this matter. It is also of interest to note that some overseas countries have now taken the further step of application of liquid ammonia direct. Under certain conditions this has proved the most economical method of obtaining nitrogen, and this too, is being thoroughly investigated. The Director of Secondary Industries is always available to discuss matters such as this with interested parties."

TRIALS IN DISTRICT COURTS

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

"(1) How many civil actions have been instituted in the District Courts in Brisbane since they came into being?"

"(2) How many of these actions have been heard?"

"(3) What would be a normal waiting time from institution to hearing of case?"

Hon. A. W. MUNRO (Toowong) replied—

“(1) 380 civil actions have been instituted in the District Courts in Brisbane since the establishment of the Court in April, 1959. In addition to these actions 41 appeals have been instituted.”

“(2) 52 civil actions and 25 appeals have been disposed of during the same period.”

“(3) It is not possible to state a normal waiting time from institution to hearing of case. The two main reasons for this are first that the District Courts are still in a developmental stage, and secondly that there is a considerable variety in the nature and circumstances of cases. To view this matter in its proper perspective it is also necessary to realise that, during the same period, the District Courts in Brisbane dealt with a total of 343 criminal trials and sentences. It may also be of interest to note that an additional District Court Judge, with headquarters at Brisbane, was appointed in February of this year.”

TENDERS FOR DIESEL-ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVES

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

“Who were the tenderers and what were the respective prices quoted for the supply of five heavy diesel-electric locomotives, the contract for which was announced by him on February 11?”

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

“A. E. Goodwin Ltd., £390,000; English Electric Co., £473,915; Clyde Engineering Co., £531,300; A. Goninan & Co., £534,400; A.S.E.A. Ltd., £563,000. The lowest tender was for a locomotive which had a horse power of only 643 at rail, whereas the required rail horsepower was 1,030. Its tractive effort was much less than the required 38,000 lbs. at 10 miles per hour, and the engine was a 6-cylinder one, whereas a 12-cylinder was specified. The fuel tank capacity was only 600 U.S. gallons as against 750 imperial gallons specified.”

RAILWAY DEPARTMENT AND MARGINS INCREASE

Mr. DONALD (Bremer) asked the Minister for Transport—

“Is it the intention of his department to oppose any application made by the Trade Unions for the granting of the twenty-eight per centum margin increase recently granted by the Commonwealth Arbitration Commission?”

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

“This is a matter which will receive consideration having regard to the terms of the application when received.”

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MEDWAY CREEK RAILWAY DISASTER INQUIRY

Mr. DONALD (Bremer) asked the Minister for Transport—

“(1) Has his attention been drawn to the report which appeared in ‘The Courier-Mail’ of March 2, under the heading ‘Were not consulted—Unions’, which stated that officials of Railway Unions denied in Brisbane last night that they had been consulted by the Railway Department over establishment of the Medway Creek rail disaster inquiry?”

“(2) If the report is correct, will he explain why he chose to ignore the Railway Maintenance Union, the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen and the Guard, Shunters and Conductors Union?”

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

“(1 and 2) I have read the report. There are many other responsible spokesmen associated with the unions concerned in addition to the four unionists mentioned.”

Mr. THACKERAY (Keppel) asked the Minister for Transport—

“(1) In view of the grave public concern as to the condition of railroad and bridges of the Queensland Government Railways and in view also of the proposed inquiry into the Medway Creek disaster, does he not consider a Supreme Court Judge would be more suitable than a General Manager to act as chairman in assessing evidence?”

“(2) Is the inquiry to be based solely on the Medway Creek smash or to be a general inquiry into the safety conditions operating in the Queensland Railways?”

“(3) Will Trade Union officials be allowed to give evidence and cross-examine witnesses at this inquiry?”

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

“(1) I am unaware that there is any grave public concern as claimed by the Honourable Member as to the condition of the railroad and bridges of the Queensland Government Railways. I already have stated by press announcement that I have absolute confidence in the integrity and capacity of the members of the Board of Inquiry, who are men experienced in railway administration, engineering and maintenance.”

“(2 and 3) The inquiry is into the cause of and the whole of the circumstances surrounding the derailment of the Midlander air-conditioned train at Medway Creek bridge on February 26, 1960. Any member of the public, including trade union officials, desirous of giving evidence will have an opportunity of doing so, and the Board has power to subpoena any witnesses whom it thinks might be able to give evidence which will assist at the inquiry.”

NEW ACT TO GOVERN QUEENSLAND
AMBULANCE TRANSPORT BRIGADE

Mr. McCATHIE (Haughton) asked the Minister for Health and Home Affairs—

“Has any consideration been given to proposals from the executive of the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade submitted after (a) the Mackay Conference in 1956 when an Act similar to that operating in New South Wales was sought or after (b) the Southport Conference in 1959 when an Act of Incorporation was sought?”

Hon. H. W. NOBLE (Yeronga) replied—

“I have been in touch with the Central Executive of the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade on this matter, and will continue to do so until the position is resolved. Whilst it is not intended that the proposal for a separate Act for ambulance brigades will be proceeded with. It is intended that amendment of the Hospital Act with reference to ambulance brigades will be submitted to the House at the first opportune time. It is confidently expected that the problem can be satisfactorily resolved in this way.”

SUGGESTED ROYAL COMMISSION ON BORDER
HOPPING

Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg) asked the Premier—

“(1) Has he received a letter from the Queensland Road Hauliers' Association in which it is claimed, inter alia, that (a) some licensed companies have been given immunity from prosecution by the department for border-hopping offences; (b) evidence was given by a State transport policeman in a court case at Toowoomba on January 18 last, in which he admitted he had exercised discriminatory treatment favouring licensed operators and on occasions had booked all three licensed Toowoomba companies for breaches; (c) two of such firms, viz., Brown's and Cobb & Co., have never been summonsed; (d) in Warwick on the nights of August 29 and September 4, 1958, six breaches of the Act were reported by a State Transport Department policeman, five of which concerned companies owned by Cobb & Co., and for which no summons were ever served on Cobb & Co. companies; (e) Cobb & Co. companies have been operating on an alleged interstate basis for two years without any prosecution; (f) there is concern in transport circles over the influence exercised on the Transport Department by Cobb & Co. and Brown's Transport, such firms having been booked for breaches of the Act, but they have not been prosecuted, and are seldom checked, and appear to have been granted immunity; (g) Crisp's, licensed operator in Stanthorpe area, had a summons served on it two years ago for a breach of the Act and the case still stands adjourned; (h) counsel appearing for the

company in a Brisbane court stated that he could produce five witnesses to swear on oath that the company had been told by the Transport Minister that it could run direct to Queensland towns instead of crossing the border; (i) a transport policeman was abusively drunk to a road haulier in a public place before five witnesses; (j) the unhealthy state of railway finances was due to Labour administrations and that Labour thinking is shared by Liberal politicians; and (k) although Western Transport have been prosecuted for breaches of the Transport Act, the number of prosecutions are small in proportion to the breaches of the Act committed by this company?”

“(2) If the Premier has received the letter from the Queensland Road Hauliers' Association containing the foregoing allegations, will he in fairness to the companies concerned and in the public interest appoint a Royal Commission to publicly probe the allegations and thereby allow all parties named in the letter to state their case?”

“(3) Has it been conveyed to him, from any source, that similar discriminatory treatment was exercised during the previous Government's period of office?”

“(4) If so, and a Royal Commission is appointed, will he extend the terms of reference to enable the commission to enquire into the previous Government's administration of the Transport Act?”

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

“(1) Yes.”

“(2) No.”

“(3) No.”

“(4) See answer to (2).”

QUEENSLAND EGG BOARD BUILDING

Mr. CLARK (Fitzroy) asked the Minister for Labour and Industry—

“(1) How much did the Government pay for the building previously occupied by the Queensland Egg Board now to be used by the Queensland Police Department?”

“(2) Have plans been prepared for its conversion for use by the Police Department?”

“(3) What is the estimated cost of conversion?”

“(4) When is it anticipated the building will be ready for occupation?”

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

“(1) £80,000.”

“(2) Plans and specification are in course of preparation.”

“(3) The work to be included in the proposal has not been finalised.”

“(4) No definite date is known but partial occupation at least is expected in the next financial year.”

SUGGESTED NEW RAIL SECTIONS,
BOGANTUNGAN-DRUMMOND RANGE

Mr. CLARK (Fitzroy) asked the Minister for Transport—

"In view of the steep grades, sharp curves, and high wooden bridges over fast-flowing streams, also the landslides, derailments and accidents that have occurred over the Bogantungan-Drummond Range section, will he give consideration to a survey for the construction of a new railway line over this section to be carried out in stages over the next three years?"

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

"Surveys already have been made with the object of improving grades and curvature over this section of line. A trial survey for a deviation approximately 14 miles in length to eliminate sharp curves and improve the grade to 1 in 75 shows that the cost of the work would be approximately £1,000,000. The elimination of four-chain curves and a few five-chain curves by the construction of five short deviations without any improvement in grade would cost approximately £200,000. The undertaking of improvements to this section of line will receive consideration in conjunction with other desirable works, having regard to available finances."

FARM LAND, HERBERT RIVER, MT. GARNET
DISTRICT

Mr. GILMORE (Tablelands) asked the Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation—

"As the farming lands recently opened up on the Herbert River, Mount Garnet, were eagerly sought and as a demand exists for more, will he have more offered, say up to twenty blocks?"

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

"There are no more surveyed blocks available for leasing from former Woodleigh holding on the Herbert River. However, following the Honourable Member's representations, an early investigation will be made as to the suitability of the land situated on the northern bank of The Millstream near Watson's Bend, for farming purposes."

COST OF HOUSING COMMISSION FLATS

Mr. MANN (Brisbane), for **Mr. LLOYD** (Kedron), asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

"(1) In view of the press statement some time ago that the erection of three blocks of flats in Brisbane would cost approximately £1 million, will he advise the approximate number of wooden dwellings that this appropriation would build in the suburban areas of Brisbane?"

"(2) Can he advise the House (a) the estimated cost of construction of the flats proposed for Holland Park, for which it is understood plans and estimates have been prepared, (b) the number of flats contained in the building, and (c) the approximate rental charges for one-, two- and three-bedroomed units?"

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

"(1) 320, including provision for land."

"(2) (a) £272,000 including an estimate to cover rise and fall provision, a tender having been accepted in October last. The flats are being constructed. (b) 99 flats in 4 buildings. (c) £3 8s. for a single bedroom and £4 5s. for a two bedroom flat per week. There are no three bedroom flats. I might add that these rentals could be as low as one-half and certainly no more than two-thirds of what would be charged for comparable living accommodation."

STATE RENTAL HOUSES FOR CIVILIANS AND
THE ARMED FORCES, IPSWICH AND GROVELY

Mr. MANN (Brisbane), for **Mr. LLOYD** (Kedron), asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

"In view of the obvious inability of working families securing the allotment of State rental houses at Ipswich and at Grovely, will he approach the Commonwealth Government, explaining the position and the necessity of workers securing accommodation in reasonable proximity to their places of employment, with the object of having that Government instruct the Department of the Army and the R.A.A.F. to either accept their responsibility for housing members of the Armed Forces, or accepting alternative accommodation in Brisbane and Ipswich?"

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

"On the second instant I advised the Honourable Member in answer to his question that the Commonwealth had accepted houses in seven areas of Ipswich. I suggest the Honourable Member inadvertently included Ipswich in his question. I cannot add further to the answer given to the Honourable Member on this question except to remind him that the 1956 Commonwealth and State Housing Agreement was entered into before this Government took office. Might I remind the Honourable Gentleman that the terms of that agreement in relation to accommodation for members of the defence forces contains one very advantageous clause for which I feel he has no regard. On every occasion that the Commonwealth exercises its right to claim a house which has been built under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, they have to

provide, as additional housing money for the State, an extra sum equal to one-half the value of the house. Having regard to the total housing needs of the State, I am prepared to say that Queensland would gain tremendously were the Commonwealth to exercise its right of nomination not only to the full limit allowed by the agreement but beyond. It would mean a lot of extra houses for Queensland citizens. If the purpose of the Honourable Gentleman's reasoning is to suggest that because a citizen wears the Queen's uniform he is no longer a citizen I am afraid I cannot agree with him."

TENDERS FOR YEPPON JETTY ANCHORAGE

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

"(1) Have any tenders been called for the construction of the Yeppoon Jetty Anchorage? If so, have any tenders been submitted and accepted?"

"(2) When is work likely to start on this project?"

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

"(1) Tenders closed at noon yesterday. They will be examined by the Chief Engineer, Department of Harbours and Marine, who will, in due course, make a recommendation for acceptance of the most satisfactory one. If none is considered suitable it is proposed that the work be done by the Livingstone Shire Council."

"(2) Until tenders have been considered it is not possible to indicate when the work will commence."

NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL, KAWANA AREA, ROCKHAMPTON

Mr. THACKERAY (Keppel) asked the Minister for Education—

"Will he consider building a new primary school in the Kawana area, Rockhampton, in place of the present school which is obsolete and the school grounds unsuitable?"

Hon. J. C. A. PIZZEY (Isis) replied—

"The Regional Director of Education and the District Architect have reported that the Glenmore School building should be replaced with a new building on a new site. A site considered to be suitable for the purpose has been selected in the Kawana area and action to acquire this site will be commenced immediately. When it is secured a recommendation will be made to the Department of Public Works for the erection as early as it can be arranged, of a new school building."

APPOINTMENT OF SCHOOL INSPECTORS

Mr. DIPLOCK (Condamine) asked the Minister for Education—

"Have teachers who have not qualified by examination to proceed to Class I., Division I., been appointed to the Inspectorate recently?"

Hon. J. C. A. PIZZEY (Isis) replied—

"Yes. The appointments were made in compliance with the prescriptions in Public Service Regulations 105 and 106. The officers promoted, owing to their superior efficiency had already, in open competition with other Head Teachers of Class I Division I, won their way to the head teacherships of large schools, and by virtue of this superior efficiency and their experience in the organisation and management of such schools are quite competent to inspect any other head teacher."

SHORTAGE OF TRAINED STAFF, CUNNAMULLA AND CHARLEVILLE HOSPITALS

Mr. MANN (Brisbane), for **Mr. DUFFICY** (Warrego), asked the Minister for Health and Home Affairs—

"(1) Is he aware that the Cunnamulla Hospital may close in the near future because of a shortage of trained staff and that shortage of trained staff at the Charleville Base Hospital is so serious that residents of the far south-west are being denied adequate hospital facilities?"

"(2) What action, if any, has he taken to rectify this position?"

Hon. H. W. NOBLE (Yeronga) replied—

"(1 and 2) I am aware that staff shortage has been severe at Cunnamulla Hospital and that Charleville Hospital has also been affected. Residents of the south-west area are not being denied the maximum hospital facilities that can be provided. Every assistance possible is given by the department to help hospitals boards to solve staff shortages, and this was done for the Cunnamulla Hospital. The latest advice received indicated that the position at that hospital was much improved in that a number of additions to the trained staff were expected. Closure of the Cunnamulla Hospital is not expected. No request for assistance in the matter of recruitment of nursing staff has been received from Charleville Hospital. It is fairly common about January and February for western hospitals to experience some staff shortage but the position usually improves quickly when the very hot weather is over."

AMALGAMATION OF MURWEH SHIRE COUNCIL
AND CHARLEVILLE TOWN COUNCIL

Mr. MANN (Brisbane), for **Mr. DUFFICY** (Warrego), asked the Minister for Public Works and Local Government—

“Did he receive the following resolution from the Charleville Town Council—“That this council endeavour to amalgamate with the Murweh Shire Council”? If so, what action, if any, has he taken?”

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

“Yes. The matter was referred to the Murweh Shire Council for its representations, as is required by law. I have discussed the matter with representatives of the Murweh Shire Council and expect to receive a reply at an early date.”

NUMBER OF PERMANENT EMPLOYEES IN
RAILWAY DEPARTMENT

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

“How many permanent employees were in the Railway Department as at February 1, 1960?”

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

“At January 10, 1960, 24,527.”

AREA PLANTED AND MEN EMPLOYED, TUAN
FORESTRY AREA

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) asked the Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation—

“(1) What acreage is to be planted at Maryborough’s Tuan Forestry this year?”

“(2) How many men are employed at Tuan Forestry at the present time?”

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

“(1) 421.”

“(2) 54.”

TRANSPORT OF COAL BY ROAD

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) asked the Premier—

“Does the Government contemplate altering the distances by which coal can be transported by road and, if so, what changes are contemplated?”

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

“The question of the haulage of coal by road poses some problems and the whole matter is at present under examination by the various departments interested, particularly insofar as it concerns the West Moreton field. One particular aspect being examined is whether, in the event of large quantities of coal from this field being brought into the metropolitan area by road, traffic hazards would be created both on the main highways and in the Ipswich and metropolitan areas.”

PROPERTIES PURCHASED BY GOVERNMENT

Mr. JESSON (Hinchinbrook) asked the Premier—

“(1) How many properties have been purchased by the Government since it took office in (a) the metropolitan area and (b) country areas?”

“(2) Will he please advise the House in detail the names of each property, location, prices paid and for what purpose the properties were bought?”

“(3) Has any reconstruction work been commenced, where, and what is the estimated cost of the conversions?”

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

“(1 to 3) To collate the information sought by the Honourable Member would involve considerable expenditure in time and money which would not be justified.”

NEW HIGH SCHOOL, BARDON

Mr. HANLON (Ithaca) asked the Minister for Education—

“In view of the initial heavy enrolment at the new High School opened this year at The Gap, will he give priority to the erection of a High School on the site held at Bardon for that purpose?”

Hon. J. C. A. PIZZHEY (Isis) replied—

“The establishment of a high school on the Bardon site will be effected as soon as it is considered necessary. Initial enrolments at the Gap High School, though very satisfactory, were not heavy.”

FAMILY MEN PAYING HIGH RENTALS

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

“Will he give consideration to a new category of rental priority covering cases where applicants are family-men paying exorbitant rents beyond their income capacity as such cases at present have no priority standing?”

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

“It is considered that the present points priority system, which is based on housing need, is the most equitable and suitable. This system has operated satisfactorily since 1945. Now let me remind the Honourable Gentleman of the priority table—Families facing ejection from present dwellings or homeless, 100 points; families living in tents, huts or similar unsuitable accommodation, 100 points; families living in premises condemned by local or State authorities, 80 points; families separated owing to lack of accommodation, 60 points; families living under overcrowded conditions 40 points; families sharing houses with other people, 40

points. A further three points shall be added for each child. After carefully considering the matter, I am not prepared to concede any priority for people who are adequately housed but facing dear rental over families facing ejection or living in tents or huts or in condemned premises. Still further, if I agree that an excessive rental is a social hardship, I am bound to say that I regard separated families, overcrowded conditions and shared houses as a worse social evil."

CONSTRUCTION OF ABATTOIRS AT MACKAY

Mr. GRAHAM (Mackay) asked the Minister for Agriculture and Stock—

"(1) In connection with the press report that appears in 'The Mackay Daily Mercury' of 25 February, dealing with the activities of the Mackay Abattoir Board, can he confirm the statements appearing in this report, which state that the Mackay Abattoir Board has had discussions with an operating firm with regard to the construction of the abattoirs and that the firm in question has made preliminary investigations into the proposal?"

"(2) Will he inform the House of the name of the operating firm concerned?"

Hon. O. O. MADSEN (Warwick) replied—

"(1 and 2) Certain bodies including more than one operating firm have displayed interest in the construction and operation of an abattoir at Mackay. However, I understand that the conferences with the various interested organisations have not extended beyond discussions of an exploratory nature. The board has requested my department to supply certain information as outlined in my answer to question No. 22 asked by the Honourable Member for Whitsunday on March 2, 1960. When the board is in a position to fully examine the information supplied at its request, I have no doubt it will forward its considered recommendations to my department for examination and subsequent recommendation to the Government."

CAIRNS STAR BOWKETT BUILDING SOCIETY

Mr. WALLACE (Cairns) asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

"In view of the apparent concern by small shareholders of the Cairns Star Bowkett Building Society as to the administration, will he consider an investigation into the affairs of the society with a view to eliminating any doubts as to its integrity?"

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

"This question should be addressed to my colleague the Honourable the Minister for Justice."

Mr. WALLACE (Cairns), without notice, asked the Minister for Justice—

"In view of the apparent concern by small shareholders of the Cairns Star Bowkett Building Society as to the administration, will he consider an investigation into the affairs of the society with a view to eliminating any doubts as to its integrity?"

Hon. A. W. MUNRO (Toowong) replied—

"I have not had prior notice of this question but if the hon. member will place before me his request in writing indicating grounds in support of his suggestion, the matter will be given consideration."

ACCIDENTS AT EAGLE FARM RAILWAY LEVEL CROSSING

Mr. KNOX (Nundah), without notice, asked the Minister for Transport—

"As the amount of traffic using the Eagle Farm railway level crossing is increasing daily, and as there have been several near accidents and two serious accidents, including a fatal accident last night, at this crossing, will the Minister have an examination made of the crossing with a view to improving safety?"

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

"This morning I received a report from the Commissioner for Railways dealing with this unfortunate happening. I have not had a chance to study the contents of it but I know it contains reference to the fact that witnesses are prepared to verify that the driver of the locomotive sounded his whistle and in fact did everything possible to attempt to stop the train. However, I assure the hon. member that I will fully consider the report and, if it is considered necessary to provide additional warning signals or take other action, it will certainly be attended to."

OPERATIONS OF ROAD HAULIERS

Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg), without notice, asked the Premier—

"Has the Premier received a letter from Messrs. Quinlan, Miller & Treston, solicitors, dated 2 March, in which inter alia, it is stated—

'Far more serious and more concrete instances of discrimination have now been drawn to our attention by our client. On 25 February, in the presence of reputable persons here in Brisbane, Mr. Harris was told by a fellow operator that there was corruption amongst the State Transport police and that nine of the police were actually being paid sums of money by him. The same operator then told our client that he

was given advance information of a sort of roster system indicating where and at what times the police would be operating for that week and that on other occasions, in exchange for the payment of £5 by him, individual reports of breaches were destroyed by Departmental officers in his presence.

The same man further told our client that other hauliers were operating under the same system. Further, on the 26th February, the same operator informed Mr. Harris that he had been visited at his depot that morning and he had made another payment. These, we know, are serious charges and our client is prepared on any occasion to give evidence on Oath of the information which was given him and set out in this paragraph.

In view of this strong evidence of corruption and discrimination in administration by the Department and against the background of unrest which has existed even prior to this date, we ask that you give this matter your most urgent attention as it seems that justice is not being done at all and that honest operators are presently being persecuted under this system of abuses. You must agree that allegations of corruption and malpractice can be investigated satisfactorily only by open enquiry. Our client demands such an enquiry in this case. In view of the failure of Cabinet to institute adequate enquiries into the charges already made to you about the administration of the Department, our client intends to make copies of this letter available tonight to other interested parties.

"If the Premier has received the letter referred to containing the foregoing allegations, what action does the Government propose to take in connection with it?"

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

"I received the letter this morning when I came into my office at 8.30 a.m. A reply is now in the hands of the solicitors concerned, advising them that as their client has made allegations of criminal offences which can be supported by evidence it is his duty to give full information concerning these allegations to the Commissioner of Police so that they may be investigated without delay.

May I further add that if the client concerned, whose name the hon. member did not mention, but who I might say is named Harris, does not take this opportunity to visit the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Harris himself will be interviewed to give him an opportunity of standing up to these very serious allegations which are made against a very honourable body of men in our Queensland Police Force."

Government Members: Hear, hear!

"**HARLEY'S SEAFOODS,**" LABRADOR, SOUTHPORT

Mr. JESSON (Hinchinbrook), without notice, asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

"Following my question of the 2nd inst. and your informative answer re Harley's Seafoods Store—

(1) Could you please inform the House—

(a) What rent is being derived by Harley from Hughes?

(b) How much rent does he (Harley) pay to the Council?

(2) Has the Gold Coast Town Council ever received any rent from this business?"

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

"So far as I am aware Mr. Harley receives no rent. I am informed that he is a partner in the business and, as such, he no doubt receives a share of profits, but, so far as I know, no rent. No rent is presently being paid by Mr. Harley to the Council. Such rent was paid, but on finding that the Council had no right to levy rent, it was discontinued."

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:—

By-laws under the Southern Electric Authority of Queensland Acts, 1952 to 1958.

Order in Council under the State Electricity Commission Acts, 1937 to 1958.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT

POLICE AND ROAD HAULIERS

Mr. SPEAKER: I wish to acquaint the House that this morning I received the following letter from the hon. member for Bundaberg and Deputy Leader, Queensland Labour Party:—

"Parliament House,
"Brisbane,
"March 3, 1960.

"Dear Mr. Fletcher,

"In accordance with Standing Order No. 137, I desire to inform you that I propose to move the adjournment of the House at today's sitting for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, viz., charges of corruption and malpractices in connection with the administration of the Transport Act.

"Yours faithfully
"E. J. Walsh,

"Member for Bundaberg and Deputy-Leader, Queensland Labour Party.

"The Hon. Alan Fletcher,
"Speaker of the Legislative Assembly,
"Parliament House,
"Brisbane."

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

Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg) (11.35 a.m.): I move—

“That the House do now adjourn.”

I take this opportunity under Standing Orders to move the adjournment of the House, which I think every hon. member will agree is the prerogative of any hon. member, to permit of a discussion of a matter of public importance in the limited time available before the session ends.

Yesterday I directed questions to the Premier which covered the serious allegations made by a representative of the Queensland Hauliers' Association. I think the Premier will agree that the charges made in that letter against the administration are of sufficient importance for them to be publicly exposed. It is not enough for them to be thrown aside by evasive replies given either in this House or through the Press. I want to be quite fair with the Premier in this matter and say that as far as I am concerned I am not interested in any of the people in this case—not at all. All I am interested in is the public statements that have been made and the statements made in the communication to the Premier as head of the Government. There appeared in the Press on 23 January, a statement by myself, commenting on a statement made by the Secretary of the Queensland Hauliers' Association, Mr. J. Overlack, which appeared in the “*Courier-Mail*”. In that statement Mr. Overlack made some specific charges that bribes had been offered by the Government and bribes had been accepted by companies. Those are not my words; they are the words of the representative of the hauliers.

A Government Member: You are making use of them.

Mr. WALSH: The same as hon. members did when they were in Opposition. They used them to the full extent and got plenty of Press copy for the allegations they made against the then Government. I pointed out that this was tantamount to a charge of corrupt administration and could not be brushed aside lightly. I pointed out that it had been represented to me that one of the representatives of a road-operating company had been threatened that unless the offer submitted by the Government was agreed to action would be taken to cancel certain licenses. It was represented to me that the Minister for Transport threatened that unless the proposals were agreed to licences would be cancelled. It was indicated to me also, and the people who made these representations said they believed the person concerned would be prepared to make a sworn affidavit regarding these things.

Another suggestion was contained in the letter forwarded to the Premier yesterday, the gist of which I have quoted. I agree that they are grave charges. Whether they

can be justified is another matter. They have been made in a communication from a responsible firm of solicitors of long standing in the community. I hesitate to think that they would present anything that could not be substantiated.

In “*Truth*” of 28 February there was an article headed “Road war legal men surprise.” It goes on to refer to the withdrawal of Mr. F. G. Brennan and Mr. John Currie of the leading firm of solicitors, O'Sullivan Ruddy & Currie. The relevant paragraph reads as follows:—

“Mr. Brennan had suggested a wide divergence of attitude and action by the Government, in its handling of transport affairs involving hauliers. It is believed that, in withdrawing, counsel had informed their clients that certain information had come into their possession, just before the Ipswich case, which necessitated their withdrawal on the ground of professional ethics.”

I want to be quite open with the Premier and the Government by saying that I have been told that Mr. Brennan and Mr. Currie's reasons for withdrawing from these cases were that the statements contained in the letter forwarded to the Premier were made in their presence and therefore, as hon. gentlemen and members of the legal profession, they felt that they could not continue to appear in any of these cases when it was likely they would be called as witnesses in any inquiry. Whether that is right or wrong, I cannot say. All I can say is that that was told to me by those who conveyed the information to me last night, and that is the information in the letter from Messrs. Quinlan & Miller.

Mr. Aikens: Did the solicitors concerned tell you this?

Mr. WALSH: The solicitors did not tell me. I said I would be frank about the matter. The information was given to me by those who conveyed to me Quinlan & Miller's letter.

Mr. Knox: Who had authority to give you that letter?

Mr. WALSH: If the hon. member for Nundah had followed carefully my question without notice to the Premier, he would know that the solicitors in their letter said it was being conveyed to other parties.

Mr. Knox: Who gave it to you?

Mr. WALSH: I am not here to be cross-questioned by the hon. member for Nundah. He knows I have only a limited time in which to speak. I shall reply only to relevant parts of his interjection.

I think it will be agreed that the charges made by the Queensland Hauliers' Association in their letter to the Premier certainly justify a royal commission, and I say frankly that one of the members of the three firms mentioned in this connection

has indicated to me that they would welcome a royal commission. What is there to hide? What do the Government want to hide? If the firms are prepared to have it and the hauliers are looking for it, why not grant the request and let us have a complete investigation into the matter. It does not matter whose head is to be cut off or who is going to get a thrashing. These men on the road are making a living. If they are illegal borderhoppers, I have no time for them, that is, if they are committing breaches of the law, but I am concerned about any suggestion that either the Minister or his officers are administering the law in such a way that they discriminate between operators in various parts of the State.

I assume it is within the knowledge of the Minister that certain of these companies have either had their licences extended into other areas of the State or have been issued with permits to engage in hauling business over long distances in Queensland.

I have been told again that either a permit or a licence has been granted to Cobb & Co. to carry goods as far as Theodore, from Dalby to Theodore, or the original destination set out in the licence. That in itself is a complete departure from one of the fundamental principles of the Transport Facilities Act, that the department is obliged in all honesty to call tenders for these routes or a new franchise. Everyone would know that Cobb & Co. and Western Transport and Western Interstate would be rolling in money, and should be able to reduce the charges already being made, but now it is alleged that they have been given some preferential treatment, in a bargain made by the Minister that if they discontinued their borderhopping or alleged borderhopping he was prepared to give them some favourable consideration regarding these permits or licences.

Those are the statements made, and those are the matters the Government and the Minister should have a chance to reply to and be quite open about. To show there is evidence of it, I have here dockets that have been issued—two of them—by Cobb & Co. which indicate that they took delivery of certain goods on a certain date. Payments have been made.

I do not know whether these documents have been brought before the notice of the Minister. The relevant numbers on the dockets are—in the case of Cobb & Co., 8808 and 7611. There is also one from Brown's Transport Pty. numbered 3145. Can the Minister or the Government justify a position where they are handling this borderhopping situation in such a way as to favour the bigger operators to the detriment of some of the smaller operators or those who want to engage in transport? When I said that Cobb & Co. would probably be rolling in money, I meant that they are only rolling in money because of the application of the law as it stands, because they have had to

charge certain freight rates in accordance with railway freight classifications. Probably they have had no alternative but to increase their charges when the Railway Department has increased its charges. This business is not of much satisfaction to the consumers and those dealing with the haulage companies. The Minister has seen Press statements to the effect that some of these hauliers, who have been, I take it, carrying on in a legitimate way, have been able to carry certain goods at a cheaper rate than other companies. All these things arise as to whether the Government are giving consideration to the bigger operators to the exclusion of others. So far as I and members of the Q.L.P. are concerned, the borderhopper has to be dealt with in accordance with the law. Let it not be forgotten that the Q.L.P. moved a certain amendment regarding taxation proposals put forward by the Government which would indicate that we were not prepared to give the illegal borderhopper any consideration.

The summons issued against Crisp, an operator at Stanthorpe, two years ago, has been continually adjourned. In recent weeks it was further adjourned. This is hard to understand. When a case is brought before the court it should be concluded. I do not know whether the case hinges around any High Court determination. Perhaps the matter was determined by the more recent High Court decision, but cases of this nature should be dealt with. From the public's point of view these are serious allegations. I asked the Premier a question this morning and he admitted in his reply to me that he had got a letter containing allegations concerning police officers. I am in entire agreement that the persons making the charges should be made to stand up to them and I suggest that the only way this can be done is by the appointment of a commission of inquiry, whether the Premier likes to call it a Royal Commission or any other form of inquiry. It does not matter about the name so long as there is scope to call witnesses and have them examined to the fullest extent. Questioning on the part of the police means that the man concerned will be advised by his solicitor to take a certain course of action. Obviously he will not give information in the manner he should give it as obviously the legal advice will be not to do so until there is an open inquiry.

Government Members: Oh!

Mr. WALSH: I think the Premier will agree that that has been done. I can recall an occasion when the Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads made certain charges in this House based on Press reports.

(Time expired).

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona) (11.49 a.m.): I second the motion for the adjournment of the House, but I make it quite clear that I have no interest in any of the hauliers, in

any way. The charges made and the letter received by the Premier are far too serious to be brushed aside.

Mr. Nicklin: They are not going to be brushed aside. Don't worry about that!

Mr. POWER: Charges have been made against members of the Police Force—I am not saying they are true—and in fairness to them the whole matter should be cleared up by the appointment of a Royal Commission. It is all very well for the Government to say that the matter has been referred to the Commissioner of Police. He has no authority to inquire into many matters that can be investigated only by a Royal Commission. The Premier can get advice from officers of the Justice Department on the questions that can be directed to any one person, and whether he can be compelled to answer them. If a Royal Commission is granted, the people who make the allegations against members of the Police Force can be compelled to answer questions and stand up to their replies. If they are questioned by a policeman, they can refuse to answer.

The question on this matter directed by the hon. member for Bundaberg to the Premier this morning reads—

“Has he received a letter from the Queensland Road Hauliers' Association in which it is claimed, *inter alia*, that (a) some licensed companies have been given immunity from prosecution by the department for border-hopping offences?”

How could a matter such as that be dealt with by the Police Department? Questions relating to an allegation like that could be answered only by the appointment of a Royal Commission. The general public are entitled to know whether there has been some discrimination.

The question asked by the hon. member for Bundaberg continued—

“(b) evidence was given by a State transport policeman in a court case at Toowoomba on 18 January last, in which he admitted he had exercised discriminatory treatment favouring licensed operators and on occasions had booked all three licensed Toowoomba companies for breaches.”

Why should these matters be referred to the Police Department for investigation? Under the Police Rules, a policeman can refuse to answer any question directed to him. However, if the terms of reference of a Royal Commission are made wide enough, it can compel witnesses to appear before it and answer questions. I am not saying that the allegations are true, but I want the fullest possible investigation so that the general public will be made aware of the truth.

Time does not permit me to develop my argument as fully as I should like, but the allegations contained in the letter that the

Premier has admitted receiving are far too serious to be brushed lightly aside. It says—

“Far more serious and more concrete instances of discrimination have now been drawn to our attention by our client. On 25 February, in the presence of reputable persons here in Brisbane, Mr. Harris was told by a fellow operator that there was corruption amongst the State Transport police and that nine of the police were actually being paid sums of money by him.”

Does that not warrant immediate investigation, not by the Police Department, but by a Royal Commission? The members of the Police Force against whom the allegations are made should be given the opportunity of appearing before a Royal Commission and being represented by counsel. If the allegations are found to be untrue, action should then be taken against those who made them. We have the further statement—

“The same operator then told our client that he was given advance information of a sort of roster system indicating where and at what times the police would be operating for that week and that on other occasions, in exchange for the payment of £5 by him, individual reports of breaches were destroyed by departmental officers in his presence.”

Surely to goodness he can be brought before a Royal Commission to give that evidence, power being vested in the Royal Commission to deal with him if he does not give it! As it is, the whole matter can be white-washed if he says he is not prepared to answer any questions asked by a member of the Police Force. The letter continues—

“The same man further told our client that other hauliers were operating under the same system.”

I do not say that the allegations are true; I have no knowledge of that. I should hate to think that a member of the Queensland Police Force would be a party to any such act. I know some members of the State transport police and I have always found them to be honest. If allegations are made against them they should be given an opportunity to go before a public inquiry and be represented by a legal man so that those allegations can be proved or disproved. The Government should have nothing to hide in the matter and if they have not why are they trying to shelve it by saying it is one for the Police Department? It is far too serious in the eyes of the general public. I agree with the Deputy Leader of the Queensland Labour Party that, where these practices can be stamped out if they do exist, action must be taken to do it. Allegations have been made to a reputable firm of solicitors by a man who says he is prepared to give the evidence on oath. Why not throw the matter open before a Royal Commission? The Government should seize the opportunity

to have a full and thorough investigation into the matters raised in the motion. In fairness to those against whom allegations have been made they should be brought before a Royal Commission where they can be given the opportunity to reply to these allegations and put their accuser under cross-examination by their legal representatives. Today the general public are very much concerned about what is taking place.

There is an allegation of favouritism against certain road hauliers. That, too, must be examined.

The hon. member for Bundaberg has documentary evidence, which he read here today.

Mr. Evans: He has always got his dossiers in his inside coat pocket.

Mr. POWER: That might be so, but I have seen the documentary evidence and he will be prepared to make it available. A copy of it must be in the office of the State Transport Department and the file can be put before the Royal Commission.

Mr. Morris: You have seen the documentary evidence?

Mr. Walsh: The Premier has got it, yes.

Mr. Morris: Yet you said a moment ago that you did not know anything about the truth of it.

Mr. POWER: I said I had seen the documentary evidence of some of the things that it was alleged had happened. I am not subject to examination by the Minister in charge of the Police Department: but allegations have been made and it is the bounden duty of the Government, in the interests of the general public, to see that the matter is fully investigated.

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Premier) (12 noon): I must admit that I am very disappointed and rather disturbed at the weakness of the case put up by the hon. member for Bundaberg and the hon. member for Baroona in advocating a Royal Commission. One would have expected, when responsible gentlemen such as they should be, being ex-Ministers of the Crown, took action such as they have taken this mornnig, that at least they would have supported their case for a Royal Commission with concrete evidence.

Mr. NICKLIN: They made out no real case that what they stated was true. In view of the circumstances associated with the moving of the motion and the statements by both hon. members in support of it I doubt very much, firstly, the bona fides of the hon. members, secondly, the bona fides of the informant on whose information the hon. member for Bundaberg based his Question No. 16 on the business sheet this morning, and thirdly, I gravely question the bona fides of the methods adopted by the solicitors concerned in the distribution of the letter under discussion.

First of all, let us look at the bona fides of the hon. member for Bundaberg. As we know this is the last day of the present session of Parliament. In his opening remarks the hon. member said that he knew of all these things on which he based his case on 23 January last. If he knew these things why did he wait until the last morning of this Parliament?

Mr. WALSH: I rise to a point of order. The Premier is misrepresenting what I said. I said that I made a statement on 22 January. I had no knowledge of what was in the letters he received.

Mr. NICKLIN: The hon. member has been in conference with some other gentlemen concerned particularly with the Road Hauliers Association. No doubt this is a plain political stunt by the hon. member in an endeavour to embarrass the Government. So much for the bona fides of the hon. member for Bundaberg!

Let us look at the bona fides of the informant on whose information the hon. member based Question No. 16. Apparently his informant who gave him the letter was Mr. Overlack.

Mr. Walsh: No.

Mr. NICKLIN: Mr. Overlack is Secretary of the Road Hauliers Association.

Mr. Walsh: Mr. Overlack did not give me the letter.

Mr. NICKLIN: The Road Hauliers Association requested an interview with the Minister for Transport and me to place their case before us with a view to having the various points that they considered were disadvantageous to their members, placed before Cabinet for consideration. We met the hauliers and the letter the hon. member has quoted from was submitted to Mr. Chalk and me as a portion of the case of the deputationists. We handled the deputationists courteously; we were thanked by them for the way in which we received their representations. We promised to investigate all their representations and at the present time a Cabinet submission on the subject of their representations is in course of preparation. In view of the action of the gentlemen concerned when, for some ulterior motive or other they gave the hon. member for Bundaberg a copy of the evidence that they presented in support of their case to me, I question whether I would be justified in treating their representations seriously and responsibly. In giving this information to the hon. member they have taken the opportunity to make it a political issue, and whether their representations should be considered any further is a matter to which I must give very serious consideration. There is the matter of bona fides in the method of distributing the letter which has been quoted here this morning and which was the subject of a question without notice. That letter contains very serious

allegations—very serious indeed, allegations that will be investigated to the full immediately.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. NICKLIN: The statements in that letter will have to be proved and the person who made them will be given the fullest opportunity to prove them. If the firm of solicitors and the client of this firm of solicitors were approaching this question purely with the idea of getting these things thoroughly investigated, not with the idea of making them a political issue, would they have endeavoured to deliver this letter to myself, to whom the letter was addressed, after office hours—when both my office and Parliament House was closed? I understand that a representative of the firm came to Parliament House last night at 8 o'clock looking for me to deliver this letter to me. And may I mention, Mr. Speaker, that in addition to giving this letter to me, they also, for some strange reason, gave a letter to the hon. member for Bundaberg. Do you wonder, Mr. Speaker, why I question the bona fides of the methods being adopted on behalf of the client of this firm of solicitors. If this thing was so vital—mind you, the information is very vital—they should have got it to me before this House finished last night. And they should have given it to me as the head of the Government to have these things investigated without, at the same time, distributing copies all over the place to other parties who had no power whatsoever to order the inquiry that they desired into these allegations. At least I myself as head of the Government should have been given the opportunity to investigate these very serious allegations before they distributed this letter far and wide, if those persons were really genuine in their desire to have these things investigated. I doubt—and I think I have every reason to do so—their bona fides when one looks at the manner in which this thing has been handled. As hon. members know—particularly the hon. member for Bundaberg, who has been Minister for Transport—there have been tremendous difficulties in regard to the implementation of the Transport Facilities Act involving very many legal cases and appeals to superior courts and the High Court. The hon. member for Bundaberg knows only too well, not only his own Government, but also the present Government have been seriously handicapped indeed by the fact that they have not been able to implement the Transport Facilities Act in the way they desired because of the legal difficulties encountered. That is the reason for the large number of adjournments in the courts, as the hon. member well knows, yet he raises the matter as a reason for a Royal Commission. Royal Commissions should not be appointed lightly. To substantiate my statement I refer hon. members to the following statement by Mr. Menzies, now a member of the Commonwealth High Court, in a

debate on Royal Commissions following a statement by Mr. Holmes, Q.C., in 1955—

“The view I wish to put to you is that there are proper cases for the appointment of such Commissioners, but the power should be used sparingly. It should always be used to enquire into matters that are of true public concern and that involve more than the question of whether or not a particular person has committed a particular crime. They should certainly not be used as alternatives to criminal proceedings.”

We do not intend to use a Royal Commission as an alternative to criminal proceedings, and, if the allegations made in the letter received this morning against members of the Police Force can be proved, suitable action will be taken by the Government. But if those charges are proved not to be correct, we will also consider suitable action against the person making them. Hon. members can rest assured that the Government are going to probe these allegations to the bottom, serious allegations as they are, against an honourable and responsible body of men, the Queensland Police Force. No effort will be spared by the Government to probe these allegations to the limit, and the gentleman who has made them will be given every opportunity.

These are the first definite allegations on alleged corruption that have come into our hands, and we are going to take suitable action to see that they are appropriately dealt with. That is the way to deal with them—not by the appointment of a Royal Commission. I repeat that if they are found to be correct suitable action will be taken by the Government, as the mover of the motion can be assured.

On what has been said, there is no justification whatever for the appointment of a Royal Commission. I repeat that the allegations in this letter will be investigated—indeed, action has already been taken to deal with them and to prove whether they are correct or not.

Hon. P. J. R. HILTON (Carnarvon) (12.13 p.m.): I support the motion, for the basic reason that hon. members of Parliament have many duties to perform in the public interest. It has been revealed time and time again not only in this, but also in other Parliaments in the British Commonwealth that, when a matter of great public interest is given emphasis in the Press and by responsible people, a member of Parliament must use every opportunity available to him to focus the attention of the Government on such matters, to ensure as far as possible that they are sifted until the position is clarified.

The point registered in my mind when the Premier was replying that he intended to appoint the Commissioner of Police virtually to act as a Royal Commissioner or as a board of inquiry. That is all very well

up to a point, but my view is that, if people make serious allegations, they should be asked to substantiate them on oath.

Mr. Nicklin: They will be.

Mr. HILTON: A police inquiry does not put them in that position, and I challenge the Premier on that point. Furthermore, we have witnessed the extraordinary spectacle in recent times of two prominent legal firms making certain statements in respect of this public matter. We have had the spectacle of a prominent barrister withdrawing from a brief entrusted to him. These are very unusual things. The unusual and unhealthy atmosphere created should be clarified as soon as possible and by the most effective means possible. I do not substantiate the charges, one way or the other. I say that because all the evidence has not been placed before me.

Mr. Chalk: You know nothing—that is your argument?

Mr. HILTON: Let me finish. I am not in a position to substantiate the charges because all the evidence is not available to me to enable me to give a considered opinion.

Mr. Morris: Your colleague has seen it.

Mr. HILTON: He has received a letter.

Mr. Morris: He said he saw the evidence.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HILTON: I make the point that for months and months not only Harris, but other men, have been making these allegations; I am sick and tired of hearing them and would welcome an inquiry to clear the atmosphere. We have had allegations that licensed carriers have been deliberately breaking the law for a number of years. There are allegations that border-hoppers, as they are called, have been discriminated against. Under the provisions of Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution, provided these people carry out certain requirements, they are operating a perfectly legal business. Section 92 has been brought into play when there are grave matters under consideration. I am not arguing for the border-hoppers, but whether we like it or not, we have to accept the legal position presented to us by decisions of the High Court and the Privy Council. If these men are operating a legitimate business, it is highly reprehensible that they should be persecuted. I see the hon. member for Mt. Gravatt, Q.C. an eminent lawyer, looking at me intently. He has argued the merits of Section 92 and knows that what I am saying is correct. If they observe certain requirements their business is legal. Because they are carrying on what they consider to be a legal business, allegations are made that certain officers of the Transport Department are persecuting them. I have heard it time and time again. I repeat, I am not taking sides one way or the other. As a public man with a sense of responsibility

and knowing what occurred in this Parliament and other Parliaments I say that I think the situation has reached a stage whereby the public should be reassured on these matters and an inquiry held to let the facts be known. If people have made false allegations, let them be put on oath and take the penalty due to them for making such allegations. Nobody can quibble against that. A police inquiry, no matter how efficiently conducted, cannot meet this situation. Let them be put on oath and suffer the penalties which would be their just due if they appeared as perjurers and men who set themselves out to defame responsible public servants. That is my attitude, and I think it is reasonable. It is one that has been adopted by past Labour Governments. The Press is the only medium by which public opinion can be kept informed, and recent Press comments have been such as to call for a searching inquiry into all the allegations that have been made.

Mr. Muller: Do you suggest that what they are doing is morally right?

Mr. HILTON: I have already said that if a man is operating under the provisions of Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution and is observing all the requirements associated therewith, he is carrying on a perfectly legal business. Whether we like it or not, we must accept it. If his business is legal he should be allowed to conduct it without interference. If it is not, let him suffer all the penalties that the law prescribes.

Dr. Noble: You could not stop him if it was legal.

Mr. HILTON: That is the point I am making. Allegations have been made that certain men who are operating legally are being unduly persecuted.

Mr. Hiley: If they are operating legally, how could anyone persecute them?

Mr. HILTON: Surely the Treasurer is not so naive that he thinks it could not be done? That is why I want a Royal Commission. I am sure that reputable citizens would be prepared to come forward and give evidence.

Dr. Noble: How could it be done?

Mr. HILTON: Of course it could be done. If, in the performance of their duties, transport police are directed to do certain things, of course it can be done. That line of argument does not go down with me. Of course it could be done.

Dr. Noble: It could not.

Mr. HILTON: I suggest that the Minister for Health and Home Affairs confer with his colleague, the Minister for Transport, and get some enlightenment on the matter.

I rose to speak as a public man; I am really concerned about all the allegations that have been made. I am not supporting them, but I want a searching inquiry into them.

If men are operating legally, they should be allowed to carry on their business under the law of the land. Those who are making the allegations should be put on oath and made to suffer the penalty if their allegations are held to be without foundation. Obviously a police inquiry could not be searching enough.

I regret very much that the Premier has not acceded to the request of my Deputy Leader for the appointment of a Royal Commission. Believe me, this matter will not conclude at the end of this debate. There is so much agitation in the interests of justice that the demands for a Royal Commission will continue until they are acceded to.

Hon. K. J. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Labour and Industry) (12.24 p.m.): Two matters have been raised in the motion. The first relates to transport and the other is an allegation against certain police officers. Most of the debate has been centred on the subject of police officers, from which I assume two things: firstly, that the supporters of the motion have no real argument on the subject of transport and, secondly, that they are trying to build up a very queer argument revolving round the Police Force. Naturally, as Minister in charge of the Police Department, it is my duty to take part in the debate.

In all countries, police officers have the responsibility of ensuring that the laws—many of which are unpopular with certain sections of the community, particularly the law-breakers—are obeyed. It is common knowledge that in all countries police officers, because they do their duty, are shot at and much effort is made to suggest that there is, in certain cases, something wrong with their actions. It is always a great problem because often charges are made against one police officer or another by people with completely unreliable backgrounds, people we know of very well; but, invariably, even if we know that the accuser is a crank or an untruthful person, whatever the situation, never during the administration of the Police Department in our period of office has any allegation, however simple, however silly, however unbelievable, failed to be investigated. The results have led me more and more to realise how right we are in being proud of the Police Force. Notwithstanding our justifiable pride and confidence in them, we recognise that, whether it is a body of policemen or of clerics or people in any other category, it is possible on occasion to get a bad potato in the bag. For that reason, whenever a charge is made, whether it sounds sensible or not, it is investigated to the absolute limit. We are jealous of the high reputation of the Police Force. I challenge any citizen of Queensland to point to one allegation that has been made against any member of the Force that has not been investigated.

Having dealt with the general I now turn to the particular to deal with certain allegations, and, mark you, they are allegations

that were made over a week ago though it was only this morning that I had any knowledge of them. The allegations were made by people in such a position that one could be excused for expecting them to be above reproach. Though the allegations were made a week and more ago it was only this morning that my Leader and I, as the Minister in charge of police, were given the faintest inkling of them. Why the delay? It was probably to prevent our getting the evidence we need, because hon. members opposite know as well as you know, Mr. Speaker, and as well as I do, that a week's delay in a case like this makes it more difficult to get evidence; but we will get it; make no mistake about that.

Another serious aspect of the charges is that both the hon. member for Bundaberg and the hon. member for Baroona want to dictate to the Premier and to the Government the method of the investigation. Why! Is it because they are afraid that they will be called to give evidence? I very much suspect that it is. I remind you that the hon. member for Bundaberg said that, unless the inquiry into the matter is of the type he believes in, he will give advice to the complainants not to produce evidence. Is that the right action for an hon. member of this House?

Mr. WALSH: I rise to a point of order. The Minister for Labour and Industry, I would say, is uttering a deliberate falsehood.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. WALSH: What I did say was the man concerned will be advised by his solicitor to take a certain course of action.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon., the Minister for Labour and Industry.

Mr. MORRIS: I move on. There was an attempt by both those hon. members to allege that they knew nothing of the statements until one of them made a slip which I shall demonstrate in a few moments. It is a deliberate attempt to befoul a body of men for the basest of reasons—for political advantage to a few people on the other side of the House. The hon. member for Baroona said he had seen certain documentary evidence. Again I say, "Why is it that this charge did not come to me as Minister in charge of police, in the days that have gone by?"

Mr. POWER: I rise to a point of order.

Mr. MORRIS: Oh yes, use up all my time!

Mr. POWER: The Deputy Premier is misleading the House. My statement was that I had seen certain papers. The papers I had seen included the letter that was forwarded to the hon. member for Bundaberg; the others were the papers which were taken down by the Minister for Transport—

Mr. MORRIS: This is another speech. I strongly object. The hon. member is trying to use up all my time.

Mr. Power: You should stick to the truth.

Mr. MORRIS: These people who try to befoul a great body of men will get their opportunity to give their evidence on oath.

Mr. POWER: I rise to a point of order. Standing Orders provide that if an hon. member rises in his place and denies a statement made by anybody else that that person must accept the denial and accept the statement made by the hon. member rising. I ask that the Deputy Premier accept my statement.

Mr. SPEAKER: He has automatically done so.

Mr. MORRIS: I move on and remind the House that a man called Overlack admitted quite openly in the Press—and many of us heard on T.V.—that many previous attempts were designed as a subterfuge to get publicity. This is another example. He is using a further instrument to get more base and untrue publicity. This is typical of the technique we have seen used by these speakers on previous occasions.

We have been in office for three years. Today is the last day of this Parliament. There has not been a charge made against the police officers until the last day. Is that not in itself significant? Although we fight with members of the Australian Labour Party quite frequently, I draw attention to the fact that none of them has sunk to the depths of coming in on this wretched attack. While I oppose them politically, I say that they would not befoul themselves in this manner.

We will not be panicked into adopting their methods in this inquiry. They can rest assured that it will be not only a full and searching inquiry but also those hon. members concerned will be required to give evidence on oath. Then we will know whether they are low political humbugs or have been making fair statements. I have several other points to make.

(Time expired.)

Mr. DUGGAN (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) (12.34 p.m.): The Opposition propose to support the motion for the adjournment but for reasons different from those advanced by the mover and seconder. I have made the point in the chamber on many occasions, but as recently as last session I was rebuked by the Treasurer for protesting, in his view, too strongly about the growing tendency in Australia, to smear the character and reputation of many people throughout the community. Fortunately that tendency seems to have been checked. We know what happened in America with what is known as "McCarthyism." One man has been able to exercise tremendous influence

because of his capacity to progressively and consistently smear the characters and reputations of many people. Senator McCarthy grew up to exercise tremendous power and authority in the United States of America. Indeed many people feared his power had become so extensive that it laid the foundation for an alternative form of Government. That man's reputation fell to the ground when he was exposed for interfering with the proper liberties of the people. Irrespective of whether we are Labour, Liberal or Country Party we should do all we can to uphold the reputation of Parliament—the probity and integrity of Parliament and members of the Public Service. That is the foundation on which the democratic system rests. We should have an incorruptible Public Service, and men in public life should be men of honour and integrity.

I could differ from the Minister in regard to the administration of his portfolio but I shall not waste time this morning with that. I have no general views to advance this morning on the administration. I suppose there was no more vociferous critic of the administration of the department than the present Minister. I can go back 10 years and I do not recall at any stage when there was so much public disquiet on the administration of transport, nor has there been a demand for a Royal Commission, as was advanced in various quarters in recent times. I do not suggest there is warrant for the establishment of a Royal Commission. If we are to preserve the structure of Parliament it is essential that we must see to it that there is more than a smear suggestion before we set in process a power to investigate people's reputations. The Premier very properly quoted Mr. Menzies, a man whom I recommended to defend this State against the High Court. If these people are prepared to make statutory declarations why not give it today instead of tomorrow. If somebody makes a statutory declaration that there have been happenings of a corrupt nature, I see no reason why action should not be taken to move in the direction sought by the hon. member for Bundaberg.

Mr. Hart: Do you not think it depends on the character of the person.

Mr. DUGGAN: That is an important element.

Mr. Hiley: They will have an opportunity to make a statutory declaration now.

Mr. DUGGAN: That has been declared by the Premier. I indicate that I did not receive a copy of the letter that was sent to the Premier. I should say normally one would expect the Leader of the Opposition to be the repository for any positive action against the Government in view of his office and the numbers he can command. Some of these men associated with the hauliers' association—I do not condemn them—through their spokesmen have publicly said that the Queensland Labour Party will be a spent

force after the election—that it will be lucky to have four members here. If Parliament is to be invoked to correct a public evil one would have thought, irrespective of leadership, that the approach would have been made to the official Opposition. The reason I associate the Opposition with the motion is not that I think the Premier has failed to establish his case—and I want him to record this very strongly in his mind—but because of the general atmosphere of smearing that has been going on for some time and which was employed inferentially yesterday in the question directed to the Premier which contained the following:—

“Has it been conveyed to him, from any source, that similar discriminatory treatment was exercised during the previous Government’s period of office? If so, and a Royal Commission is appointed, will he extend the terms of reference to enable the Commission to inquire into the previous Government’s administration of the Transport Act?”

I told my colleagues this morning, immediately I became aware of this action that, as a previous occupant of that office, I was prepared to go before any Royal Commission to have an examination of my conduct in my capacity as Minister for Transport. That is why I support the motion. I may have made many wrong decisions. I am not denying that. I may have made decisions that were in conflict with the views of the present Minister for Transport or the views of the Government, but I challenge anyone to prove against me, in the conduct of my public life, any improper action at any time. It is for that reason my colleagues join with me in saying that we do not want to find ourselves in the position where subsequently people will go outside this Chamber and say that on 3 March, 1960, there was placed on the resolution paper of the Parliament a demand for a Royal Commission which included a review of the operations of the previous Minister in the office, and we voted against it because we had something to hide. That is why we support the motion, although we do not agree that on the evidence submitted, the appointment of a Royal Commission would be justified.

I have nothing to hide. In regard to the statement about the interstate hauliers, even the minister cannot deny that I introduced an Act to deal with the problem of interstate hauliers following a Privy Council decision in 1954.

Mr. Chalk: Quite true.

Mr. DUGGAN: It was found that that law was not sufficiently valid to stand up to the High Court’s determination, and in 1955 I brought in another amendment to try and repair the position.

Mr. Nicklin: Supported by the Opposition.

Mr. DUGGAN: That is true.

Before I vacated office, and as a member of the Transport Advisory Council, I secured the support of all State Transport Ministers except Sir Arthur Warner for my suggestion that we submit to our respective Premiers a submission that there should be some common approach by way of referendum to the Australian people to clothe the Federal Parliament with specific power to deal with the problem of border-hoppers. Sir Arthur Warner was in agreement, but said it was difficult in his view to frame amendments that would not create certain other difficulties. The other Ministers were prepared to support my motion, but, as we had agreed that there should be unanimity of opinion, the proposal was abandoned. I mention that to refute the suggestion made recently, as recently as yesterday, by the hon. member for Mundingburra, that I am a friend of the road hauliers.

We laid down a policy from 1947 to 1957 for a balanced transport economy in this State. We considered the element of railway finance and the security of employment of 27,000 railway employees, but we did agree to road transport, provided the operators were prepared to make a reasonable contribution to what we considered to be a balanced transport economy. We were prepared to give some amelioration or relief to those people who felt it should be utilised. In this age I think there is need for all these services. No-one could say, because it may affect the revenue of the Railway Department or road hauliers, that air transport should be prohibited in the State or Commonwealth. In the same way we could not say that road transport people should be thrust out of existence merely because of the effect on railway revenue. We had to devise ways and means of making the services complementary, bearing in mind our capacity to finance various operations.

I think I have made it abundantly clear that the Opposition at all times is anxious to preserve the integrity of members of Parliament and the incorruptibility of public servants, but the damage has been done by the circulation of this letter and the smear contained in the question asked this morning in this House. It is useless to say later, “In fairness to those people they should be given the opportunity to reply.” The damage is then done. I want to clear up any suggestions that we want to hide anything or protect malpractice in high or low places. For those reasons only we intend to support the motion.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (12.44 p.m.): The genesis of the motion before the House is that the Government should appoint a Royal Commission or some other competent board of inquiry, to inquire into the allegations of malpractice in the Transport Department.

The hon. member for Bundaberg who introduced the motion, supported by the hon. member for Baroona, gave what he con-

sidered to be reasonable grounds for the appointment of a Royal Commission. We have just heard a speech by the Leader of the Opposition. To me it was a remarkable one. To wrap it up in a few words, he said, "We do not believe that a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire into the ramifications of the Transport Department as it is operated today, but we do believe that we should vote for this resolution because no-one then will be able to say later that Jack Duggan and his Australian Labour Party were not game to vote for it."

I want to say that—

Mr. Davies: Said by people like you.

Mr. AIKENS: If the hon. member wants to take me on—the political parrot from Maryborough who made the interjection—it will be the sorriest day he has ever experienced since entering this House.

Let us be honest with ourselves. I have been in this House a long while and if I may be permitted to use the vernacular, I have tipped the un a lot of times, and I will continue to tip the tin if I think it is in the interests of the public. If I have got a tin to tip, I tip it. I tip the tin, the horse, the harness and the whole lot. I do not come here with any sophistry or casuistry and say that it has come to my notice that certain things have happened or that I have been given to understand certain things are going on or that I have been informed by certain reputable people that such-and-such a practice is taking place. I do not question the sincerity of the hon. member for Bundaberg but if he had come into this House and said, "I charge traffic policeman so-and-so with accepting a bribe on such-and-such a date from such-and-such a person and I charge traffic policeman so-and-so that on such-and-such a day he received a bribe from so-and-so, and I charge the Minister for Transport with abusing or prostituting his Ministerial powers inasmuch as he granted a particular concession to one particular company and refused the same concession to another company" I would have said that the hon. member for Bundaberg came into the House with specific charges very horribly true or damnably false. On the basis of those specific charges this Parliament must act.

An Opposition Member: Did he have the names of the police?

Mr. AIKENS: He did not have the names of the police or the dates. He was acting on information supplied to him, secondhand information or third hand information. But, he may be acting in all good faith but that is not good enough for me. If anybody will lay a specific charge of corruption against any member of the Public Service, whether a policeman or a traffic policeman or a member of Parliament, or lay a specific charge against the Minister for Transport or any Minister sitting on the front benches, and

if he will particularise the corruption, I will be with him to the limit in demanding a Royal Commission. It is interesting to remember that on one or two occasions in this House in the past I produced specific evidence and made specific charges and asked for a Royal Commission on certain matters. I was told that I had to make this information available to the police so that the police, through their law officers, could investigate the charges before the Government would take action. It was said that the Government would not waste public money on a fishing expedition. I believe that this is a fishing expedition. What is behind it? What is the cause of it? Again, I am not referring to the integrity of the hon. member for Bundaberg. Who are behind the people writing these letters? The border-hoppers, men like Overlack who proudly and courageously went into prison the other day rather than pay his fine, hoping that he would be elevated to public martyrdom in this State.

Mr. Morris: And had a heart attack.

Mr. AIKENS: A heart attack, or housemaid's knee, or warts on the quartz. Within a couple of days he sent an urgent appeal to his mates to release him from durance vile.

An Honourable Member: They told him to go to work.

Mr. AIKENS: They should have given him a No. 9. Anybody who has been in the Army knows what a No. 9 is. When he failed to hit the headlines and have himself paraded as Saint Overlack he realised what a damp squib as a martyr he was and he slunk out of prison with a heart attack or a bad attack of housemaid's knee.

Harris was mentioned, and he was the same man of whom I asked a question in this House a couple of years ago. He was the bright bird who went to North Queensland with a load of wool. He was going to take the wool, without a licence or a permit, from a place near Muttaborra to Townsville. His truck broke down in a creek between Hughenden and Charters Towers—I think it was either Torrens Creek or Cape River—and he told all sorts of lies and put up all sorts of arguments to shield himself from the prosecution that he knew would certainly follow as soon as I got hold of it. I asked the Minister a question in the House about it, and Harris was subsequently brought before the court.

These people were running round thumbing their noses at the Government. They were told by some bush barristers that they were acting within the provisions of Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution, and that they could bring a load of wool or produce to Brisbane from any part of the country if they went to Tweed Heads and then came back. Of course, if a traffic policeman was not following them they would not even bother to go to Tweed Heads. They would merely claim that they had gone there and come back to Brisbane. They

would say, "We are operating under Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution and you can't touch us. You can go jump in the lake."

Finally, the matter came before the High Court for consideration and, by a unanimous judgment, it ruled that these hauliers were not protected by Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution and that, in effect, they were acting unlawfully. Then the hauliers squealed for mercy! Let us suppose that the High Court judgment had been in their favour; today they would have been running round hurling abuse at the Transport Minister and the Government, and everybody else. They would be saying, "You mugs can't touch us." They would have been as happy as Larry, with their thumbs to their noses and, if possible, borrowing a couple of extra hands to do it. However, now that their operations have been held by the High Court to be illegal, they are cringing and squealing for mercy. I hope that the Minister for Transport prosecutes them to the full limit of the law for every breach. To use the vernacular once again, if he does not I will be up him like a rat up a rope. I adjure him to show them as little mercy as they would have shown him if the High Court's decision had gone the other way.

Mr. Evans: They pleaded with the Government to call it a day.

Mr. AIKENS: They did when they lost the case. Their action reminded me of what happens in the fights behind "bush pubs" that many of us have seen. One fellow will get the advantage temporarily, but as soon as he is knocked down he squeals out for his mates to stop the fight and save him from his just deserts.

I do not think we should have any sympathy for these people unless they are prepared to lay specific charges. I freely admit the possibility that we may have a bad apple in the police barrel—I do not consider that every member of the Police Force is a shrinking violet or a perfumed pansy—but if a charge is laid, let it be definite and to the point so that we will have something to work on. I do not propose to vote for the motion. It has not been put forward in such a way as to merit my support.

(Time expired.)

Mr. HART (Mt. Gravatt) (12.54 p.m.): I think the real answer to the motion was given by the Leader of the Opposition when he said that it was necessary to have more than just a smear to appoint a Royal Commission. That has always been the view of the legal profession. I think I heard Mr. Menzies make the remark quoted by the Premier. It is a view with which the legal profession of Australia is in general agreement. Royal Commissions are very weighty weapons. I admit they are necessary to

preserve the integrity of the State, but it is not right to set one up every time someone makes a charge.

What is the position in this matter? It has now been shown that Mr. Harris, Mr. Overlack, and the other gentlemen who are crossing the border and returning to Brisbane and claiming the protection of Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution have been breaking the law. They took a chance. As a matter of common sense, what Harris was doing would not seem to have had the protection of Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution; but he took a chance and he was proved wrong. He is now up before the court and numerous charges have been preferred against him and are being preferred against him. Mr. Overlack, too, has been charged before the court and convicted. These gentlemen do not like being charged—nobody does—so they begin to complain and to complain very loudly, and they cry out for a Royal Commission. Mr. Harris even brings very grave charges against the police.

Mr. Morris: Not in particular.

Mr. HART: No, there is no particularity. In at least half these cases that come before the courts, somebody makes a charge against the police. Very often when a person is convicted of an offence to which he pleads "Not guilty" he says, "I am not guilty and you are making up the evidence against me." He has to say that.

An Honourable Member: Sometimes he is right.

Mr. HART: Sometimes he is right and sometimes he is wrong; more often he is wrong. If a Royal Commission were to be appointed every time such an accusation was made, the public officers of the State—the judges and others—would be doing nothing else but presiding at Royal Commissions. To justify the appointment of a Royal Commission something more is needed than a vague charge by an accused person. What is the charge on which the hon. member for Bundaberg founds his case?

It is one of the most disgraceful things I have ever seen that a motion of this nature should be moved before this House on such evidence. As I see it this is the gravamen of the charge:

"On 25 February, in the presence of reputable persons in Brisbane, Mr. Harris was told by a fellow operator that there was corruption amongst the State transport police and that nine of the police were actually being paid sums of money by him."

That is, Harris was told something by somebody not named.

Mr. Aikens: About a policeman not named.

Mr. HART: About a policeman not named and on occasions not named. The information goes on—

"The same operator then told our client that he was given advance information of a sort of roster system indicating where and at what times the police would be operating for that week and that on other occasions, in exchange for the payment of £5 by him, individual reports of breaches were destroyed by departmental officers in his presence."

There is a charge against departmental officers not named by persons not named. Surely before appointing a Royal Commission something better than that is wanted! Any Government that launched a Royal Commission on such evidence as that would be guilty of a grave dereliction of duty and of improperly using the machinery of the State.

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer—Minister for Transport) (2.15 p.m.): In the 2½ years it has been my responsibility to administer the Department of Transport it has been my privilege and duty to interview many people who have come to see me about matters associated with transport in Queensland. On many occasions implications have been made about certain actions by officers of the Department of Transport. On every occasion I have asked that charges be made in writing so that the matters could be thoroughly investigated. But there always has been some "ifs" or "buts" and consequently charges have not been laid. However, from time to time I have carried out certain investigations within my own department to ascertain whether there perhaps could be some truth in some of the things one might hear. Not on any occasion have I been able to find one iota of truth in what has been alleged.

Today a letter has been produced in the House by the hon. member for Bundaberg in which there are a number of implications. It is true that the letter refers to nine police officers, but there is nothing specific in the letter. Consequently how can we possibly accept it as being the basis for the appointment of a Royal Commission?

I want to analyse very quickly a few of the matters that have led up to the production of this letter because I believe that the pattern was not designed yesterday but several months ago. It is apparent that they have waited until today, the last day of this Parliament, to attempt to explode the matter with the idea of making political capital out of it.

Let me have a look firstly at what happened on 19 or 20 January. Constable Bradbury was told by Mr. Overlack, the gentleman who wrote the letter to the Premier asking for an interview, that his association, the Road Hauliers' Association, would make as many complaints as possible against the best police officers attached to the Department of Transport with the idea of getting them shifted. We have that from the police officer. The

same gentleman referred to the move by which one of the best police officers in New South Wales was shifted, and those were the tactics that it was proposed to adopt.

In a question asked in the House this morning by the hon. member for Bundaberg reference was made to a transport policeman being "abusively drunk to a road haulier in a public place." By whom was the allegation made? None other than a person named Tracey, a border-hopper and a man who was convicted in the Ipswich court and fined for abusing a policeman. That again gives hon. members an insight into the calibre of the men associated with this matter. Let us follow this pattern a little further. In a telephone discussion between one Stubbs, a solicitor in Brisbane, and the Transport Commissioner approximately a week ago—on 29 February at 3 p.m.—this is what the transcript says in relation to Mr. Stubbs:—

"Mr. Stubbs said he thought that the Premier had referred only to a withdrawal and I"—

that is, the Transport Commissioner—

"pointed out that the Premier had said the cases set down for the following weeks would be proceeded with. Mr. Stubbs said as long as it was understood the cases were to go on the counsel defending these cases were entitled to make their best possible case. He said under those circumstances no hold would be barred and that the defending solicitor could say many things in court which he could not say outside as there was no action for libel regarding any matters he might say in court."

That is the solicitor associated with Overlack. That is the solicitor who came to see me and the Premier on the list of cases on behalf of the Road Hauliers' Association. Let us examine the letter presented on that occasion. It says—

"We would like to put our viewpoint to you personally and to your Transport Minister. Could you advise us if it would be possible to arrange this. I can assure you that we do not intend to make any political capital out of this meeting, and it will be conducted, as far as we are concerned, in terms of absolute sincerity."

That was the approach of the Hauliers' Association from Overlack. Here we have evidence that the whole of the nature of the approach was put before the hon. member for Bundaberg. I ask hon. members to examine the sincerity of those who are raising this matter. That is all the evidence the department has.

I want briefly to touch on one or two other charges that have been made. I want to point out to the House that other points have been examined either by the Transport Commissioner or myself to see if there was any basis of truth in the charges made. We have been charged, according to the question asked this morning, with having issued cer-

tain summonses. The charge was to the effect that summonses were issued against certain companies and were not proceeded with. The number mentioned was six. It is true there were six charges. One of them was against Marylands and they were convicted.

Mr. Walsh: I did not say that.

Mr. CHALK: The hon. member said that in his question this morning. Let us examine the charges in relation to the other five cases. The other five charges were placed before the Crown Law Office. Summonses were issued but they have not been served, and for the reason advanced by the Crown Law Office who advised me that in view of the circumstances that at this stage it would be unwise to proceed. But we have protected ourselves. We can proceed against them if, after further interpretation of the Harris case we find that the breaches can be dealt with. There is nothing to hide. They were intercepted. The reports were placed in the Crown Law Office. Summonses were issued to cover the time factor. We waited for the Harris judgment. We believe certain circumstances have been clarified by the High Court in the Harris case which may enable us to review the position.

In all fairness to the constable involved, I think I should refer to another matter that was raised by the hon. member for Bundaberg about what was alleged to have been said by a police officer in court proceedings at Toowoomba. It was implied that this police officer had intercepted certain vehicles and that, when the reports went to the transport office, certain action was not taken. This is his advice of the evidence in the Toowoomba court—

Question by Mr. Currie: "Did you stop all transport trucks on the road on the date of alleged complaint?"

Answer: "No."

Question: "Why not?"

Answer: "Constable Bradbury, who was on duty in company with me at the time, stopped a number of trucks."

Question: "Between yourself and Bradbury, did you stop every truck on that date?"

Answer: "No."

Question "Why not?"

Answer: "There are a number of licensed operators such as Western Transport, Cobb & Co., and Browns Transport, whose vehicles are travelling on the Highway. I do not stop the trucks owned by these companies on each and every trip. I stop these trucks intermittently and check them."

Question: "Have you breached any of these companies?"

Answer: "Yes."

Question: "Which one?"

Answer: "I have submitted Breach reports against all three companies."

Question: "Were any of them summonsed?"

At that stage Mr. O'Connor, the barrister, interjected, and rightly so. I have now given hon. members the reason why some interceptions have not been proceeded with. Consequently, I think that the reference to this matter today has been made purely for the purposes of political propaganda.

(Time expired.)

Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg) (2.26 p.m.), in reply: The defence by the Government is more in the nature of an attack on the solicitors representing certain firms, the Hauliers' Association and those who have seen fit to come into the public light, as it were, and submit these things for public examination.

Before I deal with their case, let me refer to the speech of the Leader of the Opposition. If he has not had information from the Hauliers' Association, that is not my fault, because throughout these discussions I have submitted to them that they should bring this matter to the notice of the Leader of the Opposition, more particularly as the offences and malpractices referred to were in the Downs area. I understand now that a letter dealing with this particular aspect was conveyed to the hon. member for Ithaca last night for transmission by him to the Leader of the Opposition.

Before I proceed further I want to deal with another point. The hon. member for Mundingburra made an attack on a man named Harris. The Harris he referred to has nothing to do with the person involved in the particular proceedings at the moment. As a matter of fact, I met the gentleman outside just after the House adjourned and he said to me, "That man has got the wrong Harris." The person referred to by the hon. member for Mundingburra is living in the Central West. I am not going to say where, because I do not want to identify the locality. That is not my business. The man who apparently was sitting in the gallery has nothing to do with the case the hon. member for Mundingburra mentioned.

If I may deal with what the Leader of the Opposition said regarding the latter part of my question which was answered by the Premier this morning, I point out that I cannot help it if I hear whispers, even if they are not in relation to the Leader of the Opposition. The justification for the latter part of my question which was answered by the Premier this morning was that, if the Government had any knowledge from any source that anything was wrong with the previous Government's administration, I was anticipating them, and indeed inviting them

to have an inquiry into the ramifications of the administration prior to 1957. Is that not fair enough?

Mr. Mann: It is in keeping with the tactics you always adopt.

Mr. WALSH: I am sorry if it does not fit in with the idea of the hon. member for Brisbane, but I think they are honourable tactics. I only hoped that, if the Government did appoint a Commission, one man who would be willing to go into the box would be the Minister for Transport.

Mr. Chalk: You bet he would.

Mr. WALSH: I am sure he would. With all these references about the justification for the motion, let me say that I have a recollection of the tactics adopted by the Minister for Transport in connection with the Casket inquiry. Have I not a recollection of the statement made by the Minister for Development, Mines and Main Roads based on a statement made in the Senate by Senator Ian Wood? What came out of those representations?

Mr. Evans: You know what happened about that. Somebody was found guilty of corrupt conduct.

Mr. WALSH: If the Minister wants to be dirty about that part of it I am saying that the charges conveyed in the letter from the hauliers association, if they can be justified before a royal commission will be interpreted as being corrupt practices, the same as Mr. Justice Townley said. He made it clear that the Minister for Public Lands had not benefited financially or materially but corrupted his office merely because it was suggested he would benefit somebody else.

In this case, however, neither the Premier nor the Minister for Transport have concentrated on the complaints set out in the letter from the Queensland Road Hauliers Association. The Premier had given his answer to that letter before I asked the question without notice, and he turned down completely any suggestion that there should be any inquiry into any one of the charges made in the letter from the hauliers association to the Premier. Are they any different from the matters inquired into by Mr. Justice Townley? Not a bit. There has been the suggestion that somebody—not necessarily the Minister or even with his approval—has been giving concessions to certain major transport companies against other hauliers. It has not been denied. The Minister for Transport says that the Crown Law Office advised him in connection with five of the six breaches of the Act which were committed on 28 or 29 August and 4 September and that only one case was proceeded with—Marylands. The Minister for Transport said that I said that that case had been proceeded with. I did not mention Marylands, and I will defy the Minister to show in my question or in the

debate that I said five out of six cases were not proceeded with. There is some influence operating on the part of the major companies.

Mr. Dewar: Do you doubt the Crown Law Office?

Mr. WALSH: I am not interested in the hon. member. I am interested in the bigger things, not the small fry. The Premier very cleverly brushed aside every charge made in the letter which was the basis of my question and which was answered this morning.

Mr. Nicklin: Not at all.

Mr. WALSH: He concentrated on what he thought might be the popular thing regarding an attack on the police. I might tell the Premier that I have never had to crawl to any police officer or police administration and I am not going to do it now. It there is evidence that the police in this case have corrupted their office by virtue of the letter which has come from a responsible firm of solicitors, solicitors who act for the A.L.P. as a matter of fact—

A Government Member interjected.

Mr. WALSH: It was their right. Apart from that the people I know to be connected with that firm of solicitors are as reputable as any man in this House. I will defy anything to be said to the contrary. That firm, in their legal capacity, have submitted a letter to the Premier and the last paragraph says that because of the failure of Cabinet to take any action to institute proceedings they have submitted it to other interested parties.

Mr. Morris: Cabinet did not even have it until—

Mr. WALSH: The Minister for Labour and Industry wanders so much that I cannot be bothered with him. The letter to the Premier was delivered last night.

Mr. Morris: Not to the Premier.

Mr. WALSH: The Premier was not here. They told me they had delivered the letter to the Premier. However, the Minister for Labour and Industry cannot sidetrack me.

Minister after Minister has risen to his feet, but no attempt has been made to answer the series of charges contained in the letter from the Queensland Road Hauliers' Association. The one that arrived this morning is only secondary.

I notice that the hon. member for Mundingburra has returned to the Chamber. For his information I repeat what I said before, that is, that the Harris to whom he referred this morning has nothing to do with the Harris who is associated with this matter.

Mr. Aikens: I accept that.

(Time expired.)

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

AYES, 28

Mr. Adair	Mr. Jesson
" Baxter	" Jones, A.
" Burrows	" Keyatta
" Clark	" Lloyd
" Davis	" Mann
" Diplock	" McAthie
" Donald	" Power
" Dufficy	" Smith, A. J.
" Duggan	" Thackeray
" Foley	" Wallace
" Gardner	" Walsh
" Graham	<i>Tellers:</i>
" Hanlon	Mr. Byrne
" Hilton	" Davies
" Houston	

NOES, 39

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

PAIRS

Mr. Gunn	Mr. Ahearn
" Marsden	" Bjelke-Petersen
" Gair	" Sparkes

Resolved in the negative.

LIMITATION BILL

THIRD READING

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

INSURANCE BILL

THIRD READING

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

STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE (QUEENSLAND) BILL

THIRD READING

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

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

THIRD READING

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

WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE

Debate resumed from 2 March (see p. 2234) on Mr. Muller's motion—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

Mr. DUGGAN (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) (2.46 p.m.): I do not propose to speak very long but I wish to establish the right of the Opposition to criticise legislation and to be accepted seriously by members of the Government. In his second reading speech the Minister was entitled to reply in fairly strong terms to the various points made by hon. members on this side of the Chamber at the introductory stage. I take no exception to his doing that. When he was in Opposition he was always a hard hitter; he could take it as well as give it. We like to place ourselves in the same category. When we hit hard in a debate we must expect hard replies. For that reason I take no exception to the general reply made by the Minister.

I indicated that taking all the circumstances into consideration the Opposition felt that there was justification for this measure to give relief to these people. Having given that assurance, and not having interrupted the Minister at all when he was speaking, I should think that that would be sufficient for the Minister to realise that he had the support of the House. But the hon. member for Roma, who has apparently assumed the role of Assistant Minister for Public Lands, came in with a quite unnecessarily provocative speech in which he attacked the Labour Party, its land policy, and indeed very strongly criticised the hon. members for Belyando and Bundaberg and certain other hon. members who were not in the Chamber at the time. He showed a lamentable lack of judgment in anticipating the tenor of the House. Whether those hon. members elect to defend the criticism levelled at them yesterday is a matter for them.

The measure could have gone through without any trouble at all. I was never Minister in charge of land matters. Therefore I cannot presume to speak with experience on detailed land matters, but as an ordinary member of Parliament with some experience over the years and as one who takes a general interest in land development, I have a general knowledge of land matters. I do not presume to have as much knowledge as the present Minister or the previous Labour occupants of that office, but I think I can say that in view of the very severe attack by the hon. member for Roma it is remarkable that he is the wealthiest member on his side, having accumulated the great bulk of his wealth during Labour administration. Under the land laws of the State he has been able to amass a fortune. If he is not a millionaire he is very close to it. Labour has nothing to be ashamed

of about its general land policy over the years. It certainly has nothing to be ashamed of about its treatment of soldier settlers. What the Government of the day did was at very great cost to them. In placing the soldiers on the land admittedly some mistakes were made. I took the trouble this morning to read the Premier's remarks at the time. When the Hon. A. Jones introduced the legislation early in 1946, I think it was, the Premier said that he approved of what he believed to be prudent steps to appoint a selection committee to review the applications. Something like 1,500 or 1,600 applicants had to be screened at that time. Whether the committee did a good or a bad job I am not prepared to say. This committee was selected and comprised men of ability. The Minister said that something like £20,000 is involved in the capital loss on the holdings.

Mr. Muller: £5,000.

Mr. DUGGAN: You are writing off.

Mr. Muller: The write-off is a Commonwealth matter.

Mr. DUGGAN: You could have Soldier A who had no land experience, and under the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Scheme the utmost assistance he could secure to enter a business would be £1,000, but Soldier B with land experience could go onto a farm where the cost of development was £10,000 or £15,000. These people all undertook the same risk and it is remarkable that there should be such discrimination. On the question of 10 years, circumstances had arisen that might justify the Minister's giving approval to reduce the time to five years. When the Bill was introduced the Premier said that it was desirable that we should restrict the sales to returned service personnel. He did not want to see a repetition of people going onto War Service blocks, and then having them taken over by foreigners. We welcome them all now whether they come from Australia or some other country. There is not so much animosity now as at that time. The Premier of the day and the then Leader of the Opposition approved of the steps taken by the Government.

Mr. Hilton: So did the present Minister.

Mr. DUGGAN: I did not have an opportunity of reading through the debates, but I did come across a passage where I think the hon. gentleman collided with the present Deputy Premier. The rest of the Country Party generally approved of the measure. It is wrong to say that it was a bad and dictatorial action to prevent these people from growing potatoes or something else. They may have been persuaded not to grow certain commodities. The other day the Minister for Agriculture and Stock mentioned the Tinaroo Falls development area and the difficulty of growing products for which there is no market. No doubt that was the position and the officers of the Department of Public Lands perhaps persuaded these people

that it would be undesirable to waste their money on crops for which there was no apparent market. At no stage was it said to these people that they could not do certain things. They were given perfect freedom of action in regard to the crops they might grow.

Mr. Ewan interjected.

Mr. DUGGAN: I am giving my side of the case. It was unnecessary for the hon. member to attack the Government that went out of its way to help these men.

Mr. Ewan: Not as much as they could have.

Mr. DUGGAN: That is your opinion. The Opposition and the Q.L.P., for that matter, did not raise objection to the help given. There was unanimity. What I object to is the unwarranted attack by the hon. member for Roma. The Minister can thank the hon. member for Roma for provoking this debate. There was no need for it, as we were prepared to facilitate the passage of the measure.

Mr. Ewan: You admit you were wrong.

Mr. DUGGAN: I do not make any such admission at all.

The hon. member for Roma has quite unnecessarily held up the proceedings of the House to engage in an unnecessary, provocative attack on the Labour Government's land policy. I have entered the debate at this stage not to oppose the Bill but to reply to the hon. member for Roma. I do not object to the Minister's reply. We voiced some minor criticism, and he answered it in his usual forthright fashion. I have no quarrel with his reply. I do not agree exactly with everything he said, but I do not object to the manner in which he said it. He is a hard fighter and I accept that fact. In debate we have to cope with parry and thrust. When a person enters the political arena, he cannot expect to give all the punishment and take none.

The Opposition is in agreement with the measure. I am only sorry that it was not passed with complete concord and accord. There would have been no occasion for me and possibly other hon. members to intervene, but for the impetuous action of the hon. member for Roma.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (2.57 p.m.): I enter the debate mainly to correct the misapprehensions of the hon. member for Roma and other Government members on the war service land settlement scheme. I do not know that the qualifications of the hon. member for Roma would entitle him to speak on behalf of ex-Service men. I hope the Minister will accept what I am about to say in the spirit in which I make the statements.

When the war service land settlement scheme was started, the Government endeavoured to settle as many ex-Service men as possible in Queensland, under a system of

closer settlement. An excellent job was done by officers of the Government departments. The history of the scheme proves that in Queensland it was far superior to the scheme in any other State. We had to contend with the proposal made by the Commonwealth Government at that time. They wanted to get possession of land in this State owned by the people of Queensland. They wanted a title of that land. The Government of the day rejected the scheme on the ground that they wanted to retain ownership of the land for the people of Queensland. Subsequently, during the period of the Clare project, we got into difficulties with inflation over costs and advances to numerous ex-Service men who were placed on the land.

In March 1953 we proposed to the Commonwealth Government that the scheme should be amended to enable this State to carry on as an agent State, the idea being that we would retain ownership of the land but were prepared to pay the full cost of acquisition or resumption of the land. The Commonwealth Government rejected that suggestion.

I accompanied the late Premier, Mr. E. M. Hanlon, on an inspection of the whole of the Clare settlement. Many of the settlers were very grateful for what had been done for them by the Queensland Government, acting as a principal State, not an agent State, at tremendous cost to the Government.

Within a few years of their settlement on the land, and I think this will be admitted by officers of the Department of Public Lands and Irrigation, it appeared that those men had a bright future ahead of them. There were good seasons, the crops were good, but later the seasons collapsed and the crops were not found to be as satisfactory as they might be. The market was stifled by the monopoly tobacco interests in this country, and the scheme itself did not look as prosperous as had been hoped. The hon. member for Roma states that the former Labour Government did not do what they should have done. We find that up until 1953 the Queensland Government had actually settled more ex-service men on the land in the State than had been settled on the land in any other State of the Commonwealth. In all schemes, including war service land settlement, under the Agricultural Bank's extension of credit to ex-service men to settle on the land, 649 ex-service men had been settled on the land. Queensland was the only State in the Commonwealth to make available to 3,000 ex-service men £5,500,000 free of interest and redemption over a period. How can the hon. member for Roma say that a Labour Government had done nothing for the settlement of ex-service men. The former Labour Government in their treatment of ex-service men generally have done nothing of which they could be ashamed. We certainly differed with the Commonwealth Government as to becoming an agent State. We proved as a principal State that we could settle more landless ex-service men on

the land than could be settled on the land in any other State in the Commonwealth. The Government extended to them the provisions of the War Service Land Settlement Act, provisions which we ourselves introduced. We gave them money free of interest and redemption over a period. No other State in the Commonwealth had done as much for the settlement of ex-service men. Our figures bear that out. The hon. member for Roma, and the hon. member for Chermiside on occasions, endeavour to make political capital out of one of those things that very often happen. The hon. member for Roma should be the last person in the world to endeavour to indict the previous Labour Government on something about which he knows nothing. He might know about land in the Roma district and the profit he has been able to make, but what does he know about the settlement of ex-service men on the land in Queensland? Not a thing. The former Labour Government have nothing to be ashamed of. The results were caused by seasons and the monopoly that existed in the control and purchase of tobacco. The hon. member will admit that within the last two years, because of competition, and because the monopoly has been broken the tobacco-growers have achieved a degree of prosperity. This monopoly was slowly and gradually killing the prosperity of the tobacco-growers of Queensland.

I rose merely to explain the record of the previous Government in the settlement of ex-service men on the land. I do not think any responsible hon. member opposite would deny that that record is a good one and that the Government won the thanks of ex-service men. If the 80-farm project in North Queensland was badly planned, it was only because of the advice that was given to the Government of the day. The work was carried out well and at tremendous cost to the Labour Government, who did everything possible to ensure that the settlers would enjoy a prosperous living.

Mr. FOLEY (Belyando) (3.6 p.m.): The party to which I belong has no objection to the concessions to soldier settlers contained in the Bill, such as the right to transfer property after a shorter period than was provided originally when the agreement on soldier settlement was entered into between the State and Commonwealth Governments. At that time 10 years was regarded as a reasonable period in which to determine whether a settler was making good.

Provision was also made in the original agreement that after a certain period had elapsed, the Commonwealth and State Governments might consider a write-down if it was found that a settler could not make good. Why is it that on the eve of an election the Minister is incurring the expenditure of a large sum of money when he could ask the Commonwealth Government to inquire into the economic circumstances of the farms and, if necessary, agree to a write-down? As far as I am aware, no action has

been taken to conduct an inquiry along those lines. If a write-down was necessary, that was the proper approach and full provision was made for it in the original agreement with the Commonwealth Government. There should be no necessity for this Government to bear the cost out of their own resources.

Obviously, representations have been made to the Government and they have come to the conclusion that politically this would be a very fine gesture to make on the eve of an election. If any of the settlers are suffering privations, and if the conditions referred to by the Minister and the hon. member for Roma actually exist, by all means give the settlers some assistance. Probably they would have got more assistance and a greater write-down than under the Bill. How many farms are involved in the £4,900 referred to by the Minister? If there are very many the Bill will not make the difference between success and failure to the settlers who will receive the benefit.

I was not present during the debate on the second reading but I hurriedly perused the Minister's remarks. Generally he tried to convey the impression that irrigation in Queensland as administered by the previous Labour Government was not what it should have been, not economically sound, so he is setting out to improve it. However, he cannot point to any irrigation project in Australia or any other part of the world where the capital expenditure on the dam, the reserve dam, and the necessary canals and other improvements, is passed on to the settlers. It would be impossible for any group of settlers on an irrigation project to carry the capital investment. Governments realise that and agree to carry most of the capital expenditure. They try to adjust water charges, rents and other charges to enable the settlers to carry on successfully.

Reference has been made to the Gibber-Gunyah project on the Theodore irrigation settlement. That is purely experimental and was never intended to be anything else. It was hoped that later it would be possible to find foundations in the Nathan Gorge to build a bigger dam to carry a greater reserve of water to irrigate most of the Dawson River Valley by gravitation. That has never come about, but not through the fault of any Government.

Mr. Muller: You had 28 years in which to do it and you never did it.

Mr. FOLEY: What can any ministry do if the irrigation engineers, continually boring and testing, are unable to find suitable foundations and, naturally, therefore, unable to submit any recommendation to the Minister? In the circumstances, no administration could carry on with the project. That is why the Nathan Gorge dam and the irrigation project that was to be associated with it have never come about. But our engineers, in an endeavour to get more settlers at Theodore

to carry more of the burden of capital cost, decided that it would be sound to establish from 23 up to 27 farms in the Gibber-Gunyah area just over the river from Theodore. In their wisdom they formulated a plan and submitted it to me, as Minister in charge at the time. Was I to take the stand that I knew more than the engineers who had spent months, possibly years, investigating the project? Naturally I did not adopt that attitude. I submitted the scheme to the then Cabinet and it was agreed to carry out this project.

Mr. Davies: Most of those engineers are still in the department.

Mr. FOLEY: They are still in the department. The same men will be advising the present Minister. When they recommend a project to him, not being an irrigation engineer he will not be in a position to contest any of the points raised by them. Details of the original projects launched were submitted to Parliament. Details were given of the surveys, the capital expenditure and the estimated number of farms that would be provided. If any hon. members had any knowledge of irrigation they had the opportunity to condemn or reject the schemes. Usually, although there might be some debate, the necessary legislation was agreed to.

The Minister referred to the Mareeba-Dimbulah scheme. The same applies there. He boasts that he has cut down the number of farms by 1,000.

Mr. Muller: I did not say that.

Mr. FOLEY: That is how it reads in the proof of the Minister's speech if he has not corrected it. Anyway, he has reduced the number considerably. Again that project was submitted and agreed to by Parliament. The estimate of the number of farms was not the estimate of the Irrigation Commissioner. He went into the matter with agricultural experts and other Lands Department officials with a wide knowledge. They agreed that a certain acreage of land in the settlement would be sufficient for a man to make a good living. We agreed to that. How can any Minister dispute evidence submitted by skilled men like irrigation engineers, Department of Agriculture and Stock field experts, soil experts and agricultural experts, and field officers of the Department of Public Lands?

Mr. Ewan: What has this got to do with the Bill?

Mr. FOLEY: If the Minister is allowed to make a review of other land settlements and give his opinion on them, indicating that they were big mistakes by the then Labour administration, it is only right that other hon. members should be allowed to refer to the Minister's remarks and give their opinion, as I am doing. I do not claim to be an irrigation expert but I know that a soil survey was carried out at Mareeba-Dimbulah,

as it has been carried out in every other project. It is part of the planning of an irrigation settlement.

Mr. Davies: Several years before.

Mr. FOLEY: Yes. It was estimated that a certain acreage would be sufficient. If it has been found since that that acreage was too small I agree with the Minister that by every possible method he should try to arrange for greater areas to be given to the settlers. On the other hand it is wrong to do that in an endeavour to build up a settlement by what is known as the share-farming system. I think it is definitely wrong for a settler to be given more land than he can handle himself and permit him to work it on a share basis. Those who engaged share farmers should have had the opportunity to select the land in the first place. The Minister admitted in a previous debate that 80 acres would enable the settler to work a portion and bring in a share farmer to work the rest. I think that system is wrong; it does not tend to healthy land settlement. Every Minister, including the present Minister, who has administered that department has been faced with the same position. He has a staff of trained irrigation engineers and other experts to advise him on the different aspects of irrigation. The reports he receives reflect the wisdom of these experts. The Minister must either reject the whole thing as not being Government policy or accept it. We know that some people have found it difficult to keep up their rent payments and pay their survey dues. They enjoy an interest-free period on the capital debt. Some settlers meet with more difficulty than others, and I am with the Minister in giving these people every assistance. I advise the Minister not to adopt the attitude that because he is in charge of the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply that his judgment on these matters is better than that of experienced engineers and others. If the Minister does I prophesy that he will make greater mistakes in the future than he claims were made by some of his predecessors. The Minister said the amount of assistance was £4,900. That does not represent much help if it is spread over a considerable number and therefore will not mean the difference between success and failure; but if it only concerns a few it will be very helpful. I wish the Minister every success in his effort to help those who are in distress. If the Minister submits a similar proposal in regard to any other irrigation settlement where difficulties are being experienced my party will be right behind him. I suggest to the Minister that it would be wise to approach the Commonwealth Government to have an investigation of every farm that comes under the Commonwealth-State Agreement with the object of writing down debts to an economic level. The Government would then be giving some real assistance, and the State would have to bear only 50 per cent. of the cost.

Hon. P. J. R. HILTON (Carnarvon) (3.25 p.m.): I enter the debate because of the shocking misstatements that have emanated from the Minister and the hon. member for Roma. At the outset I take strong exception to a term used by the Minister. He accused the previous Government of placing a socialistic millstone round the necks of the settlers at Clare. No responsible Minister with a knowledge of the background and other matters associated with that settlement could justify such an outlandish statement.

The comment on the Bill has not included any reference to the Commonwealth-States Agreement on the settlement of ex-service men. As the Leader of the Opposition has said, when the complementary legislation was passed in this Assembly to ratify the agreement between the Commonwealth and the State, every Country Party member was completely in accord with the principles of the Agreement, but now we hear the Minister for Public Lands describing it as a socialistic millstone. It is a horrible reflection on the intelligence and ability of scientific officers of the Department of Agriculture and Stock, of experienced administrators of the Department of Public Lands and of that great administrator, the late Sir John Kemp, because he played a part in the formulation of that scheme in the North.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I draw the attention of the hon. member to the fact that I have been very lenient. I have allowed him to answer the Minister's comments, but I appeal to all hon. members not to embark on a general discussion on the policy of previous Ministers on land or irrigation. This is essentially a very simple and clear amendment of the Act. I appeal to the hon. member. I do not want to have to restrain him.

Mr. HILTON: I am specifically referring to the Clare settlement. The Clare and Millaroo settlement is covered by the Commonwealth-States Agreement, and certain moneys are being written off. With all due respect to you, Mr. Speaker, I think my statements were relevant to the provisions of the Bill. I was pointing out that the genesis of the settlement was the Commonwealth-States Agreement, and I referred to the calibre of the men who advised the Government re the implementation of the Agreement. As a member of the previous Government I was taking strong exception to the scheme, suggested by illustrious and competent public servants who advised the Government, being described as a socialistic experiment with returned soldiers.

The hon. member for Roma charged the previous Government with neglect, with failing to do anything for these settlers, and in all fairness we should be allowed to reply to them, because, as the Minister knows only too well, the Agreement in respect of Clare and other soldier settlements provided

that after due investigation by a committee appointed by the Commonwealth and State Governments action could be taken to write down the capital indebtedness of the settlers.

Prior to my vacating the office of Minister for Public Lands, a committee appointed by the Government made a comprehensive report.

Mr. Ewan: What did you do?

Mr. HILTON: I emphasise that it was a few weeks before the defeat of the Government.

Mr. Ewan: We followed it up.

Mr. HILTON: I am glad to have that observation. It has taken the present Government three years to act on the information supplied by that committee of investigation in regard to Clare. It has taken them three years to act when they had all the information placed before them, and I do not think that that is anything to brag about. If the State Government had acted on its own account in regard to the write-off the Commonwealth Government would have bailed up and refused to meet the writing-down of the capital indebtedness. The Premier and the Minister know that full well. The State Treasurer, having regard to the parlous state of the Treasury would strongly resent any action which would relieve the Commonwealth Government of their obligation in respect to those settlers.

Mr. Ewan: You will admit it was a horrible mess before you had that committee appointed.

Mr. HILTON: There was no such thing as a horrible mess. I give the Minister full credit for he was fair enough in his introductory speech to say that he was not blaming anybody. He knew that the best technical men available to the Government had investigated that particular area. There were factors operating, other than the land itself, which caused disaster to some, not all. I well recollect reading the results of the first year's operations of that scheme. Some men had earned a gross income up to £12,000. In that year tobacco prices were reasonably good; the tobacco combine was not able to exercise a depressing influence on sales, although in subsequent years it did. There were floods in the country, and the hon. member for Roma knows that if he knows anything at all.

Mr. P. R. Smith interjected.

Mr. HILTON: I am speaking on a serious matter. I want to see justice done to those men. I am supporting the Bill in its entirety. Let us treat the matter objectively and look at everything in its right perspective. Because of factors other than capital indebtedness and the land itself, some of these men were put in dire straits. That is why the previous Government appointed a representative committee to go into the whole matter.

Prior to the defeat of the former Government that committee had furnished a report. There was no time left to us to take action by consulting the Commonwealth Government in an endeavour to see that full justice was done to those settlers. Furthermore, everybody at that time knew that the homes erected were not all that could be desired. Hon. members will recall the position in regard to the supply of building materials at that time. There was an urgent need to get the settlement under way as speedily as possible and ex-army buildings were used. Everybody knew that in due course the cost would be written down and that we had to get the consent of the Commonwealth Government to the writing down. It was impossible to approach the position piecemeal. We had to make an approach to the Commonwealth to see that justice was done.

Mr. Ewan: Who valued them at £3,000 when they were first put up?

Mr. HILTON: They had to be valued at that time.

I repeat, there was a great outcry at the time to speed up soldier settlement, and the Government did their best to meet the demand. It was not our fault that some of the settlers failed to measure up to their obligations, even though they were all "screened" and approved by a committee composed mainly of men from outside the Public Service. Can the previous Government be held responsible merely because some of the settlers failed to make a success of the venture? The officers of the Irrigation Department did everything possible to ensure that the settlement was established on sound lines under the Commonwealth-States Agreement. Every consideration was afforded to the settlers by them and other Government officials.

I resent very strongly any attempt to make cheap political capital out of the tribulations of these ex-service men. I resent also the charge that a previous Government put a socialistic millstone round their necks. There is not much more I can say—

Mr. Aikens: Hear, hear!

Mr. HILTON: The hon. member for Mundingburra says, "Hear, hear!" If he wants to get back to the North to loaf, let him go. It is immaterial to me whether he is interested in this debate.

I should like the Minister to tell us the actual amount for which the Commonwealth Government have agreed to accept responsibility in the write-down of capital indebtedness. I realise that the Bill relates only to land rents and survey fees, but we should be told whether the Commonwealth Government have measured up to their responsibilities.

I do not intend to deal with other points raised by the Minister in his second-reading speech. I think the hon. member for

Belyando covered them very fully. However, I resent the very base and unparliamentary accusation of the hon. member for Roma that the previous Government condemned the settlers at Wandoan to penal servitude for life. What an astonishing statement! During the period that I was Minister for Public Lands—and it extended over 18 months—I had not one deputation from that area. I knew that some of the blocks were not functioning as they should, but they were surveyed and designed according to the best information available to the Government from experienced officers of the Department of Agriculture and Stock and the Department of Public Lands. To say that the Wandoan settlers were condemned to penal servitude for life is fantastic, absurd, unfair, and very unworthy of the hon. member for Roma, who pretends to know something about land settlement.

Mr. McCATHIE (Haughton) (3.39 p.m.): I intimated during the initiation stage that I was quite happy to support the measure. I know the area under consideration very well. I know also that quite a number of the soldier settlers have experienced difficulty. I know much more than I care to say here about some of their difficulties; I have said it in other places.

It has been decided to remit land rentals and water and drainage charges. However, that is only a portion of the amount to be written off. The intimation given to the soldier settlers was contained in a letter from the Premier. The two paragraphs that deal particularly with this matter read—

“The State and Commonwealth Governments are aware that many settlers have met with some severe setbacks in the growing of their crops. The Investigation Committee has not found a solution for the technical problems associated with the farms, the complexity of which is realised by both Governments.

“They feel that some recognition should be given to settlers for work that they have put into their farms without a compensating financial action. It has been agreed that this can best be achieved by relieving settlers of their debts to the Crown as at 31 December, 1959, for improvements, plant and machinery and working capital advances (excepting advances made against the 1959-1960 tobacco crop).”

That will indicate to hon. members that the Commonwealth-State agreement has been working in that direction as it should. As I intimated earlier, the previous Government set up a committee of investigation to try to settle these matters and the Premier's letter says the information in it has been obtained following work done by that committee over two years, so it is quite apparent that they have followed on from the report submitted by the committee set up by the Labour Government.

I know, too, that some of the blocks at Clare proved to be too small. The Minister said that. He said, too, in his Second-Reading speech that the farms at Mareeba-Dimbulah were reduced in number, and I understand that they were increased in area. One of my chief complaints about the settlements in the Burdekin Valley is that they have not been increased in area to allow all the settlers to have at least 40 acres of land suitable for growing tobacco. I was advised in a letter from the Minister that it was not intended to increase the areas and, further, that the vacant lands in the settlements of Clare, Millaroo and Dalbeg would be balloted for by settlers in the particular areas. That still does not solve the problem of the man who is without sufficient land to grow tobacco. He has to take pot luck.

I have here a letter written by one of the settlers who are without sufficient area. He says that he considers it one of the greatest injustices ever perpetrated on settlers in Queensland, that all the settlers have the opportunity to apply for these lands and that those who are without sufficient area still have to take pot luck. He says that, if an existing settler secures another block at ballot, he will immediately put on share-farmers and the other farmers will still be without enough area.

I mentioned the nut-grass problem. While the Minister said it was the opinion of departmental officers that tobacco could be grown with nut grass, he and other hon. members agreed that the general view was to the contrary. I appeal to him to check the results of the farm that has been in operation this year before it is abandoned. I appeal to him further to carry on the investigation for two or three years and to test thoroughly whether farrow irrigation and chipping will prove the answer to growing tobacco in nut-grass areas.

The Bill will help the settlers at Clare a little way along the road. I support it wholeheartedly but I could not accept the insinuations of hon. members opposite that the previous Government neglected the area because their accusations cannot be sustained in any way. They have only to look at the successful ones and to delve into the problems of those who were not successful to find the truth of the matter.

Hon. A. G. MULLER (Fassifern—Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation) (3.46 p.m.), in reply: Most of the points raised have been outside the provisions of the Bill nevertheless I suppose they have some indirect bearing. The Bill contains three clauses, only one of which relates to the argument put forward this afternoon about the justification of remitting the £5,000 owing to the State.

The hon. member for Belyando must have been absent from the State for a long time or taken little or no notice of what has been

going on in the negotiations between the State and Commonwealth Governments over the write-down. The Commonwealth Government have measured up to their responsibilities. They have agreed in principle to the write-down but I am not prepared to say at the moment what the amount will be. In any case it is outside the provisions of the Bill. They have agreed to meet their responsibilities and write off the considerable debt of the settlers in that area. The matter is being handled by the Treasury Department and, in all, it will run into a substantial sum of money. When the Bill was introduced I estimated how much it may be but I am not prepared to make a definite statement because I do not know. What we are concerned about now is what affects the State directly—the rent and the survey fees.

The hon. member for Belyando openly admitted that he knew nothing at all about the methods of controlling the settlements. He admitted that he considered that the Government should rely on departmental officers. He referred to the work of the late Sir John Kemp at Gibber-Gunyah. There is nothing worse than casting reflections on anyone who has passed on. Sir John Kemp did a mighty job as an engineer. It is the responsibility of the Government and the Minister in charge in particular to ensure that irrigation schemes are economically sound. After all, Governments have to find the money, whether they borrow it or get it from revenue. No Government can afford to take a risk by allowing departmental officers to direct them. The hon. members for Belyando and Carnarvon have both held the portfolio of Minister for Public Lands and they know perfectly well that when these schemes are being planned and designed the Minister in charge accepts full responsibility. Not on one single occasion has the Irrigation Commissioner attempted to lay down the costs of a scheme without conferring with me. Until I am satisfied that a plan is sound I will not refer it to Cabinet. I take it exactly the same thing happened when the hon. member for Belyando and the hon. member for Carnarvon were in office. It is no use trying to evade blame for failure by saying it had nothing to do with the Government and that the Government acted entirely on the advice of experts. I seek the advice of experts but I do not always act upon it. I do not allow any officer of my department to tell me what to do. I admit that I am influenced greatly by their advice and recommendations but when it comes to committing the Government to a large sum of money I reserve the right to make up my own mind. If you want expert advice you generally go to a person who is in the best position to advise you. Let us not throw the responsibility on a public servant when the venture turns out to be a failure.

The hon. member for Belyando said that I was making this gesture just before an election. As a matter of fact the position has been desperate for a number of years. Both

the hon. members for Belyando and Carnarvon know that is true. Some of these settlers have done well and some have not. Some of them were absolute failures. This may have been due to lack of effort or insufficient land. In some cases it was due to both. The position had to be dealt with. The longer it was left the more acute the position became.

Mr. Hilton: You described the whole thing as a socialistic venture.

Mr. MULLER: It was a socialistic venture; that was the reason why it was a failure. The hon. member claimed that every member of this Government agreed to it. We agreed to the settlement in principle. We had no say as members of the Opposition regarding the policy to be adopted with the settlers. On the admission of the hon. member for Belyando they failed because they knew nothing about it. Men were put on the land at high capital cost and the conditions were such that it was extremely difficult for them to succeed. We took off the socialistic shackles and we are now making the soldier shoulder his own responsibility. We are advancing him money and giving him land and we say, "Under the freehold basis you have to make a do of it or get off." Under the freehold basis he is not tied up for five years, let alone 10 years. If he is a failure the sooner he gets out the better for himself and everybody else. These settlers were handicapped by socialistic shackles. I do not apologise for that statement.

Mr. McCathie: Mr. Minister—

Mr. MULLER: The hon. member has had his say.

Mr. McCathie: I wish to ask a question.

Mr. MULLER: The hon. member's speech is the only one that does not call for a reply because there was nothing in it.

Mr. McCathie: I wish to say something now.

Mr. MULLER: The hon. member has had his say. I am now speaking and you have to listen to me. The hon. member represented the people up there over the years and he failed to submit one concrete proposal for the solution of the problem. The hon. member for Carnarvon failed too. He said that he appointed a committee. He appointed a committee—one of several appointed by the then Government—but nothing was done. Immediately we assumed office we got in touch with the Commonwealth Government and said that there must be an adjustment. And that adjustment is being made. The Commonwealth Government have not failed to live up to their responsibility; nor have this Government. The Bill gives the State Government the right to make their contribution.

The hon. member for Belyando also objected to my reference to Theodore and Gibber Gunyah. In the Theodore area there

was another socialistic system in operation. The settlers said, "This is not our responsibility. We are really the guinea pigs of the Government. We have been placed here by the Government but we do not own the land and cannot make a living on it. We are not in a position to sell it."

If they had owned the land and the Government had attended to irrigation by providing the water the settlers would have been able to adjust themselves, but under the scheme introduced by the previous Government they could not do it. The hon. member for Belyando tried to get out of it by saying that at the time it was intended to build the Nathan Gorge dam to provide water for the settlement, but what happened? The scheme was started in 1928, and the previous Government went out of office in 1957, 29 years later. During that time they did not do a thing about it. They did not even give an estimate of the cost. The settlers were fed up to the neck and wondered if anything was going to be done. We got busy and obtained an estimate of the cost. It was £27,000,000. The scheme was not a practical one. As the hon. member for Belyando has entered the argument, I say that he in this instance also should have satisfied himself that the proposal was sound. It was unsound economically.

Hon. members opposite have referred to my interference in the Mareeba-Dimbulah scheme. It is true that the plan envisaged 1,400 farms, the cost involved being £14,000,000 or £10,000 a farm. Any sensible person with any knowledge of irrigation would know that such a scheme was not practicable. I said to the Commissioner, "This will break the Bank of England." The Commissioner did not dictate to me as to what we had to do. We closely examined the proposal, made an adjustment of the areas and reduced the number of farms. We did not reduce the area under irrigation. We drew up a scheme so that each of the settlers could make a living. We are now building the channels to the area to supply the water. The settlers will be completely responsible for working their own farms. We assist them financially, but we will not be tied to this cost of £14,000,000. Whatever arrangement the settlers make with the Agricultural Bank or any other bank will be made by them in the same way as similar arrangements are made by any other private settler. Despite what might be said, we have put the scheme on a sound, economic footing. It is a business proposition. It is a practical scheme under which the settlers will be able to make a living.

Hon. members opposite cannot excuse themselves by saying that we agreed to the proposal. We agreed with the settlement in principle, but the form of the settlement and the tenure of the land were matters of Government policy, and that was the root cause of the failure.

The hon. member for Carnarvon asked if I was prepared to make a statement about

what the Commonwealth Government have done. I can only say that they have measured up to their responsibility.

Mr. Hilton: I am glad to hear it.

Mr. MULLER: The amount involved has been worked out, and the Commonwealth Government will find their part. The sad part of the story is not the £5,000 that will be written off under the Bill. I would not have raised a song and dance about it only the point has been raised. The State has to find about £200,000 to meet its share. The amount may be more or slightly less, but that figure will not be far out. The whole of the loss of £200,000, every penny of it, is due to the bungling of the previous Government.

I did not want to go into great detail, but the points were raised and I was obliged to reply to them.

Motion (Mr. Muller) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

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

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

Bill, on motion of Mr. Muller, by leave, read a third time.

ANZAC COTTAGES AND T.B. HOMES BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. A. G. MULLER (Fassifern—Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation) (4.1 p.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

During the introductory stage I was asked for certain information. I asked the Public Curator to give me a few details regarding the provisions of the Bill, and he has supplied me with some particulars. As to the Anzac Cottages, there is one unimproved allotment and three vacant cottages, one at Toowoomba which is in a bad state of repair, one at Goodna, and the other at Norman Park. Of the other cottages, 14 are let to ineligible tenants, and 33 to Anzac widows. As to the cost of reconditioning the cottages, I might say that in 1956 a thorough inspection of the cottages in the Greater Brisbane area and adjacent thereto was made by the inspectors attached to the Public Curator's Office, and it was estimated that an expenditure of £17,000 would be required to place the cottages in a reasonable state of repair, including painting. If the cost of reconditioning the country cottages was added to this sum, it is estimated that least £20,000 would be required. Taking into consideration the further deterioration of the cottages

and increased costs of repair, the present-day cost of reconditioning the cottages could quite conceivably reach £24,000.

The allotments on which the cottages are erected vary in area from 16 perches to 1 rood 11 perches. The values of these cottages vary. A cottage in Brisbane which has been well cared for by the widow and family might be valued at £2,000. There are not many of these. Cottages in Brisbane and in the country which have not been so well cared for by the occupant might have a value as low as £1,000.

It is anticipated that in the next three years the sales would be limited to one block of vacant land, three cottages at present vacant, and 14 other cottages occupied by ineligible tenants, realising perhaps, a gross amount of £24,000. It would be the duty of the Public Curator, as Trustee, to obtain the best price obtainable. Sales in all cases should be made by public auction at a fixed reserve, and no private sale made unless that reserve was not reached at auction.

There was a suggestion made by the hon. member for Bundaberg that the sales should be restricted to ex-service men. That suggestion has a good deal of merit. My first reaction was that it would not be practicable. Whilst this suggestion might have certain merit we must not lose sight of the primary object of the Anzac Cottage Scheme, which was to provide homes for homeless Anzac widows. Therefore, it is essential that when sales of these cottages are being made to provide funds for the upkeep of cottages occupied by Anzac widows, an endeavour should be made to obtain the maximum benefit for them, and that could only be done by selling the cottages at the highest possible price. A sale that was restricted to ex-service men only, or for that matter any other section of the community, would not return the scheme the greatest measure of benefit.

As hon. members will realise, the purpose for which the cottages were erected has almost been served; most of the widows have long since died. It became a matter for the Public Curator to use his discretion in letting the cottages, and a number of them are at present leased to ineligible persons with the object of collecting rent. He is at present collecting about 30s. a week for each cottage, which would scarcely cover the cost of keeping them in repair. He has had to use his discretion in deciding whether to allow the children of an eligible person or a war widow to use the cottages. In using his discretion, he decided that the female children of a widow would be permitted to remain in a cottage till they were married. However, that practice could not be allowed to continue over a number of generations.

The cottages are now getting into a bad state of repair, and it becomes a question of whether the Public Curator should lease them to anybody and everybody. I think that would be very unwise. No fund has been set up to enable him to keep them in a reasonable state of repair.

I do not dismiss lightly the suggestion of the hon. member for Bundaberg. If it is a matter of giving preference to someone, it could be accorded to widows of soldiers who were killed in World War II. However, seeing that the money was subscribed for a specific purpose and the obligation has been fulfilled, I think it would be wise to act on the advice received and sell the cottages that are unoccupied so that the others may be kept in reasonable repair.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (4.8 p.m.): The Minister has said that 14 of these cottages are occupied by ineligible tenants, and that there is one unimproved allotment and three vacant cottages. He said also that within the next 12 months it is intended to sell those properties and use the proceeds to keep the remainder in reasonable repair. Speaking of the 14 cottages that are let to ineligible tenants, I should imagine that the provisions of the Fair Rents Act would be binding on the Public Curator. If he is to be empowered to sell the 14 cottages, I point out that the Fair Rents Act prevents any private owner from selling a house immediately after evicting the tenant. I should like some elaboration from the Minister on whether he intends to empower the Public Curator to evict the ineligible tenants. The fund is gradually going out of use and eventually there will not be any people accommodated in the homes. It has been in operation over 40 years and naturally those eligible to occupy the homes are gradually disappearing. Their descendants are of course entitled to use them but they too will decrease in number. Under the process of selling the houses the fund will become merely a fund of money without property resources. What will happen to it then? Will it be transferred to other patriotic funds or to the Canteen Trust Fund, or to some other purpose similar to that for which it was originally intended or will it revert to the Government? The Minister might consider reviewing the fund with that in mind. We have no objection to the Bill.

Hon. A. G. MULLER (Fassifern—Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation) (4.12 p.m.), in reply: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has raised a good point about the possibility of the Public Curator's selling the homes over the heads of the tenants. I remind him, however, that the Public Curator is not empowered to sell without the approval of the Governor in Council. The question of rendering people homeless will be closely watched. I am sure that will not happen. Of course there is a limit to how far we can go to make ourselves good fellows by giving people cheap homes and not evicting them. Knowing the Public Curator and his officers I am sure that the matter will be taken care of and that no undue hardship will be created. I should not like to see people turned out when they could not get another home.

Mr. Power: He would not do it.

Mr. MULLER: I think the hon. gentleman can rest assured of that.

The proceeds of the fund will not revert to the Government. We do not expect that there will be any for some time, but any surplus moneys will go into the care of the Public Curator. Every hon. member will agree that that is very wise. If anyone can prove entitlement to moneys held in trust the Public Curator has power after a time to pay them out.

I assure hon. members that every provision in the Bill has been designed with the best of intentions to care for the people that the Government headed by the late Mr. T. J. Ryan sought to benefit.

Motion (Mr. Muller) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 to 6, both inclusive, and preamble, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

Bill, on motion of Mr. Muller, by leave, read a third time.

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

SECOND READING

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Premier) (4.17 p.m.): I move—

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

I am dealing with the Bill on behalf of the Minister for Public Works and Local Government who is keeping an appointment on behalf of the Government. The Minister gave a very full explanation of the Bill at the introductory stage. I do not propose to reiterate what he said. Hon. members have had an opportunity to study the Bill. It gives the Rockhampton City Council power to enter into an agreement for the development of Port Alma as the port for Rockhampton. It places the council in a legal position to give certain undertakings which as the elected representative body of the people it desires to give.

It was suggested on the introduction of the Bill that the Rockhampton City Council would perhaps be exceeding its powers in undertaking to make such an agreement with the Harbour Board to share responsibility to help Port Alma, but in my opinion the council has every right to undertake the responsibility as long as it has the backing and consent of the citizens of Rockhampton.

With the proposed development of Port Alma Rockhampton is to be denied its river port which has been in existence ever since Rockhampton was a city. Personally, I think

it is a very wise move because now Rockhampton will have a deep-sea port at which the former river traffic can be handled adequately. The Rockhampton Harbour Board will be relieved of the responsibility and the heavy costs of dredging the river to keep the river port open. The harbour board and the city council have jointly set out to attain a desirable objective: a good port at Port Alma that will not only serve the needs of the City of Rockhampton but also help to serve the needs of the central district of Queensland. I should like to point out that the Bill protects the rights of the electors of the city. If the people do not agree with the council regarding this matter they have the remedy in their own hands and they can cause the issue to be decided by the general body of electors at a poll. I know of no more democratic way in which the council can act and at the same time protect the rights of the electors. The Bill is not only giving the Rockhampton City Council power to make this proposed agreement with the Harbour Board; it also protects the rights of the citizens of Rockhampton. If the citizens do not wish the city council to proceed with this proposed agreement they are given the democratic right to express their displeasure at the polls. That adequately protects the interests of all concerned. Hon. members have had an opportunity to study the provisions of the draft agreement between the parties which is enacted as a schedule to the Bill. Hon. members will notice that the draft agreement is a very clear one. Safeguards are written into the agreement as far as the council is concerned. I repeat that I believe the agreement is a fair one and I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. BURROWS (Port Curtis) (4.23 p.m.): As the Premier is handling this Bill it is appropriate that I should repeat what the hon. gentleman said on a similar matter. In 1951, when speaking on the problem of Central Queensland ports the hon. the Premier said—

“The Battle of the Ports is being revived today, and the only excuse I can see for the proposal is that it is nothing more than a political sop to Rockhampton and surrounding electorates.”

In the same speech the hon. gentleman also said—

“Too much money has been wasted in this State on things that are not necessary. I do not say they are not desirable but they are not necessary at the present time.”

I agree that too much money is spent on things that are not necessary. I pointed out on the first reading that the whole of the trade of the combined ports in Central Queensland would not be sufficient to keep the port of Gladstone working to capacity for six working months of the year. It must be remembered that both the Harbour Board and the City Council are guaranteed by the Government. If they were not guaranteed

by the Government they would not be able to enjoy the lower rate of interest and they would have to pay exorbitant rates on money not guaranteed by the Government. A dangerous precedent has been established in local government finance. As the Premier rightly said in 1951, "The Battle of the Ports has been revived." The proposal is not a solution of the problem. It could be solved if the Government had the courage to inquire into it in a full and open manner. In that regard, the Government pretended to inquire into it. They appointed a committee to inquire into Central Queensland ports. Those were the terms of reference. The chairman was Mr. Fison, Chief Engineer of the Department of Harbours and Marine. I challenge anyone in Australia who has been associated with Mr. Fison to question his ability and his integrity. But the Government yielded to outside influence. The Rockhampton interests were not satisfied with Mr. Fison. They feared a man who would be honest in my opinion, and objected. They also objected to the terms of reference. In consequence the terms of reference were narrowed down and the committee was confined to an inquiry into the Rockhampton port or the area under the control of the Rockhampton Harbour Board.

It took evidence in camera. I was fortunate in that the Treasurer allowed me to look at the report. No other hon. member, apart from Cabinet Ministers, has had the same opportunity. I studied the report for about two hours in the Treasurer's office and made quite copious notes of its contents. That was the only evidence we had. In the course of that study I found some alarming evidence, directed against Gladstone. The chairman of the Rockhampton Harbour Board who is in the lobby and is naturally very interested in the Bill when giving evidence condemned the waterside workers of Rockhampton. He was asked if they could ship through Gladstone as an alternative to developing the Rockhampton port. He attacked the waterside workers of Gladstone and more or less said they were a mob of anarchists, but he described members of the same union who lived in the Rockhampton district as paragons of industrial virtue.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BURROWS: I am only pointing out how misleading and irrelevant much of the evidence was. I was astonished at a further recommendation made by the Committee. Another precedent was established which could have an immense bearing on local government finance in future. The Rockhampton City Council is contributing £80,000 towards a road which is 37 miles from the Rockhampton post office, and a long way out of the area of the City of Rockhampton. One of the reasons advanced by the Committee for its recommendation as to this road which will cost between £200,000 and £250,000, a recommendation on which the Government acted, was that it would provide

better opportunities for amateur fishermen. That shows how bankrupt of ideas the committee was. Any reason whatever was sufficient. As I pointed out in the earlier debate the Premier told the people of Rockhampton what they would get and that was what the committee recommended they should get. The report of the committee was never made public. The A.L.P. branch at Rockhampton asked for a copy of the report. I had said that the report would have a damning effect on the future of Gladstone. In response to their request the Premier wrote to the branch and said that the report was not made public, and never would be. As one who has read the report I can understand why the Premier is ashamed to make it public. The Government acted on such a scurrilous and nebulous document.

Mr. Low: Are you expressing the views of the Opposition?

Mr. BURROWS: I often wonder why God created men like the hon. member. He made men like the hon. member so that we could appreciate intelligent people. I represent a port which has been sacrificed and crucified by this Government, and whilst I am paid to do my job I will do it and I will not be brushed aside by upstarts like the hon. member.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I remind the hon. member that he must discuss the merits of the Bill.

Mr. BURROWS: After objections were made there was a further inquiry into all the ports of Central Queensland. The first report on Rockhampton, the matter with which we are dealing now, was acted upon almost instantaneously. Sir Arthur Fadden was chairman of the committee that furnished a more general and comprehensive report. The proceedings of that committee were held in public; evidence was taken in public. That report has been in the hands of the Government for three months. In answer to my question the Premier gave a ridiculous reason why it cannot be made public.

The man who used to be the champion of Gladstone is now sponsoring a Bill which, as a man said to me last night, is taking the "Glad" out of Gladstone. In future its name should be Sadstone. I am opposing this Bill. In previous years there was competition between the ports for the limited amount of trade offering in Central Queensland. There is still a limited amount of trade; there is not sufficient trade to keep one port half-filled. Both the Gladstone and Rockhampton Harbour Boards are reducing harbour dues. Gladstone is in a fortunate position because Nature was a lot kinder to it than to Port Alma.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member will remember that I have ordered that this debate should not develop into a controversy on the value of the two ports.

Mr. BURROWS: I think, Mr. Speaker, you will appreciate my point when I go a little

further. The Rockhampton Harbour Board is bankrupt. It is bankrupt for the simple reason that its charges have not been high enough. It should be unnecessary to point out that harbour boards depend upon harbour dues for their revenue. If a port's expenditure is, say, £100,000 a year and it handles 100,000 tons of cargo, it must charge dues of £1 a ton to cover its costs. If it charged only 4s. a ton, it would have a deficit of £20,000 at the end of the year.

The reason for the Rockhampton Harbour Board's difficulties is that it tried to keep up with Gladstone. It did not earn enough to pay interest and redemption. Over the years, Governments of all shades of political opinion have been very kind to the Rockhampton Harbour Board and have forgiven it its debts. During the war years, the late Hon. W. Forgan Smith called a halt—or at least steadied the board—and its position deteriorated further, while Gladstone's improved considerably. You, Mr. Speaker, know that Gladstone developed because of the revenue that it derived from the industry that you were interested in at the time.

If this battle of the ports is to continue, the Gladstone Town Council will naturally say, "We will guarantee the Gladstone Harbour Board." Other local authorities that have harbour interests will do likewise. Never-ending cut-throat methods will be created and, in the ultimate, the cost will have to be borne, not by the people of the area, but by the whole of the taxpayers of Queensland. The Rockhampton Harbour Board has accumulated a tremendous debt, and the taxpayers of Queensland are paying for it. Those who have enjoyed the benefit are Vestey's Ltd. who own the meatworks in Rockhampton and the Blue Star shipping line.

Mr. Walsh: Do you say that the graziers and other Central Queensland residents are not getting some benefit?

Mr. BURROWS: One big company—that is, Vestey's—is reaping the benefit. Stevedoring charges are a charge on the shipping company. In the ultimate, of course, they are passed onto the consumer or the producer, but they are a direct charge on the shipping company. Vestey's own the Blue Star line, which handles 95 per cent. of all cargoes shipped from Port Alma. At present the waterside workers travel to the port and back by rail motor and in his evidence before the committee Mr. Hinchliffe said that the building of the road would mean a saving of £21,000 a year in stevedoring costs. That saving is considerable although, of course, only chicken-feed to such a big combine as Vestey's. The ratepayers of Rockhampton are contributing £80,000 towards the cost of that road and Vestey's a paltry £15,000 yet on Mr. Hinchliffe's evidence, they would save about £21,000 in one year. The smaller works in Gladstone contributed half the cost of the road without saving anything in stevedoring costs. The only advantage to them would be that the meat might not be

bumped so much along a bitumen road as along a dirt road on the way to the wharf. Moreover, Vestey's have a ridiculously low charge for harbour dues. Bundaberg agreed to pay £1 a ton of sugar because they wanted the port developed. The sugar industry said, "If the Government will lend us the money to build this, we will undertake to make a charge on every ton of sugar that goes over the wharf to meet interest and redemption and working expenses."

Mr. Walsh: The Government did not lend them the money.

Mr. BURROWS: They guaranteed it.

Mr. Walsh: That is no different to any other.

Mr. BURROWS: It was a debenture loan. They could not get the loan without the Government guarantee. However, no-one can quarrel with that. The people who used the wharf agreed to pay £1 a ton of sugar. Mackay did the same and today they are very solvent. Had Mackay or Bundaberg failed to charge enough to pay working expenses and interest and redemption, they would be in the same position as Rockhampton.

Mr. Walsh: The difference between Mackay and Bundaberg is that the whole of the industry paid in Mackay.

Mr. BURROWS: These are matters that should be ventilated here and to the best of my ability I am trying to do so. What is happening is a tragedy because in my opinion it is unnecessary and uncalled for and it cannot be justified.

The Liberal candidate for Rockhampton is the Mayor of Rockhampton and he is pushing his barrow. The draft agreement contained in the Bill was sent to the Rockhampton Harbour Board and the Rockhampton City Council for approval, both being parties to it, and when it was returned to the Treasurer indicating acceptance it was signed—

"For and on behalf of the Rockhampton City Council and the Rockhampton Harbour Board, R. Pilbeam."

He is not even deputy chairman of the harbour board but he signs for both bodies. This man seems to have a hypnotic influence over the Liberal Party.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Can the hon. member relate his remarks to the provisions of the Bill?

Mr. BURROWS: Yes. I am referring to the draft agreement. The letter that came back was signed by one person for and on behalf of both bodies. I pointed out the impropriety, if not the irregularity, of one person signing on behalf of the two authorities. The Treasurer entered the debate and attacked me for questioning Pilbeam's signature. I remind the Treasurer and other members of the Liberal Party how much they valued Pilbeam's signature when he signed

a nomination paper three years ago and said that if he were not endorsed he would in no way oppose the Liberal candidate at the elections.

Government Members: What has that got to do with the Bill?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BURROWS: It has got a lot to do with the character of the man who signed the agreement that is embodied in the Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BURROWS: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I was attacked on this matter and this is the first chance I have had to reply. I want to remind them that Pilbeam was attacked as the man who would sign anything yet he is the man on whose signature the Government are acting when they introduce this legislation. I regret that the Treasurer is not in the Chamber. I should like him to answer that one. Strangely enough all his sins have been wiped away. Apparently he has been redeemed by repentance, and now he is to be the Liberal candidate for Rockhampton.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BURROWS: I quite agree with you, I am out of order.

The Bill proposes to pawn the city of Rockhampton for the benefit of the giant octopus of a corporation whose tentacles spread not only throughout Queensland but throughout the whole world. The Government have been dominated by vested interests ever since they assumed office. After three years of office they seem to be getting cheekier and cheekier. Now they are coming in with brazen legislation like this which, at the expense of the ratepayers, gives a tremendous benefit to an organisation whose capital would be sufficient, I suppose, to buy very nearly the whole of the city of Rockhampton.

I realise that I have no hope of counteracting the forces of Vestey's, which are much greater than the voice of the hon. member for Port Curtis, but I am happy to have had the opportunity to voice my opposition to the Bill. I am sorry for the Premier because I do not think he realises what he is doing. I have said before that he would be a very estimable neighbour. It is very regrettable that he and the Minister for Public Works and Local Government should be in any way associated with such a piece of legislation which will not relieve anybody's troubles but throw a heavy burden on the shoulders of many people who do not deserve it.

Mr. GARDNER (Rockhampton) (4.50 p.m.): I do not intend to take up much time. I spoke on the agreement the other day. I am heartily in accord with it. I speak on behalf of the Rockhampton City Council as well as on behalf of the people of Rockhampton. Apparently the report has been closely read by the hon. member for

Port Curtis, who has had a privilege that no other hon. member has had, and it has helped him to state his case. The Rockhampton citizens have assumed a great responsibility in connection with this matter. The Council by a vote of 8 to 3 agreed to it. I compliment the Government on giving Rockhampton the opportunity of reaching their objective. Since 1952 when the Rockhampton Harbour Board said they must have one port they have been agitating to attain that objective. It is evident, as I said the other day, that the promises of Governments to give grants for certain things—this applies particularly to the Federal Government—are not often carried out. The Rockhampton people were sadly disillusioned. This agreement has been entered into by the Rockhampton City Council acting in the interests of the ratepayers. If we are to have a deepwater port we have to give assistance and assume responsibility to reach that objective. It is true that private enterprise came forward and rendered some financial assistance. After hearing remarks of the hon. member for Port Curtis on the introductory stage and again today, one would imagine that we should stand still and not provide for the future. As I said before the committee of inquiry, we are not merely thinking of today but we have our eyes on the future. The Government are also thinking of the future development of Central Queensland.

The Gladstone people also think in this way. I shall quote the following article that appeared in the "Morning Bulletin" of 5 November, 1959. It reads as follows:—

"It is wrong to say there is any hatred between the ports of Gladstone and Rockhampton," said the chairman of the Gladstone Harbour Board (Mr. W. R. Golding), in reply to a welcome last night.

"Mr. Golding said that the case put up by Gladstone to the Central Queensland Ports Inquiry was considered a good one for the development of Gladstone. Rockhampton was a big city and the development of its port did not mean as much as the development of Gladstone. He said that Gladstone people looked upon Rockhampton as the capital of Central Queensland and no doubt Rockhampton looked upon Gladstone with friendly eyes. The people of both centres must be united and fight against the octopus (Brisbane), taking the districts' produce past Central Queensland's doors. There was need to concentrate upon the district's potentialities, Mr. Golding said. He visualised the time when Central Queensland would have hundreds of thousands of people within its borders."

I think that is what the Government thought when they gave us this opportunity to ensure our future development.

The hon. member for Port Curtis exaggerated the position when comparing port rates and dues for Rockhampton and

Gladstone. This is the statement of the Chairman of the Gladstone Harbour Board, which was published in "The Bulletin", Rockhampton, on 30 October, 1959—

"As far back as 1929 the Shell Company (then British Imperial Oil Company), the first to establish a terminal in Central Queensland, skilfully played Gladstone against Port Alma and obtained concessions from Gladstone, which they would not have obtained otherwise.

"In 1950 Caltex Oil (Australia) Pty. Ltd. also by playing Port Alma against Gladstone, drove a hard bargain and the next was the Vacuum Oil Co. Pty. Ltd.

"The final one was B.P. Australia Ltd., which drove the hardest bargain of all.

"The Board would be lucky to get out of it for under £10,000 per acre for reclamation as against £3,600 on which rental to be paid by B.P. was to be based for 9 acres. It could cost the Board in the vicinity of £100,000 to bring B.P. to Gladstone."

That is part of the evidence of the Chairman of the Gladstone Harbour Board before the Queensland Ports Inquiry Committee.

The Rockhampton Harbour Board had a fairly strong opponent apparently in the Gladstone Harbour Board. The Chairman admitted that the oil interests whose contributions are an important factor in the finances of the port drove a hard bargain. The Gladstone Harbour Board was prepared to play with the oil companies and so prevent the development of Port Alma. The charges made by the hon. member for Port Curtis could be reversed against the Gladstone Harbour Board.

The Rockhampton City Council and ratepayers of Rockhampton have obligations and responsibilities under the agreement. The Council backed by the public in a general sense and by the business community is quite willing to accept its responsibility. The agreement has been carefully considered. It is merely a continuation of the broad policy adopted by the Labour Government when the hon. member for Bundaberg was Treasurer. The Council undertook certain obligations in regard to the road to the salt works, and that industry is now being developed on very sound lines. The Labour Government subsidised the scheme and passed special legislation to enable the Rockhampton City Council to participate in it. The Rockhampton City Council is prepared to participate in these schemes for the benefit of the district. Assistance to outside organisations has been rendered by the Council on other occasions. It helped the Livingstone Shire Council with the building of a scenic road and beach improvements. It is prepared to undertake these responsibilities on the ground that development will be of benefit to the Central district. It has faith in the future development and potentiality of Central Queensland,

and hopes that that potentiality will ultimately be realised. Credit must be given to the Council. I think the Government's view is that Central Queensland will become a greater grain producer than the Darling Downs, and in addition that the mineral and pastoral industries, with secondary industries, will play their part in the development of the Central district of this great State.

The hon. member for Port Curtis has criticised the Central Queensland Meat Export Company and the benefits it will get from the agreement, but let me put the other viewpoint. Is it not a fact that Swifts of Gladstone benefited greatly from the development of that port? The Rockhampton agreement will give an opportunity to the Central district to keep the big meat industry in existence in Rockhampton, with great benefit to the economy of Rockhampton. Approximately 1,200 persons are employed in the season at the Rockhampton meatworks. We have our seasonal problems, of course. There is a future ahead of Central Queensland and I think that the agreement entered into will be honoured. I am hopeful in the days that lie ahead that the guarantee to the Rockhampton Harbour Board will be a guarantee and not a subsidy.

Mr. THACKERAY (Keppel) (5.1 p.m.): I did not intend to speak in this debate. However, as a Central Queenslander I must clarify the position on behalf of the hon. member for Fitzroy and myself. There is room for two ports in Central Queensland and they should stand side by side in a spirit of friendship and good neighbourliness for the development of Central Queensland. The individual ports of Gladstone and Port Alma should not fight one against the other. I have not attacked the development of the road to Port Alma because a first-class road to that port is essential for the development of the area. We have the agricultural, industrial and mineral wealth of the district to look after. Central Queensland has to be developed in the interests of the State. When I see statistics relating to the population of Toowoomba and Ipswich and other cities I often wonder why they are growing ahead of Rockhampton. Why are we not able in Rockhampton to keep abreast of the times and increase our population? We need extra industries in Rockhampton. I do not favour the provision relating to 10 per cent. of the people demanding a poll for I think the Government should give the people of Rockhampton a poll without a request signed by 10 per cent. of the ratepayers. However, I bow to the Government's decision.

Mr. Nicklin: It is a provision in the Local Authorities Act.

Mr. THACKERAY: Yes. Then 4,500 people will determine whether a referendum will be held. We cannot oppose a referendum because it is the exercise of the democratic right of the people.

I think I have made the position clear so far as the hon. member for Fitzroy and myself are concerned. If the people are prepared to accept this method of finance I must accept their decision.

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Premier) (5.4 p.m.), in reply: During the rather remarkable speech of the hon. member for Port Curtis he posed the question as to who took "Glad" out of Gladstone. He blamed the Bill. I am sure, after listening to his remarks today that he could be called "Dismal Jimmy". If he talked round Gladstone as he spoke in this House this afternoon it is no wonder there is no "Glad" in Gladstone.

Mr. Burrows: What about the things you said yourself?

Mr. NICKLIN: I am sure that everyone has greater faith in the port of Gladstone than the hon. member who represents it. By the way he speaks in this Chamber he has no faith whatever in the port. It has been proved by the hon. member for Rockhampton that the hon. member for Port Curtis is completely out of touch with the activities of his port. In reply to his question this morning I was able to tell him that the Gladstone Harbour Board had recently raised a loan of £40,000, and was wanting more money. If the Gladstone Harbour Board had no faith in the future of Gladstone, would it be doing that? Certainly not! It has faith in the future of Gladstone, and so have I and everybody else who knows anything about the Central district and Gladstone itself. The only one out of step is the hon. member for Port Curtis. Not only is he out of step with the Gladstone Harbour Board, from the remarks of the hon. member for Keppel, he is also out of step with the members of his own party.

The hon. member for Port Curtis said that he was here fighting for Gladstone. However, he did Gladstone a very bad turn by what he said today. The only conclusion one can reach from his remarks is that Gladstone is finished. I assure him that Gladstone is far from finished! Like the hon. member for Rockhampton, I have great faith in the future of Central Queensland. It has not been developed to the same extent as the rest of Queensland, but it has opportunities for development that someone must inevitably seize upon. When that development comes there will be plenty of business, possibly more than both Port Alma and Gladstone can handle. Where could one find a richer potential for primary products than the area served by them? What has happened in the development of grain-growing in Central Queensland in recent years is really remarkable. And the grain-growing potential of the area has not been even scratched! With development, it will call for vastly expanded port facilities.

The beef industry potential of Central Queensland, too, has not yet been scratched. I believe that the time is not far distant

when, as the result of improved pastures, the meatworks in Central Queensland will be operating for 10 or 11 months of the year. When that happens, both ports will be needed to handle the products. I point out, too, that behind Rockhampton and Gladstone are two of the greatest known coal deposits in the world. They must eventually be developed and their output must go through Port Alma and Gladstone. There is also a likelihood that a large chemical industry will be established in Central Queensland, which has the two essential raw materials—pyrites in Mt. Morgan and salt in the Fitzroy Basin.

Is there any need for the dismal picture of the area that the hon. member for Port Curtis has painted? Definitely not! With the development that must come, there will be room for both Port Alma and Gladstone.

The Bill simply gives the Rockhampton City Council the right to enter into an agreement with the Rockhampton Harbour Board to develop a port for that city. It is the wish of the Council, and I feel that it is also the wish of the people of Rockhampton. If it is not, they are being given the opportunity to say yes or no. The port will not be built at the expense of the Rockhampton ratepayers unless they approve. If they do approve, they are saying in effect that they are prepared to accept the responsibility. I believe that they will accept the responsibility and will be prepared to invest in what I think will be a profitable investment for their city, that is, the development of Port Alma.

Motion (Mr. Nicklin) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 to 4, both inclusive, and schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

Bill, on motion of Mr. Nicklin, by leave, read a third time.

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. J. C. A. PIZZHEY (Isis—Minister for Education) (5.11 p.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

As I said on its introduction, this is a very simple measure. It has one main provision and that is to give the University power to borrow by means of overdraft, affording them an additional means of getting revenue. Far from restricting them it will put us in a position to help them even more than in the past.

We are fortunate compared with other States in this first week of the University year. The Melbourne University had to bar 33 teacher students because there was no place for them in the Arts faculty. The University of Sydney, too, is tremendously over-crowded. So far we have been able to cater for all students without restriction.

We have been fairly generous, increasing the State grant from £464,000 in 1954-1955 to round £830,000 this year. Even so, the needs of the University are tremendous and some budgeting must be carried out. They must know beforehand to what extent the Government can help them. Only about 5 per cent. of their revenue comes from other sources than Federal and State Government grants and students' fees. The Federal grant is a fixed amount. The only real variables are the State Government grant and the students' fees.

We have given the University every possible support and will continue to do so. The last report of the Senate concluded with this statement—

"The picture emerging from this report on the year's activities is that of thriving growth. On all sides there is evidence of expansion. Although the initial thrust has been provided by the Commonwealth Government's acceptance of the Murray Committee's recommendations, we could not have advanced so rapidly but for the splendid co-operation of the State Government and its officers."

I can assure hon. members that we will continue to give all possible support to it, as we do to primary and secondary educational facilities.

Motion (Mr. Pizzey) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

Bill, on motion of Mr. Pizzey, by leave, read a third time.

RACING AND BETTING ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (5.15 p.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

At the introductory stage the hon. member for Kedron raised the matter of the limitation that the Bill imposes on the conduct of country sports meetings, excluding the conduct of those meetings from the cities of the

State. I listened to the argument advanced by the hon. member and have decided since to concede the principle which he advanced. In the committee stage I shall move an amendment to cover the point raised. That is the only variation to the principles of the Bill previously outlined.

Mr. DUGGAN (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) (5.16 p.m.): I thank the Treasurer for accepting the suggestion. The matter was discussed with me and I am very happy that the Treasurer is prepared to accept that submission. On behalf of the hon. member for Kedron I express thanks to the hon. gentleman.

Motion (Mr. Hiley) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clause 1—Short title—as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—New s.55A inserted; Country sports meetings—

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (5.17 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 3, lines 7 to 10, omit sub-paragraph (b)—

'Such place is not within the Metropolitan Area or any Local Authority Area mentioned in paragraph (b) of subsection one of section thirty-six of this Act.'

That is the sub-paragraph that contains the limitation which would have prevented country sports meetings being held in the metropolitan area or in any local authority area mentioned in paragraph (b) of subsection 1 of section 36 of the Act.

Amendment (Mr. Hiley) agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 9, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

THIRD READING

Bill, on motion of Mr. Hiley, by leave, read a third time.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Orders in Council under the State Transport Facilities Acts, 1946 to 1959.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

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

"That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until Tuesday, 29 March, 1960."

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 5.22 p.m.

BILLS ASSENTED TO AT CLOSE OF SESSION

His Excellency the Governor, in the name of Her Majesty, assented to the following Bills on the dates indicated—

(10 March, 1960)—

Insurance Bill;
State Government Insurance Office (Queensland) Bill;
Workers' Compensation Acts Amendment Bill.

(15 March 1960)—

Colonel Daniel Edward Evans (William Parry Memorial Bursary) Bill;
City of Brisbane Market Bill;

Schools of Arts (Winding Up and Transfer) Bill;

Labour and Industry Acts Amendment Bill.

(24 March 1960)—

Limitation Bill;
War Service Land Settlement Acts Amendment Bill;
Anzac Cottages and T.B. Homes Bill;
Rockhampton Harbour Board and the Council of the City of Rockhampton Bill;
University of Queensland Acts Amendment Bill;
Racing and Betting Acts Amendment Bill.

PROROGATION.

Parliament was prorogued by the following Proclamation in *Gazette Extraordinary*, Monday, 28th March, 1960.

A PROCLAMATION by His Excellency Sir HENRY ABEL SMITH, Colonel on the Retired List of the Corps of Household Cavalry, Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, Companion of the Distinguished Service Order, Governor in and over the State of Queensland and its Dependencies, in the Commonwealth of Australia.

[L.S.]

HENRY ABEL SMITH,
Governor.

In pursuance of the power and authority vested in me, I, Sir HENRY ABEL SMITH, the Governor aforesaid, do, by this my Proclamation, Prorogue the Parliament of Queensland to Tuesday, the Tenth day of May, 1960.

Given under my Hand and Seal, at Government House, Brisbane, this Twenty-eighth day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and sixty, and in the ninth year of Her Majesty's reign.

By Command,
FRANK NICKLIN.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!