

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 1961

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Legislative Assembly

FIRST SESSION OF THE THIRTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

(Second Period)

[VOLUME 3]

TUESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY, 1961

Under the provisions of the motion for special adjournment agreed to by the House on 7 December, 1960, the House met at 11 a.m.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. D. E. Nicholson, Murrumba) took the chair.

ASSENT TO BILLS

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

Auctioneers, Real Estate Agents, Debt Collectors and Motor Dealers Acts Amendment Bill.

Scartwater Station Trust Extension Act Amendment Bill.

Sewerage, Water Supply, and Gasfitting Acts Amendment Bill.

Gift Duty Acts Amendment Bill.

Land Tax (Adjustment) Bill.

Pollution of Waters by Oil Bill.

Canals Acts Amendment Bill.

Inspection of Machinery Acts Amendment Bill.

Inspection of Scaffolding Acts Amendment Bill.

Supreme Court Acts Amendment Bill.

District Courts Act Amendment Bill.

Statutory Salaries and Allowances Bill.

Public Service Superannuation Act Amendment Bill.

Main Roads Acts Amendment Bill.

Traffic Acts Amendment Bill.

Factories and Shops Bill.

Justices Acts Amendment Bill.

Stock Acts Amendment Bill.

1961—3Z

Workers' Compensation Acts Amendment Bill (No. 2).

Local Government Acts Amendment Bill.

State Transport Bill.

Health Acts Amendment Bill.

DEATH OF VISCOUNT DUNROSSIL

ADDRESS OF CONDOLENCE

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Premier) (11.4 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

“(1) That the following Address of Condolence to the Viscountess Dunrossil on the death of His Excellency the Right Honourable Viscount Dunrossil, P.C., G.C.M.G., M.C., Q.C., Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, be now adopted by the House:—

‘To the Viscountess Dunrossil,
Government House, Canberra.
Madam,

We, the Members of the Legislature of Queensland, in Parliament assembled, express our sympathy and sorrow with you and your family in the sad bereavement sustained by the death of your distinguished husband, His Excellency the Right Honourable Viscount Dunrossil, P.C., G.C.M.G., M.C., Q.C., Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia.’

“(2) That the Address of Condolence be communicated by Mr. Speaker to the Viscountess Dunrossil.”

Mr. DUGGAN (Toowoomba West—Leader of the Opposition) (11.6 a.m.): On behalf of the Opposition I second the Address of Condolence.

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

DEATH OF MR. ANDREW THOMPSON

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Premier) (11.8 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this State by the late Andrew Thompson, Esquire, a former member of the Parliament of Queensland.

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

I knew the late honourable gentleman very well indeed and I valued his friendship over the many years that he was a resident of the Maroochy district.

The late Mr. Thompson was a typical Queensland man of the land, who followed his calling as a dairyman very successfully over a great period of years. He was a kindly and understanding gentleman, a man who loved his State and his district. He was never happier than when he was giving some public service to the community or doing something to better the lot of his fellow man.

He represented the old Wide Bay electorate in the 20th Parliament of Queensland from 1918 to 1920 as a member of the then Labour Government Party. He was an unassuming man, nevertheless he was a very able representative of the constituency, and, following his Parliamentary term, was very active in public life. He was a chairman and member of the Tiaro Shire Council for a lengthy period, living at Miva for very many years. About 25 years ago he transferred to Dulong, an area just outside Nambour, where he carried on his vocation as a dairy farmer very successfully.

During the time that he lived in the Maroochy district he took a particularly active part in the affairs of the district. For six years he was chairman of the Maroochy Shire Council. He took a very active interest in the affairs of the Queensland Dairymen's Association, holding many offices in that organisation. He was one of the foundation members of the Nambour Co-operative Society, of which he was chairman of directors at the time of his death. He was also associated in one way or other with both the Caboolture and Wide Bay Co-operative Dairying Associations. In fact, he gave great service to the community during his lifetime and was a very highly respected citizen of the Maroochy area.

There are not many survivors of the 20th Parliament, a Parliament that had many difficulties to contend with in the immediate post-First War period. If all the members of that Parliament had served their State and

fellow Queenslanders as did Andrew Thompson, the people would have had the services of particularly public-spirited men.

I extend my deepest sympathy and condolence to his widow and family. Andrew Thompson was indeed a great Queenslandler.

Mr. DUGGAN (Toowoomba West—Leader of the Opposition) (11.10 a.m.): On behalf of the Opposition I should like to associate myself with the motion of condolence moved by the Premier. Unlike the Premier, I did not have the opportunity of knowing the deceased gentleman, and I am therefore at a disadvantage in that I cannot speak with any personal knowledge of his qualities. None of us had an opportunity of assessing his work in this House. As the Premier has pointed out he was in the House from 1918 to 1920 and none of us was a member at that time.

As the Premier has indicated, Mr. Thompson was a member of the Labour Government and served under two very great Labour Premiers, Messrs. Theodore and Ryan. I am grateful to the Premier for the tribute he has paid to a member of the Labour Party.

When I became aware that this motion was to be moved this morning, I tried to ascertain some information about the hon. gentleman's qualities and his attitude to existing problems. I went to the trouble of reading his first speech in the House, on the Financial Statement, and I should like to quote the following passage from it—

"There are many burdens on the tillers of the soil that we have to get rid of, and I come to this House as a working farmer in the hope and belief that the Labour Party is the only party that can relieve the working farmer of the burdens and disadvantages he is suffering under today."

I found also that he was a very ardent advocate of Socialism in this Assembly, and he expressed his belief that that political philosophy was the only effective way to alleviate the difficulties and economic hardships, particularly of the man on the land. As the Premier has said, he served for only one term in this Parliament, but he engaged very actively in the public life of this State. I am informed that he served with distinction on the Tiaro Shire Council and in other public offices enumerated by the Premier. His widow, two sons and a daughter, are in New South Wales. The Opposition links itself with the Premier in the very kindly references to this man who served with credit for a period in this Parliament.

It is a very great honour to be elected as a member of this Assembly and to serve in this House, even for one term. It may be of some solace to his widow and family to know that he did that and that his memory is revered and respected. In this motion of sorrow to his widow, I, as Leader of the Opposition, express our thanks for the very great public service that he gave to the State.

Hon. P. J. R. HILTON (Carnarvon) (11.14 a.m.): I associate my Party with the motion before the House, in paying tribute to the memory of the deceased gentleman. It is obvious from the resume given by the Premier, that the late gentleman made a very effective contribution to the progress of this State, not only in this House, but also in other important spheres of life. Some of the difficulties that the hon. member referred to in his speech away back in 1918-1919, are still with us, and perhaps they will always be with us in a democracy. I do not think we will ever reach the stage when all our problems will be solved. Despite the long lapse of time, from 1918-1920 to the present time, it is fitting that the House should pay tribute to his memory because he aspired to one of the most important positions in the State. It is obvious that he made a real contribution to the welfare of the people of Queensland generally, and particularly those with whom he was associated in primary production. It is proper that we should recognise that now, and I wholeheartedly join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in endorsing their sentiments.

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

ELECTIONS TRIBUNAL

JUDGE FOR 1961

Mr. SPEAKER announced the receipt of a letter from the Honourable the Chief Justice intimating that the Honourable Mr. Justice Stable would be the judge to preside at the sittings of the Elections Tribunal for the year 1961.

PAPER PRINTED DURING RECESS

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to report that the following paper was ordered to be printed and circulated during the recess—

“Report of Committee of Inquiry appointed to Inquire into and Report upon the Salaries of Members of Parliament, Officials in Parliament, and Ministers of the Crown of the State of Queensland.”

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY; MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Premier) (11.17 a.m.): I desire to inform the House that the Honourable H. W. Noble, M.L.A., Minister for Health and Home Affairs, has proceeded overseas on Government business, and that His Excellency the Governor has therefore, by virtue of the provisions of Section 8 of the Officials in Parliament Acts, 1896 to 1959, authorised and empowered the Honourable Otto Ottosen Madsen, Minister for Agriculture and Forestry, to perform and exercise all or any of the duties, powers, and authorities imposed or conferred upon the Honourable

the Minister for Health and Home Affairs by any Act, rule, practice, or ordinance, on and from 3 February, 1961, and until the return to Queensland of the Honourable H. W. Noble.

I lay upon the table of the House a copy of the “Government Gazette Extraordinary” of 2 February, 1961, containing a notification to this effect.

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

PAPERS

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

Report of the Parole Board for the year ended June 30, 1960.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Proclamation under the Public Works Land Resumption Acts, 1906 to 1955.

Proclamation under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Acts, 1938 to 1958.

Order in Council under the Commissions of Inquiry Acts, 1950 to 1954.

Order in Council under the Public Service Acts, 1922 to 1960.

Order in Council under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Acts, 1938 to 1958.

Order in Council under the Tully Falls Hydro-Electric Project Act of 1950.

Proclamation notifying Her Majesty's Assent to the Governor's Salary Acts Amendment Bill of 1960.

Order in Council under the Liquor Acts, 1912 to 1959.

Order in Council under the Labour and Industry Acts, 1946 to 1960.

Regulations under the Traffic Acts, 1949 to 1959.

Regulation under the Apprentices and Minors Acts, 1929 to 1959.

Proclamation under the Companies Acts Amendment Act of 1960.

Proclamation under the Charitable Collections Act of 1952.

Proclamation under the Companies Acts, 1931 to 1960.

Proclamation under the Printers and Newspapers Act of 1953.

Proclamation under the Justices Acts, 1886 to 1960.

Order in Council under the Supreme Court Act of 1921.

Order in Council the Lessees' Relief Acts, 1931 to 1932.

Order in Council under the Purchasers of Homes Relief Acts, 1930 to 1932.

Order in Council under the Financial Emergency Act of 1931.

Order in Council under the Mortgagees and Other Persons Relief Acts, 1931 to 1943.

Order in Council under the Public Curator Acts, 1915 to 1957.

Order in Council under the Companies Acts, 1931 to 1960.

Order in Council under the District Courts Act of 1958.

Order in Council under the Maintenance Orders (Facilities for Enforcement) Acts, 1921 to 1959.

Order in Council under the Reciprocal Enforcement of Judgments Act of 1959.

Order in Council under the Criminal Code.

Order in Council under the Elections Acts, 1915 to 1959.

Order in Council under the Landlord and Tenant Acts, 1948 to 1957.

Regulations under the Bills of Sale and Other Instruments Act of 1955.

Regulations under the Auctioneers, Real Estate Agents, Debt Collectors and Motor Dealers Acts, 1922 to 1960.

Regulations under the Trust Accounts Acts, 1923 to 1959.

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

Order in Council under the Southern Electric Authority of Queensland Acts, 1952 to 1958.

Regulations under the Main Roads Acts, 1920 to 1960.

Proclamations under the Sugar Experiment Stations Acts, 1900 to 1959.

Order in Council under the Abattoirs Acts, 1930 to 1958.

Order in Council under the City of Brisbane Market Act of 1960.

Order in Council under the Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Acts, 1926 to 1957.

Regulations under the Diseases in Plants Acts, 1929 to 1948.

Regulations under the Fruit Marketing Organisation Acts, 1923 to 1956.

Regulations under the Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Acts, 1926 to 1957.

Regulations under the Slaughtering Acts, 1951 to 1958.

Regulations under the Stock Acts, 1915 to 1960.

Orders in Council under the Forestry Act of 1959.

By-laws Nos. 860 to 862 inclusive and Nos. 864 to 867 inclusive under the Railways Acts, 1914 to 1960.

Report of Dumaresq-Barwon Border Rivers Commission for the year ended June 30, 1959.

Report of Dumaresq-Barwon Border Rivers Commission for the year ended June 30, 1960.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT

UNEMPLOYMENT IN QUEENSLAND

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

“Leader of the Opposition,

“Parliament House,

“Brisbane, 20 February, 1961.

“The Honourable D. E. Nicholson, M.L.A.,

“Speaker,

“Legislative Assembly,

“Parliament House,

“Brisbane.

“Dear Mr. Nicholson,

“I beg to inform you that, under the provisions of Standing Order 137, it is my intention to move on Tuesday, February 21,—“That this House do now adjourn.”

“My reasons for moving this motion are that I desire to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the grave and deteriorating unemployment position in Queensland; to give the Parliament an opportunity to debate the matter with the objective of eliciting constructive proposals for relief; and to afford the Government an opportunity of informing the House what positive, practical measures, if any, they propose taking with a view to protecting the livelihood of tens of thousands of our fellow citizens by both providing employment through public works and encouraging greater employment in the private sector of the State economy.

Yours faithfully,

“JOHN E. DUGGAN.”

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

Mr. DUGGAN (Toowoomba West—Leader of the Opposition) (11.49 a.m.): I move—

“That the House do now adjourn.”

It is not with any sense of levity or because we seek to make political capital out of this unfortunate situation that I feel impelled, on behalf of the Opposition and the many thoughtful people outside this House, whether they be employers, managers of companies or employees generally, to draw attention to what is a very regrettable position indeed in the country's economy. I refer, of course, to the growing incidence of unemployment in the State.

I have only 15 minutes at my disposal and I propose to outline, in a general fashion

so that the foundation built by me might be added to by other Opposition speakers, the general position in Queensland and the actions taken by the Government previously in the matter, and, when exercising my right of reply, I intend, if challenged, to give one or two concrete ways in which I think the Government can relieve the position.

This is the third occasion in three years on which the Opposition have moved a direct motion to bring the subject of serious unemployment in Queensland before the Parliament of the State. Attention was drawn to it continually by way of questions from this side of the House and in the last session and we submitted something like 30 questions on the unemployment situation. All that we receive in reply is a rebuke from the Premier of the day that we seek to embarrass the Government. We do not move this motion primarily to embarrass the Government but, if they are embarrassed by it, they deserve the censure of the House because there have been so many contradictions by Government spokesmen on the matter and a unique reluctance on the part of the Government to measure up to the promises they made when they sought the help of the people to form a Government to give effect to their policy.

We have been told from time to time when we have raised the matter that the unemployment in our midst is due to factors beyond the control of the Government or that it is due to an insufficiency of skilled labour or that it is due to droughts or to floods or to inadequate grants from the Commonwealth. Now, of course, the Government shelter behind the defence that the credit squeeze is responsible for it.

I must for the record quote one or two statements made by Government members on this important and tragic situation. The Minister for Labour and Industry, Mr. Morris, speaking on the adjournment of the House in March last, emphasised that everybody knew that the worst months for unemployment were December and January. But these months were never so bad under Labour as they have been under the present Government. For the last two Decembers under Labour—1955 and 1956—the figures of unemployment were 4,208 and 6,658 respectively. From 1957 to 1960 inclusive, they have been 15,722, 14,120, 15,881, and 16,087.

Mr. Pizzey: Are those figures of people receiving unemployment benefits?

Mr. DUGGAN: These are the figures given by the Federal Minister. Let me say right here and now that I am sick to death of this business that goes on when we quote figures released by the Commonwealth authorities. They are uniform throughout the Commonwealth. Possibly I could challenge them in some respects but I have not elected to do so. But they are the figures that we use.

Mr. Pizzey: Do they relate—

Mr. DUGGAN: Let the Minister keep out of this for a moment; I have only 15 minutes in which to speak. If he wants to have a say on the situation he will have his opportunity. I am sick to death of this Government's resorting to subterfuges every time we use figures. The figures are common to both administrations. Therefore I do not want to have this shilly-shallying sort of action by the Government in trying to hide behind a mass of technicalities and using other methods to evade their responsibilities to the people. The situation is shocking.

The average monthly registered unemployed under Labour was 4,343 in 1955 and 6,393 in 1956. Under the present Government the average rose to 10,442 in 1957, 13,160 in 1958, 12,690 in 1959, and 10,814 in 1960.

The 13 February Bulletin of the Minister for Labour and National Service shows that, in terms of percentage of unemployment in relation to the work forces in each State, Queensland is much worse off than the other States.

Queensland's percentage of unemployed is twice that of New South Wales, three times that of Victoria, and almost three times that of South Australia. Even Western Australia and Tasmania are 1.2 per cent. and 1.3 per cent. lower respectively. The Minister's figures are—

	Per cent.
New South Wales	1.6
Victoria	1.1
Queensland	3.3
South Australia	1.3
Western Australia	2.1
Tasmania	2.0

Under the Nicklin-Morris Government Queensland early established itself as the State where there were the least job opportunities. Bulletins of the Minister for Labour and National Service show that save for a few months in the middle of the year, when Western Australia and Tasmania showed greater percentages, Queensland had the unenviable record of the highest percentage of State work force unemployed. There were odd months in 1958 and 1959 when the New South Wales percentage was greater by a fraction of 1 per cent., but in the overall pattern Queensland, under this Government, is the horrible unemployment example of the Commonwealth.

When a similar motion was moved in 1958 the Premier said that we were out to embarrass the Government. I do not care if we embarrass the Government either by the action we take in the House or by mobilising public opinion outside. Indeed, that is being done, and the start is coming from an agreeably unusual quarter. Editorials of the responsible newspapers of the country are being written in very strong language on this matter. Not only are the editors writing strongly, but their editorials

are occupying two and three times the normal editorial space to focus public attention on it. What do we find? When the position deteriorates to the extent that thousands of people who want to work cannot find employment and the matter is raised in the Caucuses of the Commonwealth, according to the Press the matter was so deftly dealt with by the Federal Treasurer that gales of laughter emanated from the party room. Not one responsible Minister has repudiated that statement, which was sufficiently serious to appear in every major newspaper in the Commonwealth. Hundreds and thousands of men who want to work see no solution to their serious personal, financial and economic problem when it is dealt with deftly and with gales of laughter. Nor is it any satisfaction to them to know that in reply to a deputation yesterday the Federal Treasurer said that the unemployment position will be worse before it is better.

Let us see whose responsibility it is. When a State election is pending the Queensland Government say, through the Press, that because of the composition of the Liberal-Country Party Government, these businessmen, who have greater persuasive powers than Labour spokesmen, will engender greater confidence in the economy of the State, and therefore more industries will come here. They say that because of the special way in which they can make their pleas for State grants, these polished business gentlemen will get results from Canberra. But what do we find? By departing from the Hanlon road formula Queensland lost its first major case in its approaches for increased grants. Queensland received £1,500,000 less than what would have been received under the formula laid down by the Labour Government.

When the Opposition moved a similar motion in 1958 the Premier said—

“We have encouraged industry to back us in our efforts, and as a result we are coping with the problem of reducing the number of unemployed in Queensland.”

Mark those words, “we are coping”. But men have been put off in their hundreds from the meatworks. There is a fear in some quarters that unless there is an increase in the price of meat one or two meatworks will not even open this killing season. Five hundred men have been put off from the plywood factories. The sawmills in Queensland are putting men off. There has been a decline in the rate of building activity. Hundreds of men have been put off in the automotive field. Yet the Government shrug their shoulders, and the Premier says that it is futile to make further representations to Canberra. They go onto the hustings and say, “You return us and we will cure the problem of unemployment.” But when they fail dismally to do that they merely shrug their shoulders and say that it is futile to make representations to the people of their own political kidney in Canberra.

Speaking to a similar motion in March, 1958, the Premier said—

“We approached the Loan Council with a case that did get results for this State. As a result of that Loan Council meeting Queensland got the second highest allocation of any State in the Commonwealth. It has never been better in the history of the Loan Council.”

The Premier did not enter the debate on the adjournment motion on unemployment in 1960. In the 1958 debate the Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads said—

“When we came into office in August last the State had reached the top of employment. We have endeavoured to hold that position. No doubt we have had our up periods and at times were down slightly.

“The reason that we have been down for short periods on our employment figure—and the position will be remedied shortly—is because of the lack of plans and specifications. The former Government centralised. We have altered that position.”

They have decentralised, and the number of unemployed now is greater than since the depression period of 1929-32. They talk about thousands of plans and specifications yet we find that in the Forestry Department a number of wages employees are put off and the salaried men have increased during the term of office of this Government—plans, plans; they are all talk, empty verbosity! Those things they have in abundance, whilst the will, desire, knowledge, and capacity to solve this problem are entirely beyond them.

We have heard in the past from the Treasurer about housing but I will not take up time in dealing with his references. At least, in his case I am pleased to see he resisted certain action on the housing position. Other speakers will deal with his remarks. That position is very serious also. The Treasurer knows that the decline in building throughout Australia and in Queensland has been far greater in this December quarter than in any previous December quarter.

That brings me to what the Minister for Labour and Industry had to say in the 1958 debate. Mr Morris said—

“Although we have been the Government for only six months, the hon. the Premier and the Treasurer, owing to their capacity and ability to present a case . . .” mark those words—

“were able not only to convince the Federal authorities but the other State authorities that Queensland had been badly served in years gone by . . . No decent case was presented on behalf of Queensland for many years . . .

By presenting a good case Queensland has received the second highest allocation of any State in Australia.

That money is already being used to provide employment on a short-term basis, but the Government are considering long-term development, and plans for long-term development are many fold."

He goes on to say—

"No other Government have done what we have done to try to overcome seasonal unemployment. Today there is less seasonal unemployment than ever before. Next year the position will be infinitely better again, thanks to good government."

How much arrant nonsense will we hear from these people, running round the country with these platitudinous phrases about what they are doing! It is not a source of satisfaction to the people who elected them. Throughout the economy, from the top management to the humblest employee, there is fear and uncertainty caused by the unsympathetic attitude of the Menzies Government and the ineptitude of the Queensland Government. Mr. Menzies has now gone on his overseas tour to please his flatterers and admirers, leaving these problems to someone else to solve.

It is time that Parliament used its powers. Individual members on the Government side know that what I am saying is perfectly true. All this fancy talk is simply part of the evasive measures taken by the Government from time to time to conceal the true position, but this time it will be of no avail.

There is every justification for the motion. It is not just a matter of recording a message of regret in the newspaper and in "Hansard." I am not a prophet of despair; I am not going to be a knocker in these things at all. (Government laughter.)

It is all very well to laugh and giggle about such things. People come to my home day after day. It is all very well for some hon. members opposite who have two incomes—a private income and their parliamentary income—to laugh about such things. It is all right for Mr. Menzies to go overseas to take part in security talks or talks on the situation in Cuba and leave it to others in his party to try to solve the problems here. What is the use of talking about the potentialities of Australia when 50,000 people registered throughout the Commonwealth, and many more not registered seek gainful employment and it is denied them?

(Time expired.)

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (12.4 p.m.): I support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition and in doing so I should like to register my surprise at the attitude of hon. members on the Government side to a discussion on the tragedy of unemployment in this State, which is the direct result of their policy and that of the Federal Government. The Premier and the Government have the only opportunity to open this question to a full debate. This would indicate a sincere concern but they have not done so. There is a strange similarity between the laughter

emanating from the Federal Caucus as a result of Mr. Holt's reply and the giggles and smug smiles that have emanated from hon. members opposite at the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. They indicate that they have no real sympathy for the unemployed, nor any great appreciation of the difficulties and hardships of the people who are out of work.

We cannot relegate the task to the Commonwealth Government alone. In 1958, when the late Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Wood, raised the subject of increasing unemployment in Queensland, the Premier, the Treasurer, and other Cabinet Ministers attributed it to the drought. They refused to accept the fact that a Labour Government had faced much more serious droughts without unemployment in 1951. In 1959 and again in 1960 when we raised the matter we were told that there was tremendous prosperity in the State.

In 1961 unemployment will be still more rampant and the Government's reply will be another excuse—as it has been during the last three or four years—that it was caused by the credit restrictions imposed by the Commonwealth Government.

We realise that credit restrictions have caused a great number of our problems, but we should like the Premier, the Treasurer and Government members to stand in this Chamber and let the people of Queensland know exactly what they intend to do to overcome them. We on this side, who have not the full assistance of public servants, play our part in endeavouring to alleviate the problems. Our only opportunity is to raise them in the Chamber and make as many suggestions as possible as to how they may be overcome. We intend to be as strongly and vociferously critical as possible in an effort to force the Government to take necessary action.

The credit restrictions have arisen because of the make-and-break financial policy of the Commonwealth Government. This is not the first occasion in which the people of Australia and particularly those of Queensland have suffered from a financial policy forced on them by an inadequate Government. From time to time Government members have put forward arguments that the policy makes for financial security and prosperity. A sudden brake is put on prosperity. The economic surge which comes from time to time is not good for the country, as we realise, but we have to look to the real reason for the greater amount of unemployment in Queensland than in other States of Australia. The position is not peculiar to this year. It arose in 1957, 1958, 1959 and 1960 and it is still with us in 1961. Queensland has suffered from a recurring problem of mass unemployment. What is the cause? It is that the Government have failed to carry out their promise of an expansion of secondary industry in Queensland. It is futile for the Minister for Labour and Industry to tell us and the newspapers,

as he does from time to time, that Queensland is progressing industrially at a far greater rate than South Australia, when the figures do not support his statement. They reveal that Queensland is languishing far behind South Australia in industrial expansion.

Mr. Ramsden: That has been so for 40 years.

Mr. LLOYD: I do not intend to reply to general interjections, but I shall reply to that interjection. From 1946 until 1956 under Labour Governments, Queensland had a recurring annual increase of 10 per cent. in factory expansion and the level of employment, an increase which fell away immediately the present Government came to power. At the present time the figure is not more than 3 or 4 per cent.

South Australia is the best State to compare with Queensland on a population basis. Its population is slightly less than that of Queensland. In December 1959, 43,444 persons were employed in large industrial factories in Queensland. The number increased in 1960, the figure for December being 44,109, or in other words, an increase of 665 employees. The figure for December 1959 for South Australia was 53,614 employees, and for December 1960, 55,782; in other words, an increase in South Australia of 2,168 employees in large industrial factories, as against 665 in Queensland. Despite the fact that the reason for unemployment was the lack of industrial expansion in Queensland, all that has been done has been the establishment of committees throughout the State. The Minister for Labour and Industry on one of his tours overseas went to the United Kingdom. If he had been able to get investments in Queensland and industries to come to Queensland, we would have agreed that his trip was worth while. But then he launched out on a trip to New Zealand, then to Japan and then to Honolulu, all apparently in the interests of the tourist industry. We can see very little that we have received in return for his numerous trips. His sole remedy to overcome unemployment has been the formation of unemployment committees. He has rushed up and down the coastline forming such committees at Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, and other places, transferring the burden of unemployment and the responsibility for it to the people who are not responsible to the electors.

The people of Queensland, the electors of the State, expect immediate action by the Government. They want a full review on this occasion of the unemployment situation in Queensland by the Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Labour and Industry. They expect the Government to tell them what the Government intend to do to cope with this very grave problem. We are entitled to an explanation and the electors of Queensland expect it. We cannot accept the Government's statement that the position is

due entirely to the credit restrictions imposed by the Commonwealth Government, although we realise as much as the Treasurer the effect of them. We also expect them to accept their full responsibility on this very grave and pressing problem. We do not wish to hear the spate of words or see the flourishes to which we have been treated over a number of years. The people of Queensland require action and they expect the State Government to take immediate action to overcome the problem. Queensland is the most decentralised State of the Commonwealth, and, from a study of the unemployment figures, it will be found that Queensland is suffering in all its towns and cities, particularly in the North. I notice that the honourable member for Burdekin is smiling. He should be concerned about this problem. There is much unemployment in Ayr. There are 600 unemployed in that town, with a very small population. In every town we find a consistent pattern of unemployment. The Government have not carried out their responsibilities to the people. There has been a tremendous increase in the construction of high schools in the last year or two and that is essential, but, there is no excuse for a Government that insists on day-labour employees in the Department of Public Works, to rush the work for four to six weeks of the year, when with ordinary working hours the jobs could be spread over a longer period.

(Time expired)

Hon. K. J. MORRIS (Mount Coot-tha—Minister for Labour and Industry) 12.13 p.m.): Both the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy said they desired to deal seriously with this problem. We welcome the opportunity to deal with it, as we do in all other cases. We all admit that the problem of unemployment, whether large or small, is always serious, I stress that it always receives serious attention from the Government. The Leader of the Opposition does not help his case by lashing himself into a hysterical frenzy and exaggerating in many ways. I shall deal with a few of the facts as they are, I shall not twist them as I believe they have been by the two previous speakers. A serious problem, even unemployment, is not helped by wild exaggerations.

An Opposition Member: Nor is it helped by gales of laughter.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MORRIS: There has been some wild exaggeration. Let me repeat one or two statements by the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy. They said, "There is fear and uncertainty throughout the State; there is a feeling of despair throughout the State." That is sheer nonsense. If the speeches of the Leader of the Opposition and his Deputy serve any purpose at all it is only to implant feelings of despair and uncertainty. I assure them, as I assure everyone, that the use of those quite unnecessary words do not help;

rather do they harm. The Leader of the Opposition related his figures to the period from 1957 onwards. He should know, and I am sure he does know, that this grave problem of unemployment is not just a matter of the last two, three or four years. It is a matter of the last 20, 30 or 40 years. I shall proceed to prove that in a few moments. I tell honourable members on the other side of the Chamber that, not only Cabinet, but all honourable members of the Government are concerned. We are constantly concerned about this problem and all honourable members are making their contribution towards its solution.

Let us keep the figures straight for the record. The latest figure that I have, issued by the Government Statistician, deals with January. For January 1961 the number of persons registered for unemployment was 19,387, and the number receiving unemployment benefit payments was 8,510. Let us see if those figures are something new and some symptom that has been suddenly created in the economy of the State. I ask you, Sir, to go back in your mind to 1947. I remind honourable members that that was a period when all homes were short of every conceivable type of goods because they had been unprocurable during the war years and people were purchasing them as widely as they could. In 1947, 14,107 persons in Queensland were registered for employment as against the 19,000-odd today. In 1947, 6,657 were drawing unemployment benefit while today there are 8,510, an increase of somewhat less than 2,000.

Mr. Sherrington: You are not worrying about that?

Mr. MORRIS: I am not saying that that is not important, but the extravagant nonsense to which we have been forced to listen does not help a serious contemplation of the picture. I am afraid that in the few minutes left to me I cannot enlarge on this, but I most certainly will at a later time.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition spoke of an increase of 2,000 people in factory employment in South Australia. He enlarged on it and said how wonderful it is that South Australia has been able to increase its employment by 2,000 whereas Queensland's increase is only 600. Where he gets the figures from I do not know. All I can say is that the figures issued by the Commonwealth Statistician show that in 1957 there were in employment in Queensland 373,200 people; in 1958 there were 382,500; and in 1959 there were 384,900. The last figure available to me or to anybody else is for November, 1960—and these all relate to November because that is the last figure on employment—and it shows that the number rose from 384,900 to 391,000-odd, or an increase of 7,000. If we are going to look at the situation of unemployment, and if we want to try to view the problem as a whole, for Heavens' sake let us look, too, at the situation of employment. The whole picture shows that there has been a greater increase

in employment year by year under the present Government than ever there was under Labour in the history of the State. There is the true picture!

Why are the January figures always bad? Go back over the years even to before the war and you will find exactly the same thing. There are several reasons for it but the main one is that seasonal workers are not working and are drawing unemployment benefits. Moreover, the list of those registered for employment includes the young people who have just left school and who are looking for work. They are selective and I do not blame them. They want the job they think they can adequately handle. I have told the House many times that included in the figures of those registered for employment are University students who, having a long recess, register for work. There are many other factors, but let me deal with the first of those.

Why are people in seasonal industry? They are in it because they want to be in it. I regard this matter as a very important one and it is a problem that has been recognised for many years. Let me quote the words of a man who has been held in high esteem, I think, by all Queenslanders and who has been regarded as one of the best Labour Premiers Queensland has had—the late Hon. W. Forgan Smith. In 1922 he said this—

“In a country such as Queensland, where employment is to a very large extent of a seasonal nature, men are unemployed during certain periods of the year—a fact over which they have no control.”

He added—

“Take for example the situation in any of our large seasonal industries such as the sugar industry and the pastoral industry. We know that the sugar industry requires large numbers of men for from six to seven months of the year and during the remainder of the year little or no work is available for these men, and consequently they are dependent to a very large extent on casual labour.”

I point out that there is still over-employment in certain industries. I have here an extract from the Press of 20 February pointing out that in certain industries there is even now a shortage of labour. In seasonal industries there is a loading in the wages. I wish I could develop that now, but I have not got the time. I have one example here of a slaughterman who worked for 30 weeks in 1960, and received a salary of £1,053—more for 30 weeks' work than the average person gets for 52 weeks. Cane-cutters who worked 23 weeks received an average of £17 a week for the whole year. There is the other side of the picture. Admittedly these people get other work and earn more money, but even if they worked only for 23 weeks they still would be drawing £17 a week for the whole year. Let us recognise these facts.

The Government believe in trying to cure rather than merely alleviate. I have quoted figures to show how industry has developed very rapidly in Queensland in the last three years. Only a few weeks ago I made the announcement about an oil refinery. I shall deal more fully with that later. Last year the Willys jeep organisation commenced operations at Rocklea. They have one factory in Queensland, and four factories and a warehouse in Sydney. I am delighted to tell the House that as a result of negotiations between the Government and the company they are closing their four factories in Sydney and bringing the whole of their plant to Queensland in the course of the next month. It is a tremendous tribute to Queensland that we are getting the whole of that organisation here. That is one instance; there are many others. I shall be releasing a Press statement later in the day.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition laughed at my suggestions about tourism. World statistics show that for every room allocated to tourists, employment is provided for 17 people. They are not my figures. If anybody wants to check on them they appear in the records of the Government of Honolulu. They intend to make a capital expenditure of 50,000,000 dollars in the next five years to extend their tourist industry because they know that the tourist industry provides a great deal of employment.

The Ministers for Agriculture and Forestry, Development, Mines, Main Roads and Electricity, and Public Lands and Irrigation, are working very hard to improve the State's beef industry. Let there be no mistake about it, they will get that improvement. They are making a positive contribution to the long-term solution of the problem of unemployment, rather than a short-term solution. In addition to the many others matters about which I have told the House, through my own department Mr. Gair has been working for several weeks on the development of a campaign to stimulate the buying of Queensland goods. If we can get the co-operation of the people a great deal of employment will be found in the State.

The Leader of the Opposition can make a very positive contribution to the solution of the problem of unemployment. I have a letter here containing details of a Press statement made by a Minister in Western Australia in which he says that the shipping industry in Queensland is almost dying. Why? Because the unions are imposing a ban on an industry that is vital to the State. I shall elaborate on that at some time in the future. But let the Leader of the Opposition, his Deputy and his supporters on the opposite side of the House do something positive. Let them tell the people that we do not want this type of industrial dispute here because it is killing Queensland industry.

(Time expired.)

Hon. P. J. R. HILTON (Carnarvon) (12.30 p.m.): As this is a very important motion I am surprised that the Premier did not take

the initiative in the debate on such a grave matter. He should take the House into his confidence about what has happened and the possibilities of the future in the very grave position that faces not only the workers of Queensland but the people generally. I cannot reconcile any of the remarks of the Minister for Labour and Industry, who led the debate on behalf of the Government, with the very far-reaching statement made recently by the Premier when he placed the full responsibility for the grave position in Queensland at the door of the Federal Government. To some extent I would agree with the Premier, but his saying that the Commonwealth Government must now take full responsibility does not exonerate him or his Government from the responsibility for the improvident budgeting in the State in recent years or their docile manner towards the Commonwealth Government in accepting their dictatorial attitude to the detriment of the people of Queensland. Time does not permit us to deal with all the statistics and other figures relevant to this grave and important matter but some aspects of it come readily to my mind. Firstly, we are supposed to be a civilised and organised society living under and accepting the rule of law. In the industrial sphere, if people do not recognise and obey the rule of law there is a great outcry. Can any intelligent person convince any other intelligent person that what is happening, not only in Queensland but throughout Australia today, is not a gross violation of the rule of law which is supposed to govern us in our highly organised society?

Mr. Morris: You are quite right.

Mr. HILTON: I am glad of that admission from the Minister for Labour and Industry. He says that I am quite right, so let us proceed to examine the causes of this shocking state of affairs, this shocking ineptitude on the part of the Commonwealth Government and on the part of the State Government for acquiescing, causing thousands of honest workmen to be thrown out of employment.

The Minister for Labour and Industry made great play on seasonal unemployment. We know that, in this State particularly, this problem has always to be grappled with, but what about the thousands of people who were regarded as being in permanent employment in the motor-car and other industries and in shops and factories, who have already been thrown to the wolves? In the main, they are family men with commensurate commitments. These men do not come within the category of seasonal employment.

An ominous aspect of the present position is the statement by the Federal Treasurer, reported in today's Press, that things will get worse before getting better. Are we, as a Sovereign Parliament, to accept that? I should have thought that the Premier would initiate a motion in the House

today demanding that the Federal Government, if they are not able to clarify the position themselves or provide necessary remedies that are acceptable to the people, should immediately appoint a competent commission urgently to examine the whole position and to indicate to the people of Australia where we are heading economically and where this ever-increasing problem of unemployment will be arrested.

I think that is at least the first thing we should do as a sovereign Parliament. Admittedly, we are hamstrung to some extent by the present financial setup throughout Australia but, we should draw pointed attention to the disastrous state of affairs existing in Queensland and to the daily worsening of the position. I think the Premier would have the wholehearted support of every member of this House if he demanded the appointment of such a commission to inquire into all phases of the present position, its cause, and where it is taking us.

There can be no argument that the idiotic—pardon the use of the word but it is the only way I can describe it—attitude of the Federal Government in deliberately creating unemployment has not rectified the position in any shape or form. So far as I know, no bank nor any other company in Australia has been guilty of any breach of the law and we all know that, under the present Commonwealth Banking Act, there is power for full control of all banks and there could be full control of all financial institutions if the Federal Government should elect to bring them under control. In 1959, when the latest banking legislation was introduced, it was described as “an Act to regulate banking and for the protection of the currency and public credit of the Commonwealth and for other purposes.” I do not think that has been achieved judging from existing trends. On the one hand, the Reserve Bank may be endeavouring to carry out the obligations imposed on it, but on the other hand, any efforts that institution has made in the past and is making now are nullified by the crass stupidity of the present Federal Government in entirely removing import controls. What is more, they are adamant in that they will not alter that policy irrespective of what might happen.

To sum up, they will continue to allow our overseas funds to be exhausted indefinitely, irrespective of the growth of unemployment throughout Australia, and particularly in Queensland. Thousands of people are going to be thrown to the wolves because the Commonwealth Government will not adopt a realistic and humanitarian attitude to this important matter. That being so, is it not competent and right for this Parliament to voice its unanimous, considered opinion on the subject? It is absurd to think that thousands of men are being thrown to the wolves at a time when urgent developmental works, the undertaking of which would not contribute one iota to inflation, are wait-

ing to be commenced. The Minister for Development, Mines, Main Roads and Electricity has deplored the fact that his very extensive programme has had to be curtailed because of lack of finance. The Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation has made a similar complaint. There is no end to the reproductive and useful work that could be carried out in Queensland if sufficient money was available for it, and it should be made available in the present circumstances to eliminate unemployment.

In the past when we have experienced depressions and recessions, whatever they may be called, economists have told us after the damage has been done the course the ship should have taken, but by and large all economists worthy of the name agree that, when unemployment is increasing and when circumstances arise that hamper employment in private enterprise, it is the bounden duty of the Government to inject into the economy sufficient money to ensure that useful public works will be carried out so that the overall economy of the State can be adjusted. I do not think any intelligent person could quibble at that proposition, and, if there had to be some adjustment in the various industries, why did not the Commonwealth Government and the State Government forcibly draw attention to what has happened in the past and state that, if men have to be transferred from one industry to another, there should be some easing of the position so that the State can undertake works that would lessen the impact of any re-arrangement that had to be made economically.

(Time expired.)

Mr. PILBEAM (Rockhampton South) (12.40 p.m.): I must take part in the debate because Rockhampton has the greatest proportion of unemployment in the State, and the same position has existed for a few years. Gladstone is in the same category.

Mr. Walsh: Not the greatest proportion; the greatest number outside Brisbane.

Mr. PILBEAM: That is so.

Mr. Walsh: Bundaberg has the highest proportion.

Mr. PILBEAM: I should be indifferent to the welfare of my fellow citizens of Rockhampton and the people of Gladstone if I did not give my views.

In Rockhampton we are very conscious of the need to create employment for seasonal workers. We have an excellent committee of which I have the honour to be Chairman, a committee representative of all interests in Rockhampton and Gladstone. Its debates on this very important subject are non-political.

Mr. Thackeray: You know yourself that it fell down around our ears because we could not get them to attend. Tell the truth about it.

Mr. PILBEAM: It has always been well attended.

Mr. Thackeray: It has not.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member will have an opportunity of making a speech.

Mr. PILBEAM: Apart from a few knockers, all sections of the community fully support the cause; so much so that I had a request yesterday from the Trades and Labour Council, an organisation not on my side of the fence politically, asking me to call a special meeting of the committee and to invite the Premier and the Federal Treasurer to attend. It is futile for the Federal Treasurer to come to Queensland to discuss unemployment unless he is given an opportunity to visit the places where large numbers of persons are unemployed, and in Rockhampton he could hear the views of all sections of the community, views that have no political significance. They have to be considered before we can overcome the problem or before we can bring all our knowledge and experience to bear in considering it.

To date the contributions from both sides of the Chamber have been largely political. I appreciated the remarks of the Leader of the Queensland Labour Party. He gave us something of a positive nature in asking for the appointment of a Commission.

I am bound to deal with the position in Rockhampton and Gladstone as I see it. It is true that unemployment is largely of a seasonal nature, and I am honest enough to say that in normal years it exists for only two or three months of the year. Many employees, as the Deputy Premier has pointed out, seek that avenue of employment because they earn more in the normal season of nine or 10 months than they would in 12 months as employees, say, of the Rockhampton City Council. I make no great appeal for the seasonal workers in a normal year, but because this year is so bad I am making this strong appeal. It must be admitted that the season last year was not good for Rockhampton, and Gladstone has had a very bad season.

Mr. Thackeray: You predicted a rosy future for Rockhampton the other day.

Mr. PILBEAM: I still predict it, despite the cries. We will not overcome the problem by political bickering, but only by getting together and working out some constructive plan to give these unemployed people, and seasonal workers, a job in a bad year. The Federal Government, the State Government, and the local authority concerned should combine when there is an extraordinary situation and work out a formula. It has been suggested by the Rockhampton City Council that the Federal Government should pay 50 per cent., the State Government 25 per cent., and the local authority 25 per cent., for the cost of works that would benefit the local authority area. I see nothing wrong with such a formula.

Mr. Hanlon: The Government take no notice of your formulas.

Mr. PILBEAM: It depends who is listening.

This suggestion should be considered. The men drawing unemployment benefits want a full-time wage. If they are unemployed they draw their sustenance and the Commonwealth has to pay the equivalent of the 50 per cent. whether they like it or not. The State Government should be sufficiently sympathetic to pay their share, which would be very little different from the normal rate of subsidy.

Mr. Duggan: Didn't you say on T.V. that we had a Government of back benchers?

Mr. PILBEAM: I am not talking about that now. Let us be sufficiently interested in unemployment not to make a political football of it.

I am talking about the suffering of my fellow-citizens in Rockhampton and Gladstone. We want to do something positive, but hon. members opposite do not want it. I say to the Deputy Premier and every other hon. member in the House that this should be done because situations arise that we cannot anticipate. We have droughts and floods, but if we have a formula to meet them we can say to the State Government, "We have a couple of hundred men to employ. The Rockhampton City Council has so many thousand pounds, the State Government will put in so much, and the Commonwealth Government will put in so much, and we can tackle a difficult situation." In a long-range approach, we have to look for more industry and developmental projects. I feel sure that both sides of the House will agree with me on that. We want immediate action in times of unexpected disaster and this is the contribution I offer towards a solution. If the Premier will be kind enough to consider my request on behalf of the All-Sections-Committee in Rockhampton he may be able to arrange for the Commonwealth Treasurer to visit Rockhampton while he is in Queensland. I feel sure that he would be very well received by the people of Rockhampton.

Mr. WALLACE (Cairns) (12.46 p.m.): Firstly, I desire to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this matter forward, and for the manner in which he introduced it. Despite the accusations of the Deputy Premier, the Leader of the Opposition has placed the public spotlight on the unemployment position in Queensland.

Unemployment at any time is a serious matter. Judging from the faces of those on the Government benches when my leader brought it forward, I suggest that there are not many Government members who have any idea of how serious the position is, or that it is serious at all. The Premier regards it very seriously; he has said there were approximately 20,000 unemployed in Queensland. I suggest that the number is

nearer 30,000, or in the high twenty-thousands. The Deputy Premier implied that his figures were correct, and that no-one else could be correct. I suggest that it is not possible for hon. members of this House to get from statistics a true assessment of the number of unemployed. Quite recently and over a number of months, members of the unemployed population of Cairns and district have been receiving a direction from the Director of Social Services advising them that they are not entitled to social service benefits because under the Act they are not deemed to be bona-fide unemployed members of the community. That creates a serious problem and poses the question: just when does a person become a bona-fide unemployed member of the community?

I suggest, too, that, though the problem of unemployment is State-wide, some hon. members will intimate to the public at large that the greatest proportion of the unemployed in the State lies in their own area. I do not suggest that the greatest proportion lies in Cairns, but the unemployment position in the Cairns district has never been as bad in the last 30 years as it is today. Not only is it serious but it has become desperate for very many of the unemployed workers in the area. Never in the history of Cairns over the last 30 years have there been so many people knocking at the door for a hand-out. The hon. member for Cook will know that, and the hon. member for Tablelands and the hon. member for Mulgrave, if they had their finger on the pulse, would know it, too. Because of that, I am here to tell the people of Queensland, and the people of the Far North in particular, that in my opinion the Government have not accepted their responsibility. The Premier, while admitting that there is mass unemployment in the State, has thrown the onus of solving the problem onto the shoulders of the Federal Government. I am one of those who believe that, having accepted a responsibility as the leader of the Government in Queensland, he has the first responsibility. The problem is his to solve. He must of necessity be the first to do something about working towards a solution.

Most of what has been said by hon. members opposite this morning has been in keeping with a statement made by the President of the Chamber of Commerce in Cairns as reported in "The Cairns Post" of 17 February. In a prepared statement he said that "the chamber was concerned over unfounded and highly exaggerated loose talk and rumours that progress in Cairns and district was at a standstill and that the city, as compared with other Queensland country cities, was falling behind." The suggestions are completely true and the people of Cairns are quickly realising that, because of the number of unemployed in Cairns, the economic state of affairs there is deteriorating very rapidly. Those who would know that best are the hundreds of unemployed in the district. It is idle for anybody to suggest

that there is not a great number of unemployed there. The official figures show that there are about 1,500 unemployed in Cairns and district. This morning I have heard from my home that there are further sackings from the Railway Department. With dismissals from mills and other places, the figure will soon be in the region of 3,000 or more unless positive action is taken. Sawmills and ply mills are closing down not because the proprietors want to close down but because of action taken by a Government of the same colour as this Government. The Federal Government have allowed certain things to happen and the great timber industry of Queensland is suffering very badly. One of the very bad features is that those who have been in what they regarded as secure employment, some of them for 20 years, are now losing their jobs. Hon. members opposite contend that only temporary employees of the Government have been dismissed. It is true that some of them have been temporary employees for five, six, seven years or more. When does one graduate from being a temporary employee in any industry?

It has been said that there is a shortage of labour. There is no shortage of labour. While the members of this Government on the election hustings promised that there would be more jobs than men, it is easy to see that there are no jobs for some and that no new industries are going to that very important part of Queensland where it is vital that something be done to retain the population. In a question of which I gave notice this morning, and previously in the House, I referred to the value of that part of Queensland to the rest of Australia's remaining an integral section of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Many people are leaving that part of the State in search of work elsewhere—even going interstate. If something is not done very soon to bring industry to that part of Queensland the area will be left open to any invader. That could happen at any tick of the clock. I do not want to be a pessimist, but international affairs are such that if we are not prepared to do something for ourselves, and develop our own country, somebody else will try to take it over.

I can speak with some authority on the subject of unemployment in Cairns because I am in close touch with the people, particularly the unemployed. Every day people come to my house to see what I can do to get jobs for them or their sons and daughters. I can do nothing. The Government have not lived up to their obligations, and they have no intention of doing so.

(Time expired.)

Mr. GILMORE (Tablelands) (12.57 p.m.): The subject matter being ventilated is a hardy annual which the Labour Party bring up in season and out of season to gain popularity for their cause, a cause that they have partly destroyed because of their association with the Communist Party. Once again they

are endeavouring to gain the sympathy of the people by their talk of unemployment. We are all very conscious of the way in which they held power in Queensland over the years by fear. This is another fear approach.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Hon. members on my left, the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader were given adequate time to speak, and were allowed to make their speeches without interruption. I ask hon. members on my left to give hon. members of the Government Party the same opportunity.

Mr. GILMORE: It is true that we have unemployed in Queensland; no-one can deny that. It is most unfortunate, but it would appear that the problem is in two parts. Firstly we have Queensland's normal seasonal unemployment. The State experienced a period of drought and as this was excellent road-making weather the Department of Main Roads was able to proceed with its work and spend its allocation before the wet season started.

Because of the drought farmers and graziers have had insufficient money to employ people, which in turn has led to additional seasonal unemployment. Owing to the Commonwealth Government's policy of shifting the labour force from one industry to another we are given to understand that in the process some unemployment will occur. Of course, that is occurring in the motor industry to a very marked degree.

As I say, the Commonwealth Government are endeavouring to make reports available distinguishing between industries that are believed to be not quite essential at the moment and those able to produce export goods that can be used to increase our overseas balances. Whether they have done the right thing or the wrong has not as yet been proved. We cannot expect results overnight. I firmly believe that in time the action taken will pay very big dividends.

When the Little Horror Budget was introduced the Labour Party claimed it would destroy the economy of this country but we have lived to see even the Labour Party applaud Sir Arthur Fadden's action. I should say, though, that I believe a democratic Government should govern in the interests of those who elect them, and not place too much reliance on economists. If one wants to get a business or a nation into trouble one has only to obtain the services of an economist. They seem able to achieve that result more effectively and scientifically than anyone else.

Admittedly, two pools of unemployment do exist. This Government, of which I am proud to be a member, has scraped the barrel to provide employment. I cite as an example the work being done on the Barron Falls scheme. Over £10,000,000 is being spent there on the production of electricity.

Mr. Wallace: How many North Queenslanders are employed there?

Mr. GILMORE: I have not the figures, but no doubt the employment is considerable. Even though the immediate, direct employment is not of all North Queenslanders the indirect benefits are considerable. That money is being expended in North Queensland and ultimate results will be of great benefit to the North.

The work on the Bruce Highway to Cairns is being pushed on. Considerable sums of money are being spent to complete the road, uniting the south and the north by a strip of bitumen. That will bring a considerable number of tourists to the North. I was surprised this morning to hear the Minister in charge of tourism state that for every room occupied by a tourist 17 persons were employed.

An Opposition Member interjected.

Mr. GILMORE: That was the figure he quoted. Perhaps in the hon. member's attempt to create fear he will use anything that he feels will benefit him. The Labour Party would have been better employed in cleansing their own house rather than initiating this discussion. Had they, in their wisdom, kept the Communists out of the Transport Unions, particularly the waterside workers, we would have had shipping on our coast today. The wharf lumpers are responsible for destroying the sea transport industries on our coast, aided and abetted by the Labour Party, members of which appear on every platform and on unity tickets with them. They have done everything possible to keep Communism alive in this country and then they come here and initiate this discussion. They should have been ashamed to associate with men who have driven the shipping off our coast.

Mr. COBURN (Burdekin) (2.21 p.m.): This subject of unemployment, particularly in those areas where there are large numbers of seasonal workers employed for a portion of the year only, has become more or less a hardy annual. I represent one of those districts in which are three sugar mills employing a large number of men during the crushing season and then laying them off for periods during what we commonly know as the slack season. And so we have an annual recurrence of unemployment.

Several factors in recent years have contributed to an aggravation of the unemployment position. The sugar mills have become much more efficient by the introduction of more modern and up-to-date machinery and the introduction of certain devices and certain methods of handling their product, which were not in evidence previously, and because of those things they are able to produce their allocated mill peak now in a much shorter period than previously. That means that progressively the crushing season

in all sugar areas has become much shorter than it used to be, with a much longer slack period.

While the process of making these mills more efficient was in operation, during the slack period it was necessary to carry out a very large reconstruction programme. That went on for several years and so there was work available during those slack periods that is not available today because of the completion of that reconstruction programme.

The introduction of bulk handling of sugar was responsible for the displacement of large numbers of men who for years had gained their livelihood in what we call sugar rooms. Men were engaged in weighing the bagged sugar, sewing the bags, stacking them into great heaps, loading them from the heaps into the trucks and then, when they reached the wharves, loading them from the trucks into the holds of the ships. That method of sugar handling has now been displaced by bulk handling. The sugar runs through large tubes straight into the trucks. It is taken away to the bulk-handling facilities in Townsville and Mackay. The bottoms of the trucks are opened and the sugar falls into great bins from which it is taken straight to the ship. That method, of course, has meant a great reduction in the number of men required now compared with the number required in previous times.

The same picture is found when we go onto the farms themselves. Farmers, during the last 10 years, have introduced up-to-date and modern machinery that can do the work in a much shorter time than the type of machinery previously used. Further than that, sugar experiment stations have through experimental work produced varieties of cane that yield a much greater tonnage to the acre and a much sweeter type of cane than was formerly grown, which means that the sugar mills now reach their peak of sugar at a much earlier stage than they did when the sugar content of the cane was not as high as it has been in the last few years.

Those are only contributing factors and they do not obviate or alleviate in any way the suffering that results from men being unemployed. The hon. member for Rockhampton South claimed that he was not so much concerned with seasonal workers because they were granted a loading on their wages and earned a substantial sum of money during periods when they were employed. But there is another aspect to that matter which we as members of Parliament should be very concerned about, and that is that we can develop this country only if we fully utilise the work force available to us. We must not have hundreds of men idle for long periods each year contributing nothing to the development of the country that is crying out for development. That is a very serious aspect.

Mr. Duggan: If they had continuity of employment there would not be a loading for seasonal work.

Mr. COBURN: There would be no need for it.

As it affects my district very considerably, I took up the matter with the Minister for Labour and Industry, and he very courteously went into the representations I made to him. He quoted to me certain figures about the unemployment position with the object of proving to me that it was no worse now, that it was a little better in fact, than it was at a comparable stage last year. On 30 December, 1960, he said there were 682 unemployed in the Ayr district. The Ayr district is the Ayr employment district which includes Bowen, Home Hill, Ayr and Proserpine. On 1 January, 1960, there were 775. He took that as an improvement. At the same time, in December 1960, 461 were receiving unemployment benefits and on 1 January, 1960, it was 379. If those figures are taken as justification for being complacent, there is something wrong with our thinking. If we do not do something now this situation will recur interminably. There is nothing like striking now and taking some corrective action to avoid a repetition of our past experiences. It is a disgrace to have 775 men unemployed in the Ayr district in a State that is virile, richly endowed, and crying out for development. It is our duty to devise means to correct the position.

The hon. member for Rockhampton South proposed a constructive plan this morning which is identical with the one I proposed to the Minister for Labour and Industry in 1959, that the Commonwealth and State Governments work in co-operation with the local authorities and make money available so that work is ready to be done as soon as these periods occur. We know they will occur because they recur at the same time every year and there are approximately the same number of men unemployed. We know almost exactly how many men we have to provide for. Each local authority can be asked to submit a programme of work which could be submitted at the beginning of the year for the following slack season, and the money could be made available, as the hon. member for Rockhampton South proposed, 50 per cent. from the Commonwealth Government, 25 per cent. from the State Government and 25 per cent. from the local authority. Work would be done in the districts that would not be carried out under the ordinary programmes of the local authorities and would be of great advantage to the people in the different local areas.

In addition to the seasonal unemployment, new factors have been introduced that have considerably aggravated the unemployment figures. Our whole criticism for the introduction of these factors must be levelled at the Commonwealth Government. They have introduced credit restrictions and imposed

higher sales tax on motor vehicles to correct our overseas balances. We realise that we must live within our means. It is much the same as our domestic finance. If we are spending 30s. a week at home and getting only £1 a week, it is not going to be long before we find ourselves in difficulties.

(Time expired.)

Mr. NEWTON (Belmont) (2.31 p.m.): I rise to support the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition and hon. members on this side of the House, and other organisations, particularly the trade union movement. I do so because the trade union movement, next to the Government, would be the best avenue for getting the correct figures on unemployment. In every provincial city there are sub-branches of the various unions, and in every workshop there are shop representatives and job delegates so the trade union movement must have a pretty clear knowledge of the unemployment position in the State.

This morning we heard the Deputy Premier defend the Government on the unemployment position and he accused the Leader of the Opposition of exaggerating and disseminating a feeling of despair. Surely there can be no exaggeration on the figures I have seen. I have heard many figures quoted this morning. We were told there were somewhere in the vicinity of 20,000 registered unemployed people at the end of January. That is of vital concern to hon. members on this side of the House and must be of concern to hon. members on the other side of the House, too. The Deputy Premier held up a paper clipping. He did not tell us very much about it, or where the episode took place, but I think it refers to the meat industry where they recently called for labour and could not get it.

Let us go back to the position that existed in December and January. Over Christmas in the Brisbane Abattoirs—and I am not talking about the big meatworks now—they got down to as low as a six-butcher gang Seniority went back to somewhere about 1950. Those with seniority dating back to 1950 received three days' work a week while those with less received none. Only now is it picking up. The fact is that men were unemployed for some weeks and that must have a serious effect on family life, the ability to pay rent, and so on.

I can speak of my own electorate, which includes three of the biggest Housing Commission rental estates in the metropolitan area. If the bread-winner is unemployed, it is to be hoped that some other member of the family can find work. But in those areas there is no work whatever for youths aged between 14 and 16 years. I should like to have somebody present figures of the number of youths unemployed between the ages of 14 and 16 in Queensland because I do not think there is a true record of it kept anywhere yet we talk about child delinquency. Is it not the very start of

child delinquency if youths who leave school cannot find employment to keep themselves occupied and to bring home a reasonable weekly wage, and cannot go out and do what others are doing in industry? The most shocking state of affairs I have encountered this year—and I take it other hon. members have had a similar experience—is that I have had coming to me girls and boys with a junior pass who have told me that they cannot get a job. I have tried every avenue I know, including the State Public Service and the Brisbane City Council. Is it not a shocking state of affairs that girls and boys with a junior pass have to register with an unemployment bureau to collect the dole? When we are talking about unemployment let us start with how it affects youths, people with a good educational standard, and family life generally. If the breadwinner is out of work, let us hope we can help the young people bring in some income into the home.

The most serious aspect of the matter is that this has been going on for 2½ months. That cannot be denied. The Deputy Premier this morning told us that he constantly gets reports on the figures of unemployment in Queensland yet it is 10 weeks before any attempt is made to correct the position.

One aspect of the Government's attitude that has concerned me greatly in the short time I have been in the House is that whenever there is a dispute, even one involving only 40 men, the big squeal is: what about production and loss of man-hours? The same must apply to unemployment. If 20,000 people are unemployed in Queensland at present—and that is the Commonwealth Statistician's figure—is not the loss of production and man-hours of some concern to the Government? It must be. It cannot be of concern only when there is a dispute. If that is so they are not fair dinkum. I suggest they must be concerned with the present unemployment position. When disputes have arisen the Government have never hesitated to declare a state of emergency. If the present Federal Government's squeeze continues, the position in Queensland will deteriorate further. Nearly every small builder in the State has been told to reduce his overdraft by a certain time. Most of them have been given till the end of March. Already some have come to see me as a member of Parliament and because I belong to the building industry and have said, "If that is so we will have to dismiss our employees." And that is a fact. The Minister for Public Works and Local Government would tell hon. members if he had time to speak today that he had no trouble in December last in getting the number of employees he required to carry out his programme of works over the Christmas period. That was true not only of the building industry but of all industries and shops and factories. With the Christmas close-down there was a reduction in staff. What is the reason for it? It is that big

business is going to make sure by retrenchment that it will at least be able to keep up its production profits as expected by the shareholders and also pay the dividends it paid in the past.

Now somebody says the whole situation will be relieved somewhere in April. If it is, it will be some time in July or August next year before industry in Queensland returns to the progress that was being made in November last. I have seen these things happen before, and that is how long it takes. I have travelled around the State a good deal so I know what I am talking about. We know what happened previously when the Labour Party was in office. The present Government did it in their last term, but in their present term they have been finding the weather a bit heavy for finance. In the past, when seasonal work ceased, there was money available to carry out public works between January and June, which relieved unemployment. Most of the seasonal work is available between June and December. I have heard Ministers say that they could not get men for their various departments at that time of the year. The answer must be that we have a look at the present method the Government have adopted and see whether we can get over this difficult period between January and June each year.

(Time expired.)

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Chatsworth—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (2.40 p.m.): It would be quite wrong for any hon. member to imagine that the Government treat unemployment in the State as other than serious. Some of the things I am about to say, I think, at least will give a measure of just how seriously we regard the matter. At the outset let me say that I lived through the depression of 1929-31, and the one thing that no civilised community can allow itself to do is to so scare and frighten its people that the essential ingredient for a depression comes into being. It is true that basically a depression depends on an economic spasm of a reduction in demand, but when a real depression occurs it becomes augmented by a fear complex which occurs in the minds of people, and it makes people who have spending capacity dry up and gum up their resources because they are frightened.

Mr. Coburn: It is unfortunate that the Federal Government's policy is such that it gives the people the right to do that.

Mr. HILEY: Maybe, but the responsibility on us is to see that in examining this problem today we are careful that we do nothing to add to the fear complex in the minds of the people. If we do that we are merely succeeding in making the impact of something that is bad, only infinitely worse.

Mr. Walsh: On the other hand, don't you agree that it is wrong to paint a false picture of prosperity?

Mr. HILEY: I quite agree.

It is perfectly clear that although it was not the general pattern all over Australia, a situation had been allowed to develop up to the end of the third quarter of last year, where in many parts of Australia there was in fact an over-use of resources. I am quite critical of the fact that tendency was allowed to go unchecked as long as it was. I think I can draw an analogy with the man driving a motor-car up to a dangerous intersection. He should not put his foot on the accelerator right until he is almost at the intersection, but some time before the intersection he should apply the brake lightly before he reaches the danger point to slow the pace of the vehicle. Let me carry that analogy through. What is happening in Australia is similar to what happens with the motorist who charges up to a dangerous intersection. He puts his foot on the brake violently, there is a howl of tortured brakes and a smell of burnt rubber. Quite plainly I say that without any shadow of doubt there should have been a much easier repression applied much earlier, and it would have saved this acute spasm we are going through at the moment.

The very first thing the Premier and I did after measuring up how the matter could be approached, was to point out to the Federal Government that while there could be an overall Australian position, the overall Australian position did not fairly reflect the New South Wales position separately, the Victorian position separately, the Queensland position separately, or the separate position of the other States. Indeed, in their statement the Federal Government made it plain that there was evidence of over-employment in New South Wales and Victoria. They confessed that at the same time as there was over-employment in those two States there were still signs of under-employment in the other four. Consequently our presentation to the Federal Government was, "You cannot apply an average correction to the people who are sick and to the people who are well." When discussing this matter at the Loan Council the Premier of Western Australia put it very aptly when he said to the Federal Treasurer, "Western Australia is not sick but we have to take the same medicine as the one who is." I thought that was a very apt way of expressing it. Consequently our presentation to the Federal Treasurer has been that there is a strong case for the selective application of this squeeze so that it bears more heavily on the States where there was over-employment, and less heavily on the States where there was still under-employment. It was the Premier's hope, and mine, that we would have been in a position to make an announcement before today, but before the week is out there will be an announcement of special aid for one of the great activities of the State. I think next week there will be a further announcement of special aid designed to assist the building industry in this State. Both of those measures will come as a result of the case we put up for the selective application of this squeeze.

We think it is wrong to apply a general squeeze when there is a surge of over-activity in some States and some under-activity in others. That point has, I think, been accepted and I am hoping that possibly within the next day, in the one case, and certainly next week, in the other, an announcement will be made that will be of great comfort to every citizen of Queensland.

Mr. Coburn: Do you think that, under the Federal Constitution, one State can be discriminated against?

Mr. HILEY: I think the hon. member is well aware of the Snowy Mountains scheme, the Kimberley scheme and others that have been carried out in different parts of Australia.

Mr. Coburn: The attention of the Commonwealth Government should be directed to that.

Mr. HILEY: They have been let know. All I can say is that I am hopeful that the drought will be broken.

The next thing we put up, as we did in the two previous years with success, was the question of special relief for local authorities. In this, both the Premier and I were somewhat disappointed. We got in touch with every local authority in the State where there was evidence of unemployment and asked them to submit a list of works. All we were able to take to the Loan Council, after collecting from every local authority, was a miserable £625,000, to which we offered to add something over £200,000 by way of subsidy. That was the best we could command in claims for the whole of the local bodies of Queensland.

Mr. Houghton interjected.

Mr. HILEY: You put some up.

Mr. Houghton: About a quarter of a million pounds.

Mr. HILEY: £40,000 was all I got from you. That is all you put up and you will not be able to use all the allocation you have for this year.

Mr. Houston: How much for the Brisbane City Council?

Mr. HILEY: They put up quite a figure. I forget the exact amount, but there are grave doubts that they will use the allocation they presently have. I feel that this year the Brisbane City Council will fall down pretty badly on the present allocation.

We put up a case, unfortunately together with a case put up by New South Wales. They asked for £5,000,000 but they were prepared to settle for £3,000,000. They told the Loan Council that in that State they already had over-employment, that it was not to relieve unemployment at all. New South Wales asked for that amount because they had so badly managed their spending programme that they had spent their 12-months

allocation in eight months. They wanted it simply because they had flown in the face of the whole question of loan allocations and had mismanaged the allocation given to them.

It was in the light of that that our Premier had to put up a case for £625,000 and I regret to say that both applications were commonly discarded and refused by the Loan Council.

In relation to those two steps, the Premier will give more detail later. We are revising our loan resources here. We are cutting out the purchase of plant in some cases where the labour content is not high and we will be organising, starting from next week, work in forestry where we already have construction camps, mess arrangements and plant available and where the whole of the money will go in labour content. The Premier will give hon. members the details of what is expected to be available there.

In addition to that I remind hon. members that we have already fully used the resources available to us. In the case of roads and housing the Government are prepared to over-use its resources for this year and allow the Main Roads Fund and the Queensland Housing Commission Fund to go into debit, if necessary, rather than cut down on our activities.

I informed hon. members what we have done to re-allocate the money to local authorities in this financial year. We have already started to re-allocate where there is the faintest doubt that a local authority will be able to proceed with the job. The most noticeable instance is that of Rockhampton, where it is clear that the road to the wharf would not start in this financial year. We have acceded to the request of the Rockhampton Council to the tune of some £30,000 to £40,000 re-diverted from where it would not be used this year to providing kerbing and channelling. That will be put in hand immediately. That sort of thing is going on all the time. We are starting to ask some of the local authorities to show how the money is going to be used.

(Time expired.)

Mr. THACKERAY (Rockhampton North) (2.51 p.m.): I rise to support the Leader of the Opposition. Rockhampton has the highest unemployment of all the provincial cities in Queensland. The people of the area are the forgotten legion as far as this Government are concerned. When the Government came into office in 1957 they painted a very rosy picture about development that would be undertaken in Central Queensland. I am very sorry the Minister who is always tripping around is not present in the Chamber this afternoon. He told the people of Queensland that he had a five-year plan for the development of Queensland with particular emphasis on the development of Central Queensland.

Mr. Hanlon: How many years ago was that?

Mr. THACKERAY: In 1957. He said he was working like a nigger to complete plans for development of Central Queensland, but nothing has been heard about the matter since. Cabinet members went to Central Queensland and made a number of rash promises along the same lines. The Premier spoke about a fertilizer works, but that has now been forgotten. What happened about the cement works in Rockhampton? The Government, instead of assisting a public company in Rockhampton to develop a cement works there, assisted the North Queensland Cement Company and Queensland Cement and Lime Company to establish a distributing agency for cement in Rockhampton. It will only be a bulk crushing plant for cement. We had other promises about the Fathom Fishing Industry with a paid-up capital of £250,000. Nothing more has been heard about that.

The Rockhampton unemployment figure of 1,178 is very high. The Government have completely forgotten about the development of the area. They painted a rosy picture and told the electors of Central Queensland what they were going to do merely for the purpose of winning the seat and ensuring the election of the hon. member for Rockhampton South. I say without fear of contradiction that if there is one knocker of Central Queensland it is the Mayor of Rockhampton, the hon. member for Rockhampton South. He is responsible for Rockhampton drifting from its position of second city to that of fifth city of the State. If ever there has been a knocker in this House, it is the hon. member for Rockhampton South.

In an effort to overcome unemployment in Central Queensland a committee was formed to deal with the matter. The Mayor was chairman and I was secretary. The first three or four meetings were well attended by all representatives, but the meetings are now completely political. A committee with Liberals on the one side and Labour representatives on the other cannot be said to be other than political. It was a matter of expediency for the Liberal Party. It suited that party because it was in a jam and it wanted the Labour boys to pull it out of the jam. The committee is certainly political. As I have said, the first three or four meetings were well attended but then the attendance dwindled. Even the Mayor of Gladstone, Alderman O'Malley, did not attend one meeting, although I think an apology was sent on his behalf and a representative attended. For the last two or three meetings I was the only one who attended, along with a representative of "The Morning Bulletin."

Mr. Pilbeam interjected.

Mr. THACKERAY: The hon. member has two jobs and cannot do them both.

The Minister for Labour and Industry also set up an Unemployment Advisory Committee. One of the leading members was

Mr. Lex Dunne. He has now resigned from it because of the way Central Queensland has been neglected, and because of the Government's failure to overcome the unemployment position. He is Managing Director of "The Morning Bulletin" and President of the Rockhampton Chamber of Commerce. He is a very influential man and has made a number of statements about the Government's treatment of Central Queensland. He went to the trouble of having special blocks printed, blocks depicting the position in Central Queensland. One of them bears the caption, "Let us milk our own cow." Another shows that Central Queensland is the forgotten area of the State, forgotten, that is, by the Queen Street cow cocky government. Another depicts the Brisbane octopus and its stranglehold on the Callide coalfield and Port Alma. Another shows a queue of unemployed workers going to the Commonwealth Employment Service office. It reads, "Without a major powerhouse this could be Central Queensland's chief industry."

In spite of all these things Government members chatter and laugh and do nothing about the development of Central Queensland.

We have heard statements about seasonal workers, but what the Deputy Premier did not say there is a move afoot to put workers at Lakes Creek under Federal rather than State awards and so reduce their earnings by about £15 per week. Hundreds of meat workers in Rockhampton are looking for permanent employment, as the Mayor of Rockhampton will know. The Rockhampton City Council advertised one position and there were 35 applicants for it.

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Townsville North wishes to speak on the unemployment position at Townsville I will resume my seat on account of the time limit set for this debate.

Mr. TUCKER (Townsville North) (2.58 p.m.): I heartily endorse the sentiments expressed by my Leader in moving the motion. Statistics issued by the Department of Labour and National Service give the number of unemployed in Townsville as 741. That was on 26 January this year. As the previous speaker said, union leaders are in a position through shop representatives and others, to get the figures on unemployment in the cities. They have means available to them equal to those of the Commonwealth Government. The union leaders report that the figure is well over 1,000, and from my own information I agree with it. It is well known that many men prefer to look for work rather than register with the Department of Labour and Social Services. That is all to their credit. As I said last session, the meat season in Townsville was a very short one. There was no overtime and no Sunday work. Those who husbanded their earnings now find themselves financially embarrassed. We have been told that these fellows spend their money as soon as they earn it. It is

possible that that happens on occasions, but a great number of them husband their money and look after their families. They have been out of work for the past three months, and it is a financial catastrophe. In Townsville we have an effective strength of 521 water-side workers existing in part on appearance money. They are not registered with the Department of Labour and Social Services and they do not appear in the unemployment list, but their spending power has been drastically reduced. Both the smaller business people and the larger business houses have noticed the loss of spending power. It is very significant that the Townsville Chamber of Commerce has seen fit to draw the Government's attention to it. On top of this, there are the effects of the credit squeeze on employment in the North. It is rather unusual to our way of thinking that the Chamber of Commerce has brought this to the Government's notice.

The Townsville Trades and Labour Council has set up an unemployment committee, and I suggested that it would be a good idea to bring in all sections of the community. We in the North must bring our ideas and thoughts to bear on it. I have asked them to include in that committee the community leaders in Townsville. The University site and the Government housing project in Townsville are providing work, but the future is rather black. There is nothing in sight for them to go to when they are put off those jobs and there has been a rumour that that will happen.

The Deputy Premier mentioned tourism. I have informed him of the effects of the credit restrictions on tourism. I told him of one man who was prepared to spend many thousands of pounds on buildings at Rowes Bay and had all those buildings come to a stop as a result of the credit restrictions. He wrote back and agreed that they had the effect I mentioned.

The Townsville City Council has intimated to me that if they had received extra loan money they would have been prepared to employ more men. However, on this occasion they did not get the money and they cannot spend money they have not got. They employed 20 extra men just before Christmas but they did not continue with their employment after Christmas. They told them there was nothing for them.

Then there were the 10 men who were affected at the railway goods shed. We were told they were temporary employees. Whether they were temporary or not they joined the ranks of the unemployed. Also, we have the spectacle of guards and drivers in the railway service being asked to work outside their qualifications, and we believe that will create unemployment lower down the scale.

It is easy to talk blithely about 742 men unemployed, and 2,800 men unemployed as

if there were not so many unemployed this year as last year, but to the person concerned and his family, it is a tragedy. The Government should take stock and endeavour to bring into effect what it promised to provide three years ago—more jobs than men. In North Queensland that has not happened. What effect do the headlines of the daily newspapers have on the average man when he reads, as he read this morning, that things will get worse before they get better? It is all right to talk of big factories and of big industries to come in the future. What our men in Townsville are concerned about is what is being done now. They cannot eat factories and they cannot eat big business. They are very worried. They do not want a handout. They want to work and to be able to hold their heads up again. As the hon. member for Cairns said, the position is grave and it is becoming graver. Many men have come to me over the last few weeks and intimated that they are so hard-pressed that they are contemplating leaving the State—to such an extent that I have found myself writing for rail passes for them. So I rise to tell the Government that the position in Townsville is very grave indeed. I do not think it should be dismissed lightly.

Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg) (3.5 p.m.): It is a pity that a debate as important as this should be, as prescribed by the Standing Orders in the way it has been submitted, limited to a mere 2½ hours' discussion. I think each side will agree, irrespective of the differences in political opinions, that unemployment at any stage is very serious and a challenge to the social structure of the State and, for that matter, of the nation. I will not go over the numerous statistics that have been submitted to the House and argue them from the different points of view from which they have been submitted. Suffice it to say that the figures at least can be accepted as the minimum. I agree with remarks that have been made from this side of the House that if there were a more careful examination and if a truer picture were presented it would show that there are far more than 19,000 or 20,000 unemployed in the State. The Premier will agree that it is a very serious charge against his Government and his administration that we have an admission from a Commonwealth Minister that of the total increase of 17,552 to 71,000 throughout Australia in January half is attributed to Queensland. In other words, the unemployment in Queensland increased by an amount equal to the other five States combined, and at the end of February it will be worse. The Government are to blame in many respects for this. The Premier and the Treasurer on their return from their frequent visits to Canberra have painted the picture that everything in the garden was lovely, that they had all the assistance and co-operation required to enable them to carry out a full employment programme. Probably the Minister for Development, Mines, Main

Roads and Electricity was the only one who had the courage to challenge that statement. So when I interjected to the Treasurer when he was pleading that there should not be built up a feeling of despair I had in mind that we do not need to do that in this House. All one has to do is move amongst the business people, apart altogether from the unemployed, to see how bad things are in the State, from the business point of view. The feeling of despair is already there.

Mr. Coburn interjected.

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member and his colleagues have helped Holt and his kind the whole time they have been in this House. So the Government to a certain extent are responsible for it. We had the Treasurer making the fantastic statement here that it was necessary for the State to go broke financially so that they could get better consideration from the Federal Government to enable them to carry out a full works programme. Now the Treasurer, after castigating hon. members on this side of the House over the past three or four years for being apostles of gloom everytime they raised the matter of growing unemployment, appears at this late stage and indicates—and we are glad to have the admission from him—that he, too, has joined the apostles of gloom.

He has not said it, of course, in the way we should like him to say it and in the way that we know he could say it. He has such a feeling of loyalty to Mr. Menzies and the Federal Government that he does not want to interfere with them or insult them.

However, let us not get on to too much criticism of this but let us look at ways in which the problem can be met. The Treasurer has once again presented one of his bright pictures of prosperity and foreshadowed announcements of financial aid in the course of the next week or so. I suggest that the Government, through their own departments, should examine the organisation where they have such matters as building proposals from men who are prepared to build their homes and who have the ready cash, that they will put a spurt on to enable approvals to be given to allow those people to go ahead and spend their money and build the homes. I suggest, too, that they get onto the local authorities and see if they have surplus funds that can be used, as in the case of Bundaberg. An announcement appeared in the "Bundaberg News Mail" of 17 February that the council is providing £45,000 to help the unemployed. To my amazement it is shown here that they have £15,293 in the Water Fund and £30,000 in the Sewerage Fund. It is possible that many other local authorities are in a similar position. Let the Government, through their departments, investigate the whole field of finance in the local authority areas to see if they cannot relieve the position elsewhere. The figures in the "Telegraph" of 13 February, indicate that Brisbane has 2,060

unemployed out of a population of approximately 500,000, and Rockhampton 1,178 out of 40,000. Here are the figures for other major cities—

Mackay	946
Bundaberg	864
Townsville	747
Cairns	662
Ayr	339
Toowoomba	386
Maryborough	385
Innisfail	275
Ingham	225
Ipswich	192

The figures indicate that the Government have concentrated their efforts on providing employment in the major cities like Brisbane and Ipswich. Apparently the country areas are to get a raw deal from the Government. It is up to the back-benchers, particularly of the Country Party, to see that a better deal is given to them.

I understand that the Premier wishes to speak. I do not intend to avail myself of the full time available to me, but I hope that the Government at least have some plan to meet the present position.

Mr. HOUGHTON (Redcliffe) (3.11 p.m.): Let me say in fairness to the State Government that the fault does not lie specifically at their door but at the door of the Federal Government, who are completely out of step with Queensland's requirements. The Premier and the Treasurer are to be congratulated upon the outcome of their visit to Canberra, as a result of which Federal Members will make a visit to Queensland to examine the unemployment position here. Their visit to Canberra signifies their determination to endeavour to rectify the ill of Queensland's economic set-up. The creation of employment is dependent upon the availability of finance. The State Government should examine closely the possibility of creating their own finance by the establishment of a State bank. Surplus money should be channelled into developmental work throughout the State. Local authorities hold considerable amounts of loan moneys, but they cannot let contracts unless they have money at call. It could be 12 months before it is utilised. The Government have millions of pounds lying idle that could be used to overcome the ill that is quite evident in the economic set-up. Our financial advisers are controlled by one person—Dr. Coombes. As Dr. Coombes was put into that position by the Labour Government he would probably offer Labour administration policy to the Liberal-Country Party coalition. I am not an economist but I should say that they need to analyse closely the situation as it affects Queensland and the Commonwealth as a whole. The problem will not be overcome unless we can get wholehearted co-operation of all members of the Queensland Parliament. I suggest that the Government consider the establishment of their own State bank.

I challenge the Treasurer's statement that the Redcliffe local authority budgeted for only £45,000. He is completely out of touch there. He saw the financial tree only after it had been pruned by the Co-ordinator General of Public Works. The City of Redcliffe could employ 100 men as long as we were given the necessary approval and the green light to go ahead before 30 June. That would help to overcome unemployment in that area.

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Premier) (3.15 p.m.): I was quite happy to hear the opening remarks of the Leader of the Opposition when he said that he did not wish to play politics in his submissions to the House, that he wanted to examine the problem of unemployment which, after all, is a problem which concerns not only the Government but also the Opposition. He said that he wanted to adopt an objective manner and put forward some constructive suggestions that would help to deal with the problem that we have to face in Queensland at the present time. Unfortunately, not one single constructive suggestion has yet come from any member of the official Opposition. What is the good of the Opposition bringing forward a motion like this and condemning the Government if they themselves have nothing to offer?

Mr. Duggan interjected.

Mr. NICKLIN: It is no use the Leader of the Opposition getting hot under the collar. I know his true purpose. He has been playing politics right through without any constructive suggestion.

Mr. Tucker: What are you doing now?

Mr. NICKLIN: I am not going to deny that there is unemployment in the State. It is giving this Government a good deal of concern but we are not sitting down and doing nothing about it. The Treasurer has outlined the very practical steps which the Government have already initiated to help us deal with the unemployment problem here.

To hear hon. members opposite speak one would think that the number of unemployed at the end of January this year was double or treble or even more than double or treble what it was at the end of January in previous years. But if we check back even as far as 1958 it will be seen that there are fewer in January, 1961. There were more unemployed registered in 1958; there were more in 1959, and in 1960 there were less. At present 19,387 are registered for employment in this State.

The hon. member for Cairns said that the position had never been worse in his district in 30 years. It is exaggerated statements like that that do not do the cause of the State any good at all. Actually, there are more unemployed registered in Cairns at present than there have been for the past four years, but the number is less than 100 more.

What are the causes of the position in this State at the present time? If the unemployed in this State are analysed it will be found that the great majority are those connected with rural industries. In other words, it is very largely seasonal unemployment.

Hon. members opposite might not know it but it is a fact that this State has been suffering from continual "below par" water conditions since this Government assumed office in 1957. The few inches of rain we have had have not yet broken the drought in the State and that, undoubtedly, has had a big effect on the employment position here.

I will not deny that the Federal credit restrictions have had an effect on employment in the State.

Mr. Walsh: A big effect.

Mr. NICKLIN: Probably next year they will have a greater effect than they have had up to the end of January this year but, in reply to an Opposition question as to what the Government are doing, I say that we are carrying out at present the most vigorous policy of development of industry ever undertaken in the State, and we have got results. Figures just released by the Commonwealth Statistician show that in the past year factory production has jumped £7,000,000, the value of plant and machinery £8,000,000, the value of factory land and buildings £8,000,000, and the value of the materials used by £11,000,000.

That is the result of the policy being followed by this Government, and during the past year we had industry after industry, only one year established in this State, doubling its production. They have faith in Queensland and in the Government's policy, notwithstanding the jeremiahs in the Opposition.

Looking through the State at present, let us see what the prospects of employment are. In the next few weeks there will be added employment on the Mt. Isa railway line, Weipa will be coming into production, and there will be further employment in the sale of Kiangra coal. These are some of the steps this Government has taken and in the near future this Parliament will be asked to approve of an agreement we have obtained for the establishment of an oil refinery in Queensland. That will provide considerable employment and bring additional industry to this State.

Mr. Walsh: What have the Government been doing from their own resources?

Mr. NICKLIN: We have been advantageously using every penny that has come to us in providing employment in this State. The Minister for Main Roads in the last two years has carried out the biggest Main Roads programme in the history of Queensland. The Government have carried out the biggest works programme in the history of Queensland. We are not content with what we have already done; we are going to do

more to improve the position. As a result of the reallocation of funds spoken of by the hon. member for Bundaberg, we are making available to the Forestry Department £50,000 to employ, as from next week, 300 men on this work, taking them from those parts of the State where the problem of unemployment is greatest. That is a constructive step, yet hon. members opposite say we are doing nothing. Within the very near future construction work will start on another major project, the Bribie Bridge. That will provide a considerable amount of employment for workers in various sections of industry.

As the Treasurer has said, an examination is being made continuously of the moneys available to the Government to ensure that those moneys are spent to the best advantage for the purpose of providing work and developing Queensland. Since they have been in office the Government have taken steps to get more money and as a result of our representations at the Loan Council we have been able to increase the percentage of money available to us for the Government, semi-governmental authorities and local bodies. We have achieved better raisings of semi-governmental loans as a result of the confidence we have restored in Queensland. Under the Labour Government in 1955-1956, local authorities were able to raise only 80 per cent. of their allocations; in 1956-1957 they raised only 95 per cent., but they have raised 100 per cent. of their allocations ever since we became the Government and as a consequence they have been able to spend much more money.

The Government have increased the subsidies payable to local authorities from £3,900,000 during the last year when the Labour Government were in office to £6,000,000 for the current year, yet we have been accused of doing nothing. Hon. member after hon. member of the official Opposition said we had done nothing for Queensland, but at the same time not one constructive suggestion was put forward by them. The figures belie the accusation. The record of the Government in regard to making the best use of the money available to the Government and in the restoration of confidence in the private sector of industry so as to increase employment and development of Queensland is one of which we have no need to be ashamed. We are unhappy about the undue proportion of unemployment in Queensland, but we are not going to sit down and cry about it as so many hon. members opposite have done. We are going to get on with the job and do something about it.

Mr. DUGGAN (Toowoomba West—Leader of the Opposition (3.24 p.m.), in reply: Precisely what does the Premier and Leader of the Government expect the Leader of the Opposition and Opposition members to do to secure consideration from the Government? He charged us first of all with making no constructive suggestions. He then went on

to say that the Government are taking action and are concerned about the incidence of unemployment. There is at least one thing we have done. This is the first time for many years on an occasion when we have put forward a proposition in this Parliament that was said by Government members to be unnecessary and frivolous when three senior Ministers of the Government have seen fit to rise in their places and vigorously defend the Government's action. What further does the Premier want us to do? His Deputy Leader, who led the debate, did not say he was concerned about the incidence of unemployment.

Mr. Morris: Yes I did.

Mr. DUGGAN: He merely challenged my figures, but did not refute them. He merely dealt with one particular meatworker who in his opinion earned a disproportionate amount of money. He then dealt with the cane-cutters who averaged £17 a week.

Mr. Morris: I did not.

Mr. DUGGAN: He did.

Mr. MORRIS: I rise to a point of order. I do not mind the hon. member's being extravagant in his statement but I resent his stating categorically that I referred to one particular meatworker who was earning more than I thought was desirable. That is not true and I ask him to accept it.

Mr. DUGGAN: I do not accept it for the reason that he said that in 30 weeks a slaughterman earned £1,053. He went on to say that the average earnings of cane-cutters was £17 a week. How can he have the effrontery to get up and deny those things? He challenged my figures and said they were wrong. In regard to factory employment, the Government Statistician, Mr. Solomon, said on 9 February of this year—

“The number of Queensland factories increased by 106 to 5,757 during 1959-1960, but employment in them dropped by 92 to 104,661.”

They are the Minister's figures, and yet he has the colossal impertinence to say I exaggerate. Where do we stand? Is there, or is there not, unemployment? Then the honourable member for Tablelands gets up and says we are linked with the Communists in this. The honourable member who said that is departing on a world trip very shortly. I am not criticising him for that, but he said that we are not concerned about this, and that it is merely a Communist stand. If he can afford to go away and leave these things in the hands of the Northern Labour members, that is his business, but I feel sure it will be remembered by the electors. I have been accused of becoming hysterical. The situation is sufficiently serious to warrant some strong action by the Parliamentary parties, particularly by those who constitute the Opposition. We believe

that we should take some stand. When dealing with the unemployment problem, I would rather be accused of political savagery than of approaching it with some degree of political suavity as we have seen today when members of the Government tried to smooth things over. Even the Treasurer was called upon to extricate the Deputy Premier from this problem, and admitted quite frankly that the Government were concerned about it. However, the only plea he made was that we should be temperate in our criticism and not engender fear in the community. I am prepared to accept that. We do not wish to scare people. We want to focus attention on the fact that we have compelled the Premier to announce today what he is going to do, not that he was going to make an announcement next week, so we have achieved something of importance.

The Treasurer said that he was disappointed with the response from the local authorities in this matter. We have a point of dispute between the Mayor of Redcliffe and the Treasurer about the loan requirements. Even if the local authorities had put in a list of plans and specifications amounting to £2,000,000, £3,000,000 or £4,000,000, what value would that have been in the present circumstances? The Treasurer said Redcliffe could not raise £40,000 for this year, and the Rockhampton Council would have difficulty in raising its quota.

Mr. Hiley: I did not say they could not raise £40,000. I said they could not raise their full allocation, which is more than £40,000.

Mr. DUGGAN: What is the difference? If they cannot raise what they have obtained approval for what is the good of putting in for supplementary amounts; the Treasurer is playing around with words on these matters.

The Mayor of Rockhampton said that he felt so deeply on this matter that for the first time since he has been Mayor of Rockhampton he has found it necessary to call a public meeting. What does he mean? Does it mean that the honourable member invited the Federal Treasurer and the Premier up? The honourable member has never done that before; he was complacent previously about the degree of unemployment. Is it more serious than it was previously? There cannot possibly be any other deduction.

The Deputy Premier said that as a result of tremendous activity on his part Willys jeeps are now to be assembled in Brisbane. There are to be four factories closed in New South Wales. What will be the net result of that? Mr. Thompson of Annand and Thompson has said to me that as a direct result of Willys jeeps being assembled up here they have put off 40 men.

Mr. Morris: No, they didn't.

Mr. DUGGAN: Not entirely that. They put off 40 men. As long as the Deputy Premier acknowledges that if it is good logic to give preference in Queensland, then it is equally good logic to say that New South Wales will refuse to give preference to Jeeps built in Queensland and give preference to Jeeps produced in New South Wales. We have heard all this silly clap-trap, and then we have heard that the shipping industry is responsible for these things. The Premier says we are talking a lot of nonsense about these figures and he says we are exaggerating and that seasonal unemployment is responsible. Mr. Laws, the Regional Director of Labour and National Service said that when you break down the January unemployment figures, only 2,300 of the 19,387 registered, were employees in rural industries—about 12 per cent. The great mass of the unemployed belonged to the clerical, commercial and administrative field, building and construction, metal and other skilled trades, and semi-skilled trades. The Premier said that I was saying a lot of nonsense, and that there was no doubt that there was seasonal unemployment. However, our reason for bringing this matter up today is that it concerns not only seasonal unemployment, but a very large number of salaried, clerical, commercial and administrative employees. The other day an advertisement was inserted calling for a junior stenotypist, and over 60 persons with Junior passes applied. This position is fraught with tremendous difficulties. We are confronted with this problem and the Government are trying to shelter behind the Commonwealth Government.

If the Commonwealth Government are responsible for it, why have this Government not the intestinal fortitude of the Minister for Development, Mines, Main Roads and Electricity, to attack them? Did the Premier attack the Commonwealth Government? Did the Minister for Labour and Industry attack them? Did the Treasurer? No! Droughts, floods, shipping disputes, transport industry, Communist infiltration, a lack of tourists coming from overseas—every conceivable thing but putting the finger of blame where it should be placed, and that is, firstly, pointed at themselves. When that pointing process is finished they can point at the Federal Government. They are the Government.

I said in my speech earlier that I believed the Department of Forestry could absorb unemployed and the Premier must have heard me, but he said we made no constructive suggestion. I have figures of the diminution in number of employees in the forestry industry, and what does the Premier say? With great banging on his desk he says that £50,000 is going to be made available by the Department of Forestry for 300 men. Divide £50,000 by 300 and you get £167—eight weeks' work!

(Time expired.)

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

AYES, 28

Mr. Adair	Mr. Inch
" Baxter	" Lloyd
" Byrne	" Mann
" Davies	" Marsden
" Davis	" Melloy
" Dean	" Newton
" Diplock	" Sherrington
" Donald	" Thackeray
" Dufficy	" Tucker
" Duggan	" Wallace
" Graham	" Walsh
" Gunn	
" Hanlon	<i>Tellers:</i>
" Hilton	Mr. Bromley
" Houston	" Burrows

NOES, 40

Mr. Armstrong	Mr. Hughes
" Beardmore	" Jones
" Bjelke-Petersen	" Lonergan
" Campbell	" Low
" Carey	" Madsen
" Chalk	" Morris
" Coburn	" Munro
Dr. Delamothie	" Nicklin
Mr. Dewar	" Pilbeam
" Evans	" Pizzev
" Ewan	" Ramsden
" Fletcher	" Richter
" Gaven	" Row
" Gilmore	" Sullivan
" Harrison	" Taylor
" Hart	" Wharton
" Herbert	" Windsor
" Hewitt	
" Hiley	<i>Tellers:</i>
" Hooper	Mr. Hodges
" Houghton	" Tooth

PAIR

Mr. Bennett Mr. Smith

Resolved in the negative.

CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Chatsworth—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (3.42 p.m.): I move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Co-operative Housing Societies Act of 1958, in certain particulars."

It was in 1958 that Parliament passed the Co-operative Housing Societies Act in terms of which a new form of co-operative housing society came into being. The essential features of the societies were that they were completely co-operative, that they were organised on a terminating basis, and provision was made for their funds to be secured under the cover of a Government guarantee to the lender.

As I told Parliament at the time the first Bill was introduced, societies of this type had undergone a lengthy experience in the States of New South Wales and Victoria, where, in all, a sum now in excess of £200,000,000 had been invested and, from what we are able to learn, there had been a completely smooth operation by the societies,

and there had been no claim whatever upon the Government of either of those States in terms of the guarantees that had been given.

At the time the legislation was introduced it was recognised that we not only had to start a completely new movement in Queensland but also that we had to deal with largely untrained personnel on the side of management. The result was that we fixed careful limits on the percentage of valuation of the property that could be advanced and, in order to restrain abortive attempts at society formation, we adopted the Victorian practice of requiring two meetings of interested persons. The first required 12 persons in attendance, with no requirements for prior advertisement. This meeting would then adjourn for not less than three, nor more than six, weeks during which notification had to be given by advertisement for a period of at least two weeks.

Since the Act came into operation guarantees have been extended in respect of £3,400,000. We have experienced no difficulty at all with the advance limits and we have concluded that there is room to streamline the formation procedure by telescoping the present requirement of two meetings into a single advertised meeting.

On the question of advance limits, the original legislation provided that adjustments could be made from time to time by Order in Council and on 19 May, 1960, an Order in Council was issued making the following increases in lending limits for home construction and purchase of new homes, and the newly-increased limits are as follows:—

Original Limit—

In the case of an advance of £2,750 or less—80 per cent. of the land and dwelling-house.

In the case of an advance of more than £2,750—70 per cent. on the land and dwelling-house.

Increased Limit—

In the case of an advance of £3,000 or less—90 per cent. of the land and dwelling-house.

In the case of an advance of more than £3,000—80 per cent. of the land and dwelling-house.

In the original Act there was another class of advance relating to conversion of old buildings. The Government did not alter the advance limit for this type of security which remains unaltered at 60 per cent. There have been only three cases of advances for this purpose and I must say that this has been something of a disappointment to me. However, all my inquiries suggest that the difficulty is not related to the advance limit. Rather, the deterrent factor is the very exact requirements imposed by local authorities on these conversion operations.

Mr. Hanlon: They would be converted to flats, in other words?

Mr. HILEY: Old buildings converted to multi-unit dwellings. It is not my purpose

to suggest that local authority requirements in such cases are necessarily over-stringent. The type of conversion operation which we had in mind would commonly involve the raising of an existing, old dwelling, and the construction of a new storey underneath, so that where originally there was one spacious old home on the site, the ultimate result might well be four flats, two upstairs and two downstairs. It will, however, be quickly obvious that it is not a simple matter to command a blended appearance cheaply where half the structure is very old and the other half completely new, where the top half is still the old wooden-frame construction and the lower half perhaps in new face brick. I repeat that I am disappointed that more of this has not happened, particularly as an analysis of the building statistics shows that one of the significant features of the closing half of the past decade has been the rapid rise in the number of flats which have been constructed. There can be little doubt that the demand is there for flats, but apparently most owners of an old building prefer to demolish the existing old wooden structure completely rather than use it for the upper storey of a composite structure.

The other deterrent can be stated as the reluctance on the part of some societies to accept older persons as members. The average young person starts off with a new house and the class of applicant who buys an old house is a person well on in years, and the societies prefer to deal with younger persons. If a person goes to a building society at about 58 years of age, that society with pressure of applications, naturally prefers to deal with a young couple than somebody well on in years.

The amendment that we propose, however, is one which is incapable of being commanded by the procedure of an Order in Council and hence the need for the present Bill. Our experience with the double meetings has been that the first meeting would be held in an atmosphere of fine enthusiasm, the rules are presented and then the meeting has to adjourn for several weeks. At this adjourned meeting, the rules would be adopted and the officers appointed. Quite apart from the delay, which is vexing in itself, we often found difficulty in commanding attendance at the second meeting. Everyone concerned felt that their society was under way and they did not want to be caught up with the need for repeated meetings in order to give the society a legal being.

Helpful recommendations were made to me by the Housing Advisory Committee of the co-operative movement, and after considering the matter, I felt that we should adopt their suggestions and telescope the two meetings into one. That is the sole purpose of the present amendment. There still has to be 12 persons present and there still has to be a prior newspaper advertisement. The one meeting both adopts the rules and elects the

officers of the society. That is the whole purpose of the amendment and I commend it to the Committee.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (3.51 p.m.): The amending Bill on this occasion is apparently a very simple one but I think we should make it very clear that when the original Act was introduced by the Treasurer we have ourselves given a great deal of consideration to introducing similar legislation had we become the Government. In pre-war years particularly Queensland housing schemes were such that there was no great encouragement to establish and operate co-operative housing societies in Queensland. Queensland had reached the stage immediately before the war of the highest percentage of home ownership in Australia, mainly because of the old State Advances legislation and the Workers' Dwelling scheme that subsequently was put into operation.

There was therefore no great demand for co-operative building societies, but we did realise that the position might be different, with the authorisation by the Commonwealth Government of savings bank branches of private trading banks. They were given a type of charter by the Central Bank. They were asked to allocate 20 per cent. of savings deposits to housing, subject, of course, to State Government guarantees for the money loaned to co-operative building societies. We could see that there was a possibility that much of that savings bank finance could be diverted to other States if the Government failed to recognise co-operative building societies and refused to guarantee loans to them. It was for that reason we approved the original legislation. We thought that we should give the legislation a trial, to see whether additional money would be available for housing from this source. I think that has been the result. Additional money has been channelled by banks and even private insurance companies into housing schemes through co-operative building societies.

Our main arguments at the time, and I think they are still current, is that the limited advances and high rates of interest would restrict the number of people who could take advantage of the schemes. In other words, a man on an income of £16 to £17 a week could not possibly make the advance required under the co-operative housing scheme and so could not take advantage of it. The period of repayment in some cases was 31 years, and I think that is still the position.

Mr. Hiley: Twenty-six years.

Mr. LLOYD: Our argument was that the repayments to co-operative building societies may be a little high for such a man, and, with the subsequent increases in cost of building and the probability of further increases in interest charges there will be a

further shrinkage in the number of people who are able to take advantage of such schemes. That is one of the most unfortunate consequences of an increase in interest rates. Hon. members on this side of the Chamber have consistently criticised this aspect. An increase in interest must have a detrimental effect. It must reduce the number of people who are able to take advantage of building societies. Even an increase of 10s. or 5s. per cent. must inflict hardship on many people who want to build homes, and in itself will cause a drop in the number who are able to borrow money for this purpose.

The Bill introduced by the Treasurer does not pose any difficulties. At the moment I can see no great objection to it. As the Treasurer has said, the Bill provides that the meeting must be advertised in the daily Press and I should think that the agenda of the meeting would have to be included in the advertisement. The members of the building society would know the exact procedure, that they would have to elect their officials, and so on. I think that safeguard is sufficient. I can see no great objection to the legislation.

As a Committee I think we should give some consideration to the effect of increased interest rates. A number of housing schemes are available, but in relation to young people, say, of 22 years, who intend to get married, unless they are able to take advantage of some scheme such as the War Service Homes scheme for ex-servicemen, their position will be most difficult. With increasing costs of building and increasing interest charges and advances, we must reach the stage when it will be economically impossible for a person not in receipt of an income of £20 a week to own a home. None of us would like to see that position arise, but we face that very danger. There seems to be very little realisation by any Government of the difficult period we are going through for housing. We have given warnings in the past and it is now more obvious than ever. We must not reach the stage where it is necessary for the young people in the community, on an average wage, to be forced to pay more than 25 per cent. of their actual wages in interest and redemption payments on houses. Even with the legislation we have here, if the interest rate of the co-operative building societies is to increase to 6½ per cent., and if the necessary advance is £3,000, that stage has been reached. Instead of there being repayments of £15 to £17 a month, it will be necessary in the very near future for them to repay a minimum sum of £20 a month. If that stage is reached I will be very sorry for the young people. There is the incidence of unemployment and sickness to be considered, and the young people are entitled to very little moratorium. We must not allow the position to deteriorate to the extent that the homes will be repossessed as happened previously. It is one of the unfortunate aspects of co-operative building

societies that this has happened in the past. I do not think there can be any objection to the amendment as moved by the Treasurer.

Motion (Mr. Hiley) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

STATE HOUSING ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Chatsworth—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (4.4 p.m.): I seek leave of the Committee to move the motion in an amended form. In explanation, I should say that when I introduced the measure before the adjournment of the House in December I thought the parliamentary draftsman would find it possible to accomplish two purposes with the one measure. This morning I gave notice of a Bill to be introduced tomorrow to repeal the Workers' Homes Act, which is consequential on, a telescoping measure envisaged for the operation of the Queensland Housing Commission. So the course I propose to adopt is to move that it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the State Housing Acts, 1945 to 1957, in certain particulars, and I seek the permission of the Committee to move the motion in that amended form.

(Leave granted.)

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Chatsworth—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (4.5 p.m.): I move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the State Housing Acts, 1945 to 1957, in certain particulars."

The Bill consists of three major principles. It provides for the Commission to carry its own risk in respect of free life insurance and it slightly varies the provisions of that insurance; it provides a more fluent means for the Commission to deal with the problem of overdue rentals and it amplifies the power of the Commission to engage in subdivision and sale of land as such.

I will also be bringing down a further Bill, of which I gave notice this morning, to amalgamate the functioning of the Workers' Homes Act with the Queensland Housing Commission so that the combined activities will be carried on by one organisation under one Act. The provisions of this Bill to repeal the Workers' Homes Act might have been included with the amendments that I am now proposing, but, on the advice of the Parliamentary draftsman, it was considered preferable to introduce an entirely separate Bill for that purpose.

Let me deal now with the three subjects of amendment. The free life insurance provision was inaugurated in the year 1949. It provided a general cover to borrowers during the agreed term of the loan against the hazard of death of the borrower or, where the advance was in joint names, it allowed the cover to be related to the life of a selected one of the borrowers. Obviously in the case of a married couple the wage-earner would be chosen.

At the time the cover was introduced, the Government of the day recognised that the cover should not be absolute and, accordingly, it was available only to those who received less than a prescribed income; it was open only to applicants under 40 years of age.

Under the existing law, the cover was arranged by the payment of a single lump sum premium to the State Government Insurance Office, which office carried the whole of the risk.

When I took over the responsibilities of Treasurer, I found that the annual requirement for premiums was substantial and growing. To give the Committee an idea of the amount of money that was involved, the net premium payments for the years were as follows:—

1 July, 1950 to 30 June, 1957	451,928
1 July, 1957 to 30 June, 1958	110,663
1 July, 1958 to 30 June, 1959	92,044

Now, it must be appreciated that these premiums cover a diminishing hazard (diminishing because the capital debt is reducing) for the balance of the agreed term. You start off at a high level and, as it dwindles, to the extent that it is not the amount that is covered, it is the residual debt that is covered. That is to say, you start off with a big liability under the insurance and, as the debt tapers, so does the risk. Liabilities can continue to arise for close on 30 years. But my inquiries showed that, in the 11 years in which the scheme has been in operation, there had been only 29 recorded cases of claim. Accordingly, I formed two conclusions. The first was that I preferred to spend roughly £100,000 building or financing extra homes to using the money in the payment of insurance premiums. Secondly, I was satisfied that the risk was sufficiently well spread and, having regard to the intermediate use of the moneys that would otherwise be consumed in premiums, I had no doubt that it would be advisable for the Commission to carry the insurance risk.

Accordingly, the Government decided the Commission would do so and this Bill authorises the Commission to carry the risk, free of charge to the borrower. It applies to all eligible advances made after 31 December, 1958, when payment of premiums was discontinued.

Mr. Lloyd: Were not these free insurance policies originally financed from reserves of

money set aside by the State Government Insurance Office as moneys which might normally be paid as taxation?

Mr. HILEY: I never heard that story. All I know is that they were charged against the Consolidated Revenue of the State.

Mr. Coburn: From 1950 to 1957 you paid nearly £500,000.

Mr. Hanlon: It indicates that the insurance business is pretty strong.

Mr. HILEY: It is one occasion on which my Insurance Commissioner looked at me with a very twisted grin. I think he thought I was drawing his pet wisdom tooth.

However, it introduces one refinement in the cover that I should report to the Committee. The cover previously applied to the loan irrespective of the family circumstance of the borrower. In other words it could be possible for a man to borrow, for his wife to die during the term of the loan, leaving no children, with the result that, on the death of the borrower, the insurance scheme could benefit a complete stranger. The Government see no good social reason why this should be so. We recognise a strong argument in favour of benefiting a widow or children. The amending Bill has been drafted in such a manner as to protect the family but to exclude strangers.

Mr. Hanlon: It will include dependants?

Mr. HILEY: Yes. I hardly need to tell the Committee that a considerable proportion of borrowers' advances are paid off during the term of the loan as a result of the intermediate sale of the property. In such an event the hazard at which the insurance was directed came to an end. This provided one of the further reasons why I concluded that it would pay the Government handsomely to carry their own risk. Where the risk is retired there is a rebate of part premium by State insurance. Anybody with any experience of the arithmetic of a rebate knows that it is of no particular advantage to the Commission.

The second principle dealt with in the Bill is one to which I think I have made earlier reference in the Chamber. The Commission has over 10,000 tenants, and for some time rental arrears have been held steady in the neighbourhood of £90,000. As is inevitable with such a large rent roll, sometimes it is found necessary to terminate a tenancy because of persistent and growing arrears of rent without adequate excuse, and each year we find it necessary to write off a moderate sum in bad debts. It would be quite wrong to convey the impression that the bad debt losses are crippling. Indeed, our average experience over the last three years is that bad debt losses have been merely .13 per cent of gross rents, which is a very low figure. However, there is a constant battle with the problem of overdue rents, and I have been forced to the conclusion that some more fluent approach is necessary. Before I develop

this aspect, let me state quite clearly that it is not the policy of the Government to insist blindly that their rents should be paid under any and every circumstance. It has been the policy of the Commission for many years to recognise the difficulties occasioned by sickness or unemployment, and reasonable time always is conceded in such distressed cases. The type of instance that really troubles us is where the income of the tenant is sufficient, but for a variety of causes entirely within his control, rental payments are badly erratic. In dealing with such cases the Commission is at the present time bound by the Summary Ejectment Act, which requires that notice to quit should be given, and a warrant of possession obtained from the court. This is a somewhat cumbersome procedure, and the warrant having been issued we have found from bitter experience that it is hazardous to accept intermediate payments towards the arrears and the promise of further payments in the future, and let the warrant lapse. Under the present law once we start a warrant procedure if we stop it or hesitate at any stage we lose the whole of what has been done, and we have to start completely afresh. I have seen cases where a tenant has been in arrears, say, £40; he has been given notice to quit; he comes in and offers to pay £20 and to increase his weekly payments until the arrears are overtaken. With some doubt we have accepted the £20, but little or no further payments have been made. By the time a fresh notice to quit is determined and served, and the tenant is finally removed from possession, the debt has swollen past the original £40 up to perhaps £60 or £80.

Mr. Newton: Does that not happen in the courts sometimes apart from your own procedure?

Mr. HILEY: It does indeed. After discussing some of these cases with my Commissioner, if tenants have rung true with me I have said, "Take a chance with them." In some cases I am glad to say that it has worked out well. Please do not think that my faith in human nature has been destroyed entirely by our experience, but in some cases it has worked out well, but in others, quite frankly, we have been taken for a ride. A tenant might owe £60; we accept £20 on account. By the time we finally catch up with him, that £20 is gone and another £20 or £30 as well. There have been sufficient adverse cases that I do not feel justified in a general reversal of what has been the policy of the Commission both under the preceding Government and this Government—once proceedings are commenced, not to lightly interfere with them by some interim payment and promise to be good in future.

Accordingly, the remedy which is proposed is that the Commission should be given more fluent powers in demanding and obtaining possession. If a Notice to Quit has been issued and not complied with then the Commission applies to a magistrate for a warrant of possession. The protection of the court is thus preserved; the Commission has to

give at least 14 days' notice from its original notice to quit and the warrant of possession becomes applicable not less than 7 or more than 30 days from the date of the warrant. The fixing of those dates will be in the judgment of the court.

Power is given for the date of the warrant to be extended for not more than 30 clear days from the date of the receipt of such request.

An Opposition Member: Is there provision for an extension?

Mr. HILEY: Actually, we provide for repeated extensions.

When these provisions become law, it will be safer for the Commission to extend time to a tenant without invalidating the whole of the proceedings and being forced to commence *de novo*. In bringing forward these provisions, it is the hope of the Government that there will be fewer evictions than have been necessary in the past and that bad debt losses will be reduced.

The third principle of the Bill, and perhaps the most interesting one, is aimed at something which caused me a great deal of concern almost up to Christmas last. I suppose it would be right to say that in the past two to three years there has been seen the greatest degree of activity by subdividers that this State has ever witnessed. Subdivisional practice is infinitely more rigorous than was the case a generation ago. In those days, almost the only work that was performed was survey work and the scratching of rough soil tracks. Little or nothing was done in respect of drainage or kerbing and channelling, durable roads and for treatment of some of the subject land.

Today, estate treatment is of a very high order indeed. It is common today to go onto a new estate and find that it has been laid out with bitumen roads, concrete kerbing and channelling, proper drainage, and often where the surface of the land itself is rugged, some surface treatment to smooth out the worst of the irregularities.

But, if the quality of estate preparation has infinitely advanced, the trend in prices has been even more marked. I do not believe—and the Government do not—that the average young person today can afford to pay £700 and upwards for a perimeter building block. I know nothing of the profits which have been made by the subdividers although I suspect that in their good times it was a richly rewarding field; but I have been struck by the obvious high level of what can be termed promotional expenditure. There has been expenditure of a very high order in press, radio and television advertising; there has been a small army of salesmen, all of which, in sober fact, has to be included in the price of the allotment and paid for by the purchaser.

In examining how the Government could make a contribution to partially easing this trend, it was found that the Commission

had very limited powers to dispose of land as such. It has very wide powers to deal with a house and land; it has only trifling and occasional powers to deal with land on which no home had been constructed. Accordingly, the Bill now proposes to give the Commission wider powers to deal with the sale of land as such. There are impressive safeguards against this power being used to feed those who wish to speculate in land. I am determined that we are not going to promote some cheap allotments for somebody to buy up and immediately sell at a big profit. The wider powers of the Commission will only be available to those who intend to get on with the business of building a home within a very reasonable time. In all, the Bill envisages that 18 months be allowed in which to select the land, to pay for it and to enter into a contract for the erection of the house.

To secure against someone's coming along, buying an allotment from the Commission on the pretence that he is going to build a home, and later changing his mind and selling the block at a profit, the procedure envisages that the Commission will not sign over the interest in the land to the purchaser except as part of a simultaneous signing of a building contract and, where the purchaser is borrowing part of the purchase money on the security of the house, a bill of mortgage in favour of the lender over the subject land. So, on the day a transfer of land is signed by him there is a simultaneous process; he must sign his building contract and mortgage the land to someone as part of the purchase price of the house. We think that will tie it up and stop speculation in land as such.

Mr. Tucker: What about the man who wants to build his own home?

Mr. HILEY: We will have to ease him through administratively if we are convinced he is genuine. If I come across a really genuine case and I am satisfied that the person is not going to do "the dirty" on us, we will find some way administratively of making it possible, even if my Commissioner raises his eyebrows at the suggestion. But generally the Government are determined to prevent land speculation.

Mr. Duggan: What about the person who sells the home a fortnight or a month after he buys it?

Mr. HILEY: That is something that cannot be avoided, but at least he has to go through the difficulty of financing the home and taking the responsibility for it.

Mr. Lloyd: Would you put on him the same restrictions as you would on, say, a person borrowing money? For instance, if he were to do that would you restrict his opportunity of buying another piece of land?

Mr. HILEY: If such a person borrowed money and built a home and immediately sold it and then came back again, I can state what our answer would be. He would be wasting his time.

Mr. Lloyd: He may not have to borrow money to build a home.

Mr. HILEY: All I can state is that administratively we are putting every difficulty in the way of a person who wishes to speculate, and any person who has not played the game would be wasting his time in applying again. We are taking this step to assist the genuine home-builder. If from our experience we know a person is not genuine but is a spec builder, we will never deal with him again.

Mr. Coburn: Does it mean that you would sell an allotment to a person to build a home other than through the Housing Commission?

Mr. HILEY: Yes.

Mr. Tucker: You do not envisage kerbing and channelling.

Mr. HILEY: On the contrary, I assure hon. members that the Commission develops its estates to full Council requirements.

Mr. Newton: All except bus strips by the sound of things from the Brisbane City Council. You do not allow for them.

Mr. HILEY: I am not conscious of one request from the Council to provide a bus strip which has been declined.

Mr. Newton interjected.

Mr. HILEY: That was not a Council requirement at the time of the subdivision.

Mr. Newton: It should be.

Mr. HILEY: We draw up subdivisional plans and send those plans to the Council. Once the Council puts its stamp of approval on them, we call tenders for the earth works in accordance with the plan. If the Council wants bus strips and insists on them, they would be one of the requirements of the subdivision. I have no doubt we would accede to it if it was a proper requirement. They ask for what they want. That is the general practice for local authorities. A subdivider is not allowed to say what he is going to do. He is told what is required.

Mr. Coburn: What you are doing is becoming a subdivider in competition with private subdividers to keep down the price of allotments.

Mr. HILEY: We are doing that with workers' dwellings, but we want to do it for the public, provided they are genuine home builders.

To conclude the thought I had, in between the indication that such-and-such an allotment will go to John Jones, all that the purchaser will receive in between is a written undertaking by the Commission acknowledging that the land in question has been set aside and the title will be given simultaneously with compliance with the other conditions. Appropriate provision has been made for the right to withdraw. We get the case of an engaged couple who come along and seriously put down their deposit

and start to buy their land, with every firm intention of proceeding, but then they have a lovers' tiff and it is all off and they want to withdraw. The proposal in the Bill is that the intending purchaser will get his money back at a low rate of intermediate interest, but he will be liable for the payment of the rates from the date on which the land was set aside. In other words, when the land is set aside, it is his and he is liable for the payment of rates during that period. He cannot put his hand on the title until he complies with the other conditions, but he can withdraw and get his money back with a low rate of interest. I think that is fair when it is considered that the land has been held idle for him at his request.

The Government believe that these powers are unlikely to lead to a vast business by the Commission in subdivisational estates. Were it to do so, whilst it might have a considerable value to the average young Queensland, it would tie up precious moneys which are urgently needed for housing. I envisage that the Commission will, by this means, sell a number of allotments in each financial year at prices which will fully cover our costs and allow for a tiny margin of profit.

Mr. Hanlon: I assume these are allotments for which you have no waiting list of people.

Mr. HILEY: This will be extra land we will get.

An Opposition Member: Will you take Crown land?

Mr. HILEY: Yes, we will take it if we find Crown land suitable. In so doing, it will provide a modest check on any tendency towards over-exuberance in allotment value.

I might add that the present credit squeeze has already provided a restrictive factor but quite plainly the effects of the credit squeeze will be transient and the Government believe that some permanent restraint on the values of home allotments is a desirable step.

I think I should say, that in my judgment, the correction in price of an allotment was likely to come in any case. At the moment, for new homes, holiday homes and the rebuilding of burnt homes, Queensland needs to build just over 8,000 homes a year.

Mr. Mann: Are you going to put an upset price on these allotments for public auction?

Mr. HILEY: No. We will fix them according to our measurement of cost. The selling price just covers that with a slight margin and they will be available to anyone who comes in. If we start an auction procedure we may defeat our very purposes. We will have the desirable blocks running up to a level that is too high. All we want to do is recover our cost.

Mr. Hanlon: Will there be a ballot for land where there may be 10 applicants?

Mr. HILEY: We will endeavour to have enough land available to fix everyone, on

the basis that if the hon. member comes in today we can fix him, and if the hon. member for Brisbane comes in tomorrow we can fix him too.

Mr. Hanlon: You may get some lobbying and the suggestion of people being paid for blocks, and all that sort of thing, if you don't.

Mr. HILEY: If we find any business such as that, we may have to conduct a ballot. Quite frankly, I hope this can operate on a day-to-day basis.

Mr. Mann: The abolition of public auctions is a very good point.

Mr. HILEY: I gave it serious consideration and I came to the conclusion that the auction procedure could operate against the purchaser when good land is offering cheaply. Queensland needs just over 8,000 new homes a year. When we count up the allotments being developed between Coolangatta and Noosa we find there are 100,000 allotments developed, in course of development, or about to be developed, and that is leaving Brisbane out. That will be something additional in a year or two. There are enough blocks there to take care of the total requirements of the people of Queensland for the next 10 to 12 years and then thrown in on top of that there are the allotments being released around every country town and provincial city in Queensland and around the perimeter of Brisbane. Heavens above, no-one in their senses could look at the subdivision in Queensland and not feel that it was shockingly overdone. I believe that even without this step, and without the credit squeeze, the subdivisational market in Queensland would have come back to mother earth through the sheer force of the over-exuberance of the subdividers. They have gone into this field on far too grand a scale and have choked the market. Many of the allotments sold have been bought by people who do not want to use them for building on but to speculate with. They bought the land with the idea of making something out of it and some of them have been sadly disappointed already, as we know. I believe that there was every prospect that the prices of land would drop normally, in any case, but in the meantime the credit squeeze has done it sharply. There is no doubt that allotment prices have already dropped, but we have looked into this and have determined that the Commission should have the power to do it. Heavens knows at what future stage we may again run into over-exuberance in land values and we feel it is right for the Commission, which is a body that can be trusted to have this power and see that allotments reach the public at a fair price, although I cannot pretend to the Committee that there is the same urgency today for this power that I felt in October last. We have included it in the Bill and that is the third, and probably the most interesting provision contained in the Bill and I commend it to the Committee.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (4.33 p.m.): In moving this amending Bill the Treasurer has raised a number of interesting and provocative subjects that will receive much consideration. I should like to deal with his original statement that it is his intention to repeal the Workers' Homes Act and to merge the State Housing Act and the Workers' Homes Act. As I understand it, during the introduction of the latter part of his amending Bill this afternoon, it would seem that the repeal of the Workers' Homes Act will mean that these land development schemes will, to a great extent, take over the work of the Workers' Homes scheme. In other words, land which was previously available for applicants who wanted to own a home under the Workers' Homes scheme will now be opened up under the Workers' Dwellings scheme. That is the way I see it.

I intend to reserve most of my argument till tomorrow. It is possible to tie this up with another part of the speech I intend to make. I think it must be given serious consideration. Any attempt to destroy overnight the working of the worker's homes scheme could possibly bring about difficulty or work hardship on people unable to pay the higher deposit required under the workers' dwelling scheme.

Mr. Hiley: I assure you that the Commission, through its ordinary activities, is dealing on the basis of perpetual lease blocks every day.

Mr. LLOYD: It is still intending to do that?

Mr. Hiley: Yes.

Mr. Coburn: They will still be built on perpetual lease land?

Mr. Hiley: Yes.

Mr. LLOYD: I am glad to have that assurance from the Minister.

The first part of the Bill relates to free insurance policies. I am subject to correction on this and I will study the matter overnight. When the idea was first introduced in 1949, as I understand it there was a trust account held by the State Government Insurance Office to finance the free insurance scheme, which was open to borrowers of money. In all probability I am wrong. It was an impression I gained many years ago and it stuck in my mind and I was quite surprised when the Treasurer intimated that the moneys had been paid previously by the Housing Commission to the State Insurance Office as money on premiums.

Mr. Hiley: Actually they are drawn from Consolidated Revenue.

Mr. LLOYD: I can see the argument on that. I do not think there would be a great deal of argument against the intention of the Housing Commission to carry its own insurance cover. I think it will be much more profitable for the Commission on the statement made by the Premier.

The second part of the Bill relates to arrears of rental. The Treasurer has said that some £90,000 has been the average amount held in arrears on the part of tenants of State rental houses. Most of that, some 30 per cent. or more, is owned by people who were former tenants of the Housing Commission.

Mr. Hiley: It would not be the majority of it.

Mr. LLOYD: I believe a great deal of the arrears comprises sums of money that may be temporarily arrears. In other words, many tenants pay their rent every fortnight or every three weeks or every month. At one time they may be two weeks behind but they are not continually behind. I put this to the Committee more or less to substantiate the Minister's argument that the incidence of bad debts with Queensland Housing Commission rental homes is very low. Tenants may be two weeks in arrears at one time but they may be two weeks in advance in a month's time so that the arrears of rent are not actually bad debts. A great deal of the publicity given to this matter in the newspapers does not take into consideration the large number of houses at present being rented to tenants and the fact that most of them are good tenants. They look after their homes well. Many of them have beautiful gardens and they religiously apply themselves to keeping their rent payments up to date. There are always the few who spoil it for the majority.

Mr. Windsor: The .13 per cent. bad debt rate is small, anyhow.

Mr. LLOYD: That is so. I feel sure it would not come anywhere near the amount of extra rental paid by tenants offsetting the reserve of bad debts, set aside each year by the Housing Commission. Provision for bad debts is included in the formula from which the rental payments are assessed so there would be very little loss to the Queensland Housing Commission, if any.

One good point that I think the Treasurer made was that at present in cases where tenants are in arrears of rent a notice to quit has to be served and application made to the court. If that application is granted, as it usually is, the tenant has to be out of the place by a certain date or the order becomes redundant. In other words, allowing the tenant to stay in the house after that date immediately invalidates the court order. Then you have to start over again. That is one reason why the Housing Commission officers have seemed to be unduly harsh. After giving tenants 30 days to pay rental arrears they have been reluctant to settle for a payment of £10 with the balance at, say, £1 a week until the arrears were paid. The treatment has seemed unduly harsh, and, indeed, in some cases it has been where Commission officers have refused to allow extra time to pay. The provision should be an extremely good one if it is treated that way by the Housing Commission officers. It will give

them an opportunity to adopt a more sympathetic approach to a tenant in arrears. In a genuine case of hardship where a tenant has a sincere intention to pay his arrears it will be of benefit to have this system. It struck me as being a good clause to introduce to overcome a great deal of hardship which has occurred in the past. In many instances rental arrears have occurred through no fault of the tenants, particularly since 1956 when pressure was brought to bear on the State Governments by the then Federal Minister for Supply, Mr. Spooner, who said that the housing shortage had been overcome and many tenants came from the more prosperous section of the community. I shall never forget the statement he made. It was decided to abolish that provision in the new agreement. It was not possible for the State Governments to resist at that time. They had to accept the agreement as it stood, and secure the money from the Commonwealth Government at 4 per cent., or have no agreement but pay 5½ per cent. for the same money. The Government were in a cleft stick, and had to accept the exclusion of the clause covering rental rebates.

I think some means could be found where a system of rental rebates could be established by the State Government. There was insufficient time to analyse exactly how the new agreement would operate before we were defeated in 1957. The signing of the 1956 agreement was delayed for some months. It has been found since that hardship has been created in many cases. Widows occupying 1956 agreement homes have had to be transferred into 1945 agreement homes. As long as a tenant is in one house or the other it does not make much difference to the Commission because—

Mr. Hiley: There is this difference: if they occupy an old agreement home the Commonwealth Government bear 60 per cent. of the losses, otherwise we bear the lot.

Mr. LLOYD: I would reply to that interjection by asking the Treasurer a question. Have the Commonwealth Government at any time since the original 1945 agreement was signed made any contribution to the Queensland Government because of any losses sustained?

Mr. Hiley: I thought the Commissioner was in the lobby but he is not. I would have checked with him, but in any case I think I am right in saying that last week we got a cheque for over £100,000.

Mr. LLOYD: Up till 1956 I am certain that not one penny had been received from the Commonwealth Government for that reason.

Mr. Hiley: We have been chasing them. I am on their hammer for another £90,000 now.

Mr. LLOYD: I realise that there is provision under the 1945 agreement for the losses to be made up by the Commonwealth

Government. I also realise that hardship has been imposed on many of the tenants of 1956 agreement homes. If they were in a private home owned by a private landlord they would have to find other accommodation. They would have to go along to the Housing Commission and the Housing Commission eventually would have to find them accommodation. The widow or the pensioner would not be able to afford a high rental. We have accepted the responsibility of being a landlord. We must accept that responsibility in the terminology of the agreement. The real purpose of the agreement was to provide homes for working people who were unable to afford to own a home of their own. In other words, it was originally planned that the homes were to be constructed for people who could not afford to pay the high rentals charged by landlords, and who were unable to buy homes of their own. That was the original intention of the agreement. I think that the exclusion altogether of the rental rebate system violates the original intention of the Commonwealth-States Housing Agreement. I realise there would be considerable cost involved in this matter, but I do not think there would be a great number of cases. For instance, in the case of a man who was thrown out of employment and who may be out of employment for two or three weeks, or even for six months if he is unfortunate, there would be very little loss involved for the Housing Commission. If it is the case of a widowed pensioner or an invalid pensioner—and cases of that nature have occurred—the arrears of rental pending the period until they are able to shift into another home, could be completely wiped out.

I understand that the Housing Commission, when transferring some of these pensioners from one house to another have forgotten the arrears of rental on the first home, the 1956 agreement home, but there is considerable worry to the pensioner also, particularly if it is a woman, in the notices being continually received from the Commission. So, I think some more humanitarian approach could be made to such cases.

The third matter raised by the Treasurer was in relation to subdividers, and it is one that raises quite an interesting and provocative argument. We have all been concerned at the high cost of land as demanded by subdividers. Land right on the border of Brisbane is at present being developed. I think it is called the Everton Park Estate. It was advertised extensively on T.V. last week-end, and it has come down to prices ranging from £595 to £750 because of the difficulties of the particular subdivider. When the original subdivision was made prices of land in the area were set down at from £1,000 upwards. For the choice allotments in the area £900 was the minimum price and the average price ranged from £1,000 to £1,100. People were paying those prices up to three months ago when the first sales were made. Hon. members probably realise the

financial difficulties of that particular subdivider. The land is now being sold at a discount, bringing the price down to a range between £595 and £750, and even this price is extremely difficult for most young couples to meet. Many of them are buying on a small deposit of 10 per cent.

It will be found that land advertised for sale in the classified advertisements of the daily newspapers was advertised on a deposit of 5 per cent. to 10 per cent., even at prices ranging up to £600. In many cases young couples recently married are purchasing such land and then finding themselves in financial difficulties paying it off. Often they do not know their civil rights and surrender the land to the subdivider. It is then resold by an estate agent. In many cases that land is sold over and over again.

An unfortunate feature of the matter is that many allotments of land are sold for speculation purposes. It is sold many times over to young couples before a home is built on it. The Housing Commission's sale of land will provide some competition and certainly drain off a great deal of the demand that is causing the high prices at the present time. The scheme stated by the Treasurer is one that no doubt could prevent speculation by people buying and selling the land being subdivided by the Commission. However, I suggest that the Housing Commission should closely consider one of the schemes at present in operation in the War Service Homes Division. They have two schemes. One is the ordinary scheme of lending money to prospective home-builders based on a 10 per cent. deposit with a 90 per cent. advance. The title of the land is transferred immediately and the land itself is held by the prospective home-builder. The other scheme is altogether different, that is, where the advance required of the home-builder is 5 per cent., and War Service Homes Division makes available 95 per cent. of the finance required for the house. In that case the title of the land is held by War Service Homes Division until the mortgage is completely paid off. Immediately it is paid off, the land reverts to the mortgagee. Such a scheme could be incorporated in the scheme of subdivision of land by the Commission. It could take the place of the Workers' Home scheme if that is to be abolished eventually. Under such a scheme the deposit is 5 per cent. and the land will eventually become the property of the person owning the house.

I shall deal again with the building of homes by co-operative building societies. With heavy interest charges we are reaching the stage when it will be impossible for many young people to borrow sufficient money to get a home of their own. I ask the Government to accept the principle that it is necessary to take drastic action in order to provide homes for this section of the community, that is, the lower income group, with an average of £20 a week and less. A means test could be introduced and a scheme

adopted to enable the poorer section of the community to buy homes. A lower rate of interest than under other schemes could be charged. I realise that the action would be sectional, but in other forms of governmental activity we have at times introduced sectional schemes. Under the workers' dwelling scheme an advance up to £3,000 can be obtained at an interest rate of 5½ per cent. Under schemes arising from the Commonwealth-States Housing Agreement amounts up to £3,400 or £3,500 may be borrowed at 5½ per cent. The people who are borrowing those sums of money and paying a heavy rate of interest must have an income sufficient to enable them to meet their high interest and redemption charges. A family with an income of £20 a week or less could not possibly borrow £3,400 from the Housing Commission and pay interest of 5½ per cent. on it. They could not do it on a repayment plan that calls for the payment of £5 a week. They have to pay rates and undertake all the other commitments that accompany home ownership. A sectional housing plan should be introduced for the young people in our community, to enable them to look forward to the future with some degree of confidence. They cannot do so at the present time. Interest charges and the cost of home construction put homes beyond their financial capacity. I suggest a lower rate of interest, ranging down to the rate of interest charged by the War Service Homes Division. Such a scheme could be incorporated in the present land subdivisional scheme of the Commission. Young people will then be able to purchase a home on a deposit of 5 per cent. and secure a Housing Commission home at a low rate of interest.

If a means test was introduced such a scheme would be of real benefit for the lower-income group in the community, a very valuable and growing group.

Mr. HANLON (Baroona) (4.56 p.m.): Each of the three principles of the Bill seems to have a good deal to recommend it. I am pleased that the Treasurer has taken the opportunity of carrying out the request of the Auditor-General in his last two reports in regard to a change of policy by the Government and the carrying by them of their own insurance risk. In 1959 the Auditor-General pointed out that this change would require amending legislation. He pointed out the same thing in 1960. I should not have liked to see another Session go by and his wishes ignored.

I think the Treasurer has done the right thing. The Housing Commission will be taking the risk instead of paying huge premiums to the State Government Insurance Office. We know, of course, that the two instrumentalities are part of the Government service and the money paid by the Housing Commission goes to the State Government Insurance Office, but as the Treasurer has said the Commission can do much with that amount of money. This action goes to prove,

as I interjected, firstly that insurance business is very lucrative. That is very obvious to most people. It also shows that many things that seem to be a big risk when introduced turn out to be not such a big risk at all. I can remember when this principle was introduced in 1947 my father telling me that he had a great battle with officialdom when it was first discussed. They predicted dire consequences for the finances of the State and the Commission if this free insurance scheme was introduced, but the Government went ahead and decided they would carry on with it, notwithstanding the warnings of the officials. It may have been because of those dire warnings that the large premiums were to be paid to the State Government Insurance Office. Up to 1958 over half a million pounds has been paid in premiums, and more would have been paid if the practice had not ceased. There have been very few claims. I understand that up to date there have been only 29.

I hope some day to be able to convince some of the hon. members on the other side that three weeks' leave will not ruin us just as this measure did not ruin us.

The new arrangements relating to overdue rentals are very good. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said they will enable the officers of the Commission to have a more practical approach to the problems and may perhaps avoid the criticism that has been unfairly levelled at times because of the procedures adopted to secure overdue rentals. It means also that they can deal with people who are outright no-hopers; the people who take advantage of the Housing Commission. They would represent a very small proportion. The overdue rentals do not amount to very much, as the Treasurer said, compared with the total rentals. Those tenants who attempt to take advantage of the Housing Commission spoil it for the majority of the tenants who try to do the right thing. I have no objection to the Commission being given power to deal harshly with people who take an unfair advantage. What is more important is that this measure will give an opportunity for sympathetic dealings with those people who have a genuine case of hardship through unemployment or sickness and are thus unable to keep up with their rentals.

I turn now to the completely new principle dealing with the subdivision of land for sale. I agree with the Treasurer and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that this is a good move. It has been carried out already by the Labour Government in New South Wales but I do not know whether it is through the New South Wales Housing Commission. By competition in sales they have endeavoured to bring back the prices of residential allotments to a more reasonable level. However, at present there are a number of Brisbane suburbs that have long waiting lists with the Housing Commission of people who want to buy homes built by the Housing Commission on Housing Commission land. I mentioned that

by way of interjection when the Treasurer was speaking. I do not altogether agree with the Housing Commission subdividing and selling allotments when people are waiting to purchase homes that the Housing Commission could build on those sites.

I think that the Treasurer should endeavour to get the Government and the Premier to co-operate with the Housing Commission in providing land, but on 28th of this month 10 allotments at Stafford are to be auctioned by the Lands Department. The upset prices range from £400 to £700. I do not know what the Housing Commission will be paying for building blocks but I do not think it will be paying much less than £400 to £700 for that type of land. Naturally it is the job of the Department of Public Lands to sell land and make something out of it for the department and the revenue of the State, but it seems a dog-in-the-manger attitude to me for one section of the Government to auction blocks of land in a week's time at an upset price of £400 to £700 which could easily sell for £800 to £1,500 at auction, and at the same time the Treasurer brings down this legislation to try to stop auctions sending prices up. The Government should have made that land available to the Housing Commission and let it build on it.

Mr. Hiley: That could be our fault. If the Housing Commission desires any reasonable quantity of land for housing purposes, it never has any trouble with the Department of Public Lands. It is always made available. These must have been a few strays that slipped our notice.

Mr. HANLON: It seems I must put the blame on the Housing Commission. The blocks in question are near the Stafford State School, and according to the figures there are quite a few people on the waiting list for sites at Stafford to be purchased under the low-deposit scheme. The Housing Commission could have used those and housed 10 people who have not a great deal of money to buy land whereas possibly at an auction the blocks would go to people who could afford to buy land elsewhere and who have £3,000 or £4,000 in cash to spend on land and a home.

Mr. Hughes: With inflated values the Brisbane City Council auctions have not realised their expected prices in recent months, so these probably would not.

Mr. HANLON: I do not know where the Council land was.

Mr. Hughes: Within the city area.

Mr. HANLON: It may have been because of the particular circumstances of the present credit squeeze. However, the Stafford sites are right next to a Housing Commission estate, in a sewered area, and next to the Stafford School. I think they would have realised their value. I know people have not been able to get them for the upset price.

It would be helpful to the Treasurer, too, in trying to bring the price of land down and to secure land for the Housing Commission, if he could get more co-operation from the council (which is selling land to speculators and making a tremendous cop out of it and allowing the purchasers to subdivide it and auction it) and also from the Commonwealth Government, who do not show much co-operation, either. The Commonwealth Government have a great deal of land which they could make available to the Housing Commission for building homes, or they could subdivide it and sell it themselves at an upset price and so let people get land at a reasonable price.

I think if an upset price is put on a block it should not be left to the discretion of the Minister or the Commissioner to determine who should get the block. I hope, as the Treasurer said, there will be no difficulties in that. People will come in and be asked to select their block and there will not be any argument. But the Treasurer has said he does not think there will be an avalanche of blocks overnight. It will just be ones that come in. The position could well develop that members of Parliament on both sides, and the Treasurer himself and the Commissioner, would have people coming along and saying, "There is a block of land on such-and-such a corner at Stafford" or Chermiside or somewhere else. "I'd like to get that block. I have heard that Hiley has somebody lined up for it" or Galvin, and all that sort of business, and so you would have lobbying going on for some particular person to get the block.

Mr. Hiley: Lobbying could be made a disqualification.

Mr. HANLON: If members in particular do not produce some evidence that they have made inquiries they themselves might not be in a very healthy position with the outlook of their electors. That could be avoided, and it would be better all round if, in the event of more than one suitable applicant coming in for a particular block, a ballot were conducted along the same lines as those held by the Department of Public Lands.

Mr. Hiley: I think that is fair enough.

Mr. HANLON: If there were, say, 10 applicants for the one block, they could ballot. The successful applicant would take the block and the other nine move on to another block.

Apart from that, I have no objection to the Bill.

Mr. SHERRINGTON (Salisbury) (5.7 p.m.): I rise to support some of the views expounded by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, particularly those relating to arrears of rental on Housing Commission homes. I represent an electorate composed, of some 75 per cent. of Housing Commission homes, and naturally, from the problems my constituents have, and which they bring to

my notice, I have a keen interest in the measures before the Committee to overcome and straighten out the matter of arrears of rentals of those homes.

The hon. member for Kedron mentioned the difference between old-agreement and new-agreement homes. I find from experience that this has caused a great deal of confusion and resentment amongst tenants who fall into arrears of rent and find that, to their way of thinking, one section is being treated differently from the other. When the tenant of an old-agreement home becomes unemployed or ill, he is usually able to get a rebate of rent. In my experience the officers of the Housing Commission are very humane in cases of unemployment and sickness. When the tenant of a new-agreement home falls into the same category of distress and approaches the Housing Commission, he is told that, because he occupies a home coming under the new agreement, he cannot obtain a rebate of rent. Although the Commission will allow him to fall into arrears of rent to some extent during his period of distress, he is expected to repay his debt when his circumstances improve. There is a certain amount of resentment in these rent-arrears cases about what is termed differential treatment of tenants. The principle contained in the Bill will go a long way towards assisting those who have the unfortunate experience of falling into arrears. As the Treasurer said, once a court eviction order is secured it must be exercised before its expiry date or it becomes invalid. Consequently once an order becomes invalid the Housing Commission has to re-apply to the court for a further order. For that reason the Commission has adopted the policy that once an eviction order is issued, to use the vernacular, it is a matter of "Money up or get out." People who have genuinely tried to discharge their debts have had to vacate their homes because eviction orders were due to expire before they were able to obtain financial assistance, and the Commission would not grant them a further extension of time. The provision of the Bill will enable Commission officers to clear up a lot of doubt and misunderstanding. In cases of genuine hardship they will be able to extend a little more relief than they can at the present time.

I should particularly like to bring to the notice of the Committee the case of a woman in my electorate who became widowed under tragic circumstances. The family were occupying a new agreement home, and they spent many hundreds of pounds on beautifying it. The work that was done to improve the house and its surroundings was a credit to the family. When the lady was widowed and in receipt of only the widow's pension she could not obtain a rental rebate. She was anxious to retain possession of the home because of all the improvements carried out. I pay tribute to the officers of the Commission who humanely allowed her to take in a boarder to assist her financially.

The problem of arrears of rent is a difficult one, and one that will be accentuated by the present economic situation. I welcome that provision of the Bill because it will allow the Commission more latitude than it can extend presently to persons who are unfortunately placed in the position of owing rent.

I welcome the provision dealing with subdivision. In a previous speech on the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply I said that I considered that the Government could subdivide land for young home-builders. One of the great advantages of the introduction of this principle is the fact that it will tend to curb the activities of land developers and land sharks who have had a Roman holiday in Queensland in the past few years. One particularly bad feature of the land developer—I think the Treasurer will agree entirely with me on this—is the misconception created by the advertisements of land developers. They advertise so many lots valued from £300 to £700, but when young home-seekers hopefully try to purchase land for from £300 to £700 an allotment they find that there are no £300 allotments left. For that matter there never were any. It is snide advertising. They find that, where there is a class of allotment valued at between £300 and £700, the lowest for which they can buy an allotment is about £650.

I feel that the principle contained in this Bill is an answer to those land sharks who indulge in this snide advertising and who constitute one of the reasons why young home seekers adopt such a hopeless attitude when they realise what they are up against in their desire to build a home.

Another aspect of the matter which should be brought to the notice of the Committee is that under which a person might own one or two acres of land and desire to sell it. He negotiates with persons who have answered the advertisement to sell the land, and is amazed when the financial arrangements are being concluded to find that he is actually dealing with snide agents for land developers who subdivide the land and make enormous profits. I feel that the Government are doing a good service in introducing the principle of subdividing land and selling it to young home seekers, as the Minister has stated, with a small margin of profit. I commend that section of the Bill and feel that it will receive full support.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (5.19 p.m.): The first two principles contained in this Bill have been fully covered by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the hon. member for Baroona, and the hon. member for Salisbury, but a few thoughts come to my mind on subdivisions. I ask the Minister to take the points I make into account in implementing the provisions of the Bill. In large subdivisions road works and channelling have to be carried out. I appeal to the Government to make sure that such work is done by Government departments and that the practice will not

develop of doing it by outside contract. Once that becomes the practice such contractors will endeavour to make as much profit as possible out of the project. They will not be concerned about keeping costs down. The road works and channelling should be done by the Department of Main Roads in order to ensure that the cost, passed on to the home purchaser, is at the right level. There have been instances where private estates have been subdivided and the subdividers have fallen down on the job, the Council having to complete the work.

Mr. Hughes: That has not happened recently.

Mr. HOUSTON: Yes, it has happened recently. The hon. member might not know it, but that occurred quite recently. There have been cases, to my knowledge, in which the Council has had to finish the work. Balmoral Heights Estate is one case in point which the hon. member may check if he so desires. I urge the Government to do the work through Government instrumentalities.

When such land is sold the purchaser buys land which is valued at such-and-such an initial figure. He then has to pay for the cost of the road work and the channelling and that cost is added on to the initial cost. He then pays rates on that total valuation. In other words, he is paying rates on the value of road work and channelling for which he has already paid. To me the principle seems to be that such purchasers of land have to pay for something they cannot get. Can any hon. member tell me what the average householder gets out of a Council once the footpath and channelling is made and the road constructed? I do not know of anything.

Before this land is sold the Commission should make sure that the titles are clear. One of the greatest problems that I, at any rate, have come across is that land is sold and when the purchaser goes to build his home through the Housing Commission or another society it is found that he cannot get his loan because the title is not clear. There is one example at Seven Hills at the present time of people waiting for 18 months for the title. They paid cash for the land but cannot get their titles because the subdivider made errors in subdivision and the matter has been passed backwards and forwards between the subdivider, the Council and the Titles Office until it is a complete mess. If the Government are going into this matter—and I believe they should—I urge them not to seek advice from those who have made a complete mess of the situation on some estates.

I suggest that the Government come to arrangements with the Brisbane City Council and local authorities so that when roads are laid down in housing estates other connecting roads to the estates are put in first-class condition. At the present time an estate is developed with very fine roads, and the

quarter mile of road connecting the old housing area to the new estate is a bog patch in wet weather and a dust bowl in dry weather. I suggest that the connecting roads should be put in first-class condition and that arrangements to do so should be made with the local authority at the time.

Every effort should be made to prevent problems that may arise for prospective home-owners. We are dealing with people who in most instances are buying their first block of ground and have very little experience of these matters. As they are dealing with a Government department they assume that everything will be done correctly for them. It is not in the interest of the scheme or the people themselves if they get troubles immediately after they take possession. I do not want to get into a technical debate with a member of the Brisbane City Council who happens to be in the Chamber, but I suggest that land in the Brisbane suburbs should be tested as to its suitability for the installation of septic systems prior to the sale of that land. The person who buys the land will then know his commitment for the installation of sewerage or septic. He would know that he could not have sewerage as the area is not sewered, but he could have the idea when buying the land of installing a septic system, only to be told by the Council after he purchases it that it is unsuitable for the installation of a septic system. Three or four blocks away the land may be suitable and he may have been able to purchase a block that he wanted at no extra cost had he known. Soil tests should be carried out so that when the land is being put up for sale it can be stated that it is suitable or unsuitable for the installation of a septic system.

The Minister did not give us any clear indication of the location of the land he has in mind or whether he had any particular land in mind. I get back on my old hobby-horse and suggest that the Government make sure that estates to be opened up are somewhere near industries where people work. The fact that that has not been done in the past is a great bugbear and has affected the development of Brisbane. Problems in regard to transport and the supply of electricity and water have been created. Housing is scattered over a wide area. We have people living at Inala and working at Bulimba, and others living at Holland Park and working on the other side of Brisbane. They have to cross from one side of the city to the other. Now that the Government are going into this matter, I urge them to obtain land somewhere near where the people are going to work, and if possible to try to hold that land for people who work in the locality. If we do not we are going to find ourselves in a certain amount of difficulty. Land subdividers are opening up ground near industries, and the State Government should do likewise. I have suggested before, and I do so again, the resumption of holding paddocks in my electorate which are now going to

waste. Many acres of land in that area are now held as holding paddocks and are never used. They may be used in times of industrial trouble, but in the main they are lying idle. If it is necessary to hold cattle over long periods, they can be held further from the centre of the city. These parts of the Bulimba electorate are not more than three miles from the G.P.O. In the interests of people who require land and people who now reside in the area, I suggest the resumption of this land. It is ideal for building purposes, it could be subdivided and sold to people who are working at the abattoirs, wharves, and so on. I support the other measures that have been introduced. I look forward to having a copy of the Bill and going through it in detail. Provided the suggestions I have made are given effect to I cannot see any reason why the Bill should not have my support.

Mr. NEWTON (Belmont) (5.26 p.m.): I wish to deal mainly with the matter of arrears of rent. My electorate takes in a number of Housing Commission areas and at times I am called upon to adjudicate between a tenant and the Queensland Housing Commission. I find difficulty in understanding the procedure adopted. The Minister has indicated to some extent what takes place.

We find that an eviction order was taken out by the Housing Commission some time in February last and eventually it came before the court, but for some unknown reason the proceedings were not continued, or the court decided, after hearing the tenant's case—which takes the case out of the Housing Commission's hands—that the tenant had a further length of life over his arrears. Then, eventually it comes before the court, if the tenant has not paid up, and the necessary action is taken. When this is done the tenants are not notified that the proceedings are to take place. This is a most unfortunate procedure, because when Housing Commission tenants are being dealt with it has been my experience that they fall into three main categories, a husband, wife and family, a widow and her family, or a widow. They come to us, as members of Parliament, to adjudicate between them and the Housing Commission. I had one case this morning where the rental was £3 17s. 6d. a week. It was under the 1956 agreement, and there were 12 weeks in arrears. I have people coming to see me weekly about evictions. There must be a monthly analysis relating to arrears in Housing Commission rents, but I do not know the policy of the Housing Commission.

To my mind, the present rent-card system is not a good method of showing the exact position of a tenant. I have seen a number of them. It is quite true they show what has been paid, but if they get into arrears, when the weekly rental is £3 17s. 6d. a week, a tenant would have to be an expert to pick up the amount of rental owing, whereas at £3 a week it is a relatively easy matter to

work out the amount. Quite a few tenants have come to see me and I have written to the Commission and have received a reply stating just where they stand. Luckily for the tenants it has been long before they got near the £40 or £60 mark and they have tried to do something about it. There are many genuine cases of tenants with arrears of rent. A case was brought to my notice of a working man with a family, whose wife went out to work to overcome the arrears in rent. On this occasion the wife came to me and told me that she had gone to work and had to pay somebody to look after the children under school age and she was asked to pay so much extra a week—if it was £4, she was asked to pay £6—and immediately it was found she was working, further pressure was put on her to pay more. I brought this matter to the attention of the authorities, and then the pressure was removed. These are the things we must look into when we are discussing arrears of rent.

I had a case concerning the widow of an ex-service man where the Red Cross organisation or some other organisation visited her and told her not to worry about the rent. Luckily I called on her about a week later and I made some inquiries. The house she was occupying was built before 1956 and I was able to apply for a rental rebate for her. On going back in a month's time, I said to the woman, "Are you paying your rent?" She said, "No, I am not paying my rent because I have been told by these other people not to worry about it." In the short time I have been in Parliament I have had a number of these cases. Immediately somebody mentions applying for a rental rebate the widow and other tenants stop paying until the rental rebates comes through, and when it does come through the arrears are great. When I refer to a widow I refer to a widow on her own, or with a son or daughter. Here again we strike some odd instances. I do not know. It is beyond me. The widow must have known what she was doing but it is surprising that any widow on £5 a week should accept a house built since 1956, which means that there is no rental rebate and that she will have to pay £3 17s. 6d. a week or whatever the full rent is. She gives herself very little to live on. It is all very well to say she has a son and daughter working; they are under 21 and she would be able to get something out of them. Those who have families know it is not as easy as that. It takes a good deal of money to feed them and keep a roof over their heads. I have in my room downstairs a thick file covering problems relating to arrears of rent that have been referred to me since I became a member of Parliament. There are genuine cases but there have also been cases of people I have helped who later, I have found, have gone owing the Commission a considerable sum of money. These tenants do not help us to help others.

Though there are amounts at present outstanding by way of arrears of rent, I think they would have been just as great when we were the Government. I would expect my party when in Government to be just as sympathetic as the present parties in Government. When you have a look at many of these cases and find them genuine you learn that very often the tenants could have applied for rental rebate instead of getting into arrears but they did not know that they had that right. Eventually when the matter comes to a member of Parliament to adjudicate, he has possibly only 24 hours or 48 hours in which to do something for them. It is a shocking state of affairs because it does not give the member a chance to study the case fully to put it before the Commissioner and, if necessary, before the Minister to stop the eviction.

I do not want to touch on the other matters in the Bill but I have mentioned those because they affect a number of people in my electorate.

Mr. DEAN (Sandgate) (5.38 p.m.): I do not wish to indulge in tedious repetition but I want to make a few observations on some aspects of the Bill. I heartily agree with the provision for free life insurance to give greater consideration to the home-seeker and the borrower. That is long overdue.

The subject of arrears of rents has been well covered. I think a survey should be made of the present housing position in some areas, particularly of some homes occupied by very old people. I get many complaints from time to time from family units about some of the homes being occupied by one person. In many cases the person unfortunately has suffered illness and spent many weeks in hospital so that the home has been locked up whereas it could have been used by the family. Today we are not devoid of homes for those unfortunate aged people. Many of the churches provide good accommodation for them and there are Government homes as well. Perhaps the Minister will adopt my suggestion and have a survey conducted to consider whether existing homes could be better used.

I am rather sceptical about the subdivision provision of the Bill. I cannot see how it will work in competition with the private subdivider outside. On the other side of the Chamber we certainly have businessmen who will be interested in some of the property transactions throughout the area and no doubt there will be some conflict, if they carry out the provision sincerely—if they carry it, as it should be carried, to its logical conclusion to give the borrower and the home-purchaser a fair go with land. It is not a new principle; it has been in existence for a long time. We already have Housing Commission estates built on acquired land, land formerly farm land and the like. If this idea is carried to its logical conclusion—and I hope it is; I hope my scepticism will prove to be unfounded—a

person intending to buy a block of land that the Commissioner has acquired will receive the full benefit. The only way he can receive the benefit of a fair deal when applying for the land is by the use of the ballot system. Already a certain amount of doubt has been cast this afternoon on how the land would be fairly and squarely dealt with and handed out to prospective home-owners. I think that the ballot system would be the only way of doing it.

I sincerely hope that the development of the land will be done a little better than it has been in the past. I have in mind contracts that were let to private contractors to carry out developmental work within Housing Commission areas. I have a vivid recollection of one area where the water channelling fell apart in 12 months. Naturally inspectors cannot be on the job all day and every day to watch the ingredients that are going into the concrete.

Mr. Hiley: Are you talking about Zillmere?

Mr. DEAN: The South Zillmere project. After it was handed over to the Council and we accepted full responsibility for the maintenance of the area we had to reconstruct a great deal of the water channelling.

Mr. Hiley: That is eight or ten years ago?

Mr. DEAN: About that. I should not like to see the same mistakes made again by handing the work out to any private contractor who might like to tender for it.

Perhaps something could be done to overcome the difficulty and inconvenience caused to many prospective home-builders who want to build a Commission home. Many people who own their own land have applied to the Commission for the construction of homes, but even though they have paid for the land they are still waiting for the title deed to go through the Titles Office. The work in that office has been heavy for years, but I think that it is even heavier at the present time. I understand that the Commissioner has insisted that owners of land must present their title deeds over the counter before consideration will be given even to drawing up plans. I think it is wrong, because for many years the previous practice worked very well. A cover-note showing that they had lodged details of a subdivision for a title deed was considered quite sufficient. I should like to see that practice reintroduced.

I hope that the acquiring of the land by the Housing Commission will help to stabilise prices, and even bring them down, which no doubt the present economic position will tend to do. I hope that it will give some of the private subdividers the right type of thinking so that they will charge the right price for their land. I have in mind land in my area that could have been held by the Housing Commission, but it was sold to Asiatics—people who are never likely to come to this country, but they are holding the land on a speculation basis.

I do not think that the provision dealing with subdivision will work because in my opinion pressure will be brought to bear as private subdividers will not be happy about it. I am quite happy with the rest of the Bill, and look forward to examining it more closely when it is printed.

Mr. TUCKER (Townsville North) (5.43 p.m.): I listened with interest to the Treasurer's introduction of the Bill. Two points struck me particularly, overdue rentals and the subdivision of land. I have many Housing Commission homes in my area. The subject of overdue rentals already has been well ventilated. The matter that vitally concerns me now is the proposed subdivision of land. Townsville has a very big housing problem which I have mentioned many times. The fringe allotments in Townsville about five miles or so from the post office, are offered for sale at between £550 and £650 an allotment. I have not noticed any price drop in the last few weeks, despite the credit squeeze. It would appear that there is some sort of ring or cartel in Townsville that consistently holds up the price of these allotments. There does not seem to be any way in the world of breaking it. The provision of the Bill dealing with the subdivision and sale of land through the Housing Commission is certainly a very bright star on the horizon for the working people in Townsville because it could mean a way to break the ring. When I mentioned the amounts of £650 and £550 for the fringe areas I neglected to state that nearer town, prices range from £800 to £1,100 which is absolutely ridiculous in most instances and far beyond the means of most young people on wages.

In addition to the speculators there are other investors who not only buy land but also build on it and sell the homes to these young people at exorbitant prices. In such cases, nobody ever knows at just what value the land was sold.

There is land at Rowe's Bay in Townsville which is regarded as quite a select suburb at the moment. The Department of Public Lands has thrown land open there previously. I went with the Minister for Lands and the Acting Mayor of Townsville at the time when land was to be thrown open to private enterprise to develop. I mention that because it would be very good land for the Housing Commission to acquire. Very little work need be done on it and I think it could be made available to the average worker at far below the price that private enterprise would ask for it.

Mr. Hiley: I have had my eye on that but it is not in the council's early scheme for water and sewerage. Land is no good to me unless there is water, and I want sewerage as well.

Mr. TUCKER: It would be hard to find land in Townsville adjacent to any sewerage scheme now being carried out. The land is adjacent to fully-developed land at Rowe's

Bay and, when I was with the Minister and the Acting Mayor, the Acting Mayor indicated that the council would be prepared to bring services to that land if it was thrown open to private enterprise. When I asked at that stage why the Government could not throw the land open and sell it, the Minister was not prepared to listen.

Mr. Hiley: That is the land near the sanitary reserve?

Mr. TUCKER: That is right. I mention it again this afternoon because I think it would be one way of dealing with these speculators in Townsville who have been the curse of the working people there for the past 10 years.

Young people who wish to build a home have to pay from £800 to £1,000 for land and it becomes almost impossible for them to build a home. The average family man is in the same category.

I should also like to ask the Treasurer if the Housing Commission intends to embark immediately on this business? Would it be the intention of the Commission to act fairly soon in regard to the piece of land that has been mentioned?

Mr. Hiley: Yes.

Mr. TUCKER: The Treasurer mentioned that he thought there would be only a small number of applications at a time. I venture to say that in Townsville there would be an avalanche if it was made known to the people that such a scheme would operate to put on the market cheap land next door to some of these more expensive subdivisions. I feel that the Commission could put the land on the market at probably half the price now being asked and there would be an avalanche of applications.

A further point I should like to make before resuming my seat is: if a person purchases a piece of land from the Commission would that preclude him from borrowing from the Commission and going on or would he have to go back in the priority list?

Mr. Hiley: No.

Mr. TUCKER: I think that in Townsville at the moment there are about 120 people who already have their names down for homes on £350 deposit. Would they have to go back?

Mr. Hiley: I cannot give you a precise answer.

Mr. TUCKER: It would not mean then that if someone bought a piece of land he would have to borrow from some other instrumentality?

Mr. Hiley: If he does not want to do that he selects his block and enters into a contract of sale with the Commission.

Mr. TUCKER: The last point is in reference to the development of the land. I have in mind the Garbutt area in Townsville where

there are Housing Commission homes nearing completion, but there is no kerbing or channelling in the area.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I am having difficulty in hearing the honourable member.

Mr. TUCKER: Although the City Council has asked subdividers in other areas to carry out such work, it has not been done by the Commission at Garbutt.

Mr. Hiley: That is an old subdivision. Any new subdivision must be right up to what the Council requires.

Mr. TUCKER: That is the only one I had in mind. I wanted to know why homes could be built there without that improvement. I commend the Bill and certainly hope that it works one hundred per cent.

Hon. P. J. R. HILTON (Carnarvon) (5.52 p.m.): At this stage it is impossible to express a considered opinion on all the proposals incorporated in the legislation. Unfortunately I was called out of the Chamber during the Treasurer's introduction and I do not know the full import of some of his remarks. There is some misconception in the minds of the people that the policy of the Commission of buying land, subdividing it and selling at a minimum profit is going to reduce substantially land values in Brisbane and provincial cities. The Treasurer has not explained many factors in detail, first, the selling of land at a minimum of profit. I do not think he defined what he considered to be a minimum of profit. There is certainly a limitation on the areas of land that the Housing Commission can acquire for these purposes. Obviously, just compensation must be paid to the land-holders for all land that is acquired. The Land Court is the final authority to determine compensation, and obviously subdivisional values will be a factor that must be taken into consideration when the Land Court is finally making its determination on compensation. While it is desirable that action be taken to bring land prices to a reasonable level, I cannot see for the life of me how the Bill will go very far in that direction.

I recall what happened when I was Minister for Housing. After much arguing with the Commonwealth Government we got them to agree—after two years of negotiations—to permit the sale of homes erected under the Commonwealth-States agreement. I remember the great outcry by the then Opposition because we were selling land at that time at a very reasonable valuation. That was before the land sharks came on the scene and forced up the price of land. I do not think we shall ever see those happy times again. The fact remains that a difficult position has been created by the sharp practices of land subdividers, and I do not think the provisions of the Bill will have a great tendency to reduce land prices. I should like to see something done in that direction but, if the Treasurer states that

by way of this legislation the Government are embarking on a policy that is going to make land cheaper, I think he may be pulling the legs of the public to some extent.

I should like to know what the Treasurer regards as a minimum profit and, assuming land is sold and it can be truthfully said that it is sold at a minimum of profit to the Commission, how will valuations subsequently be determined on that particular land?

Valuations by the Valuator-General will eventually come into play. Will he disregard the values placed on the land by the Housing Commission or will he still be guided, in accordance with the law, by the prices received from what we term free and open sales to people buying land from land subdividers? That point will have to be determined in due course. To bring about a reduction in land values it would seem to me that eventually there will have to be an amendment of the Valuation of Land Acts in order to put the whole matter in its proper perspective.

I reserve my considered comment until I have perused the legislation, but at this stage I warn the people that as I understand it the legislation is not going to be a really big factor in bringing down the unfortunately high values that exist at the present time.

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 6 p.m.
