

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 23 MARCH 1965

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Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. D. E. Nicholson, Murrumba) read prayers and took the chair at 11 a.m.

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF MIRANI

DATES FOR BY-ELECTION

Mr. SPEAKER: I inform the House that the dates in connection with the issue of the writ for the election of a member to serve in this House for the electoral district of Mirani will be as follows:—

Issue of writ—15 April, 1965.

Date of nomination—22 April, 1965.

Polling day—15 May, 1965.

Return of writ—11 June, 1965.

STATE TRANSPORT ACTS

NOTICE OF MOTION FOR DISALLOWANCE OF PROCLAMATION

Mr. SPEAKER: I draw the attention of hon. members to the notice of motion standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition to disallow the proclamation dated 9 March, 1965, under the State Transport Acts, 1938 to 1943. I point out that since the notice was given, in passing the Industrial Law Amendment Bill Parliament has ratified and confirmed the proclamation in question. I am of the opinion that it is not now competent for the Legislative Assembly to disallow, by resolution, the proclamation under the provisions of Standing Order No. 37A.

QUESTIONS

COMMISSION ON LAND SALES, FITZROY BASIN LAND DEVELOPMENT SCHEME.—Mr. Lloyd, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Lands,—

(1) How much commission has been paid to selling agents in relation to freehold sales of land under the Fitzroy Basin Land Development Scheme?

(2) Who were the selling agents at each sale and how much commission has been paid to each selling agent?

(3) Why is it not possible for the Department to conduct its own sales and arrange its own conveyancing?

Answers:—

(1) “£8,312 19s. 4d. for first and second sales and an estimate of £2,929 13s. 6d. for third sale.”

(2) (a) “Elder Smith Goldsbrough Mort Ltd. and The Australian Estates Company Ltd. for the first sale. The Australian Estates Company Ltd. and Mactaggarts Primary Producers Co-operative Associa-

tion Ltd. for the second sale and Elder Smith Goldsbrough Mort Ltd. and Dalgety & New Zealand Loan Ltd. for the third sale. (b) £1,849 16s. 5d. to Elder Smith Goldsbrough Mort Ltd. £4,156 9s. 8d. to The Australian Estates Company Ltd. £2,306 13s. 3d. to Mactaggarts Primary Producers Co-operative Association. The estimated commission of £2,929 13s. 6d. for the third sale would be payable:—£1,464 16s. 9d. to Elder Smith Goldsbrough Mort Ltd. £1,464 16s. 9d. to Dalgety & New Zealand Loan Ltd.”

(3) “Yes, the Department could conduct its own sales with the provision of additional staff but it is considered the matter is better handled by the selling agents for the following reasons:—(a) Because of their branches throughout Australia the selling agents are able to extensively publicise the sales and are able to provide a very convenient service to prospective purchasers. This applies particularly to interstate enquiries. (b) The selling agents are in a better position to conduct enquiries over the blocks and the district generally. As a matter of interest and in no way as justification of the action taken I mention that there was a precedent for the Government's action in that the Queensland Government Central Queensland Estates appointed selling agents for the disposal of certain of the lands of the Queensland British Food Corporation in 1956. The Honourable Member was a Member of that Government.”

DRIVER'S LICENSE TESTING CENTRE IN WYNNUM-MANLY AREA.—Mr. Newton, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Mines,—

As there are over 40,000 people residing in the suburbs of Belmont, Gumdale, Tingalpa, Capalaba, and in the Wynnum-Manly-Lota area, will he give consideration to setting up a driving test centre in either the Wynnum or Manly district to assist residents in these areas desiring a test now or in the future?

Answer:—

“Following a review of drivers' licence issuing centre requirements for the metropolitan area in 1964, it was approved that two additional testing centres be established. One of these is to be erected on a site at the corner of Cavendish Road and Stanley Street East, Coorparoo, and it is intended that this testing centre serve all of the suburbs in the city of Brisbane area on the south side of the river, including Wynnum, Manly and Lota. It is not proposed to consider at this stage the establishment of a driving test centre at either Wynnum or Manly. Much of Capalaba is not in the city of Brisbane area and persons residing in the area outside the city of Brisbane can be tested for licences at the Cleveland Police Station.”

APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT MEDICAL OFFICER, AYR DISTRICT HOSPITAL.—Mr. Coburn, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

As the resignation from the medical staff of the Ayr District Hospital of the Assistant Medical Officer, Dr. Ross, approximately six months ago has resulted in the Medical Superintendent, Dr. Beumer, being required to work excessively, attending to approximately one hundred out-patients daily, performing surgery and attending to in-patients in both the general and the maternity sections of the hospital, when is it anticipated that a replacement for Dr. Ross will be appointed?

Answer:—

“Although the Department of Health endeavours to assist a Hospitals Board to engage doctors, it is the responsibility of the Board to advertise for staff when a vacancy occurs. As far as can be ascertained the last advertisement for a resident medical officer for Ayr Hospital appeared in the Medical Journal of Australia in November, 1964. The private practitioners of Ayr co-operate with the hospital staff and I feel sure if an approach were made to them the Medical Superintendent would receive their support until a resident medical officer is engaged. In the meantime, the Hospitals Board should re-advertise the position.”

SEPTIC SYSTEM, MAIDAVALE STATE SCHOOL.—Mr. Coburn, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

Has he approved of the request of the Maidavale School Committee that the removable material in the septic system at McDesme State School, now closed, be transferred to Maidavale school and used in the installation of septic system at that school? If not, why not?

Answer:—

“Because of possible technical difficulties involved in the request of the Committee, action is being taken to request the Department of Works to investigate the application for the removal of the septic system from the closed McDesme State School to the Maidavale State School. When the report and estimate of cost is received, this proposal will receive consideration.”

ERECTION OF HOUSING COMMISSION HOMES, CAIRNS.—Mr. R. Jones, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Works,—

(1) Has the Housing Commission early intention of calling tenders for the erection of homes on allocated building sites, bounded by Clarke, Hoare and Birch Streets, Cairns?

(2) If so, what is the number of building sites that will be available on this location?

(3) Does the number of building sites available in this area compare favourably with the number of applications received for Housing Commission homes?

(4) If so, is it intended such homes will be for purchase and/or a number of them allocated for rental purposes?

Answers:—

(1) “This area is being developed by the Cairns City Council at the cost of the Commission, and when the sites are in order consideration will be given to calling tenders for houses.”

(2) “39.”

(3) “Yes.”

(4) “Sites will be available for selection by applicants who desire to purchase Commission houses erected to designs which they nominate. Houses erected by the Commission on a group basis would be available for purchase in the first instance and, if not sold, would be rented.”

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION, CAIRNS WEST STATE SCHOOL.—Mr. R. Jones, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

(1) Are temporary classrooms under the school at present being utilized at the West Cairns Primary School? If so, why has this become necessary, when this school was completed as recently as the commencement of the 1964 school-year and officially opened by him on February 6, 1965?

(2) When will extra and permanent classrooms be constructed to alleviate this position?

(3) Do similar conditions exist at any other State school in the Cairns Electorate?

Answers:—

(1) “Temporary accommodation underneath the Cairns West State School building is in use for one (1) class. A comprehensive investigation was made by the District Inspector of Schools in June, 1963. Information then received from the parents of school age and pre-school children in the district, together with an allowance for home building in the area, indicated that the enrolment in 1965 would be 210. As the enrolment at present is 292, it appears that the area has grown more rapidly than the citizens had anticipated.”

(2) “As trends in enrolment at the Cairns West State School are now apparent, early action will be taken to obtain from the head teacher details of the anticipated

enrolments for the 1966 and 1967 school years. When details of the anticipated enrolments are received, a plan and estimate of cost will be prepared for the necessary number of additional permanent classrooms. No indication can be given at present, however, as to when work is likely to commence on the construction of permanent additions."

(3) "No other primary school in the Cairns Electorate is using a temporary classroom, but this has often been the pattern in other centres where new schools have been established. It is refreshing to hear the Honourable Member acknowledging the need for more classrooms when only a few weeks ago he was telling the people of Cairns how the city had languished under this Government. I would remind him again that since 1957, over £500,000 has been spent on schools in the city of Cairns to provide for better educational facilities and the needs of a growing and developing city."

PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM, CAIRNS-KURANDA RAIL MOTOR SERVICE.—Mr. R. Jones, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Transport,—

Has further consideration been given to or has provision been made this year for a public address system to be installed on the Cairns-Kuranda scenic railway daily tourist railmotor? If not, will he again review the position with a view to installing this facility to assist tourist appreciation of this half-day tour?

Answer:—

"This matter was raised previously by the Honourable Member for Tablelands and on February 12, 1964, I informed him that while there would not be any technical obstacle to the installation of a public address system in the rail motor, it was considered most undesirable that either the guard or the driver of the rail motor should be distracted from their responsibilities, particularly that of ensuring safe working, by being required to deliver the commentary—further, that such employees are not trained in the making of announcements over a public address system. However, as an alternative to the installation of a public address system in the rail motors working the Cairns-Kuranda tourist service, it was proposed in conjunction with the Queensland Government Tourist Bureau to have a descriptive pamphlet prepared for distribution to passengers on the service. The pamphlet was duly prepared and on August 25, 1964, I forwarded a copy to the Honourable Member for Tablelands. A supply of these brochures was forwarded to the District Superintendent at Cairns, in addition to a supply to the Director-General, Queensland Government Tourist Bureau, Brisbane."

INCIDENCE OF TUBERCULOSIS IN CATTLE, ATHERTON TABLELAND.—Mr. Davies for Mr. Wallis-Smith, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Primary Industries,—

In view of the increased cattle population of the Atherton Tableland due to cattle fattening properties being stocked from outlying stations, are tests being continually conducted to see if there is any incidence of tuberculosis? If so, how many cases have been detected?

Answer:—

"Dairy herds on the Atherton Tableland are submitted to a regular programme of testing for tuberculosis and the incidence of this disease is remarkably low. Approximately half of the 550 dairy herds on the Atherton Tableland, representing some 15,000 animals, are submitted to the tuberculosis test annually. Over the period of five years from 1960 to 1965 only 18 animals giving positive reactions have been detected, representing an overall incidence of less than 0.03 per cent. Beef cattle running on the Atherton Tableland are not tested as a routine. However, records of cattle slaughtered at meatworks treating cattle from the Atherton Tableland and adjacent areas together with returns compiled in relation to stock slaughtered at Atherton district slaughteryards, reveal that there has been a steady decline in animals affected from 0.08 per cent. in 1961 to 0.02 per cent. in 1964. In both beef and dairy cattle it can, therefore, be taken that the incidence of tuberculosis on the Atherton Tableland is at a very satisfactory low level."

ECONOMY SURVEY, ATHERTON TABLELAND.—Mr. Davies for Mr. Wallis-Smith, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Primary Industries,—

In view of the preliminary findings of Dr. W. O. McCarthy on the economic problems of the dairy and maize farmers on the Atherton Tableland, will the recommendations to be made after an additional survey in May, 1965, supersede those of the Government investigation made in 1964?

Answer:—

"There have been no findings as yet by Dr. W. O. McCarthy on the economic problems of the dairy and maize farmers on the Atherton Tableland. There have been some general comments on what seem to be possible problems in the area. The survey being carried out by the University of Queensland is viewed as being complementary and supplementary to certain issues raised in the report of the Committee of Enquiry appointed in 1963."

TOBACCO INDUSTRY STABILISATION SCHEME.
—Mr. Davies for Mr. Wallis-Smith, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Primary Industries,—

In view of the commencement of the 1965 tobacco sales at Mareeba on Tuesday, March 16,—

(1) What percentage of leaf was sold and is this clearance satisfactory?

(2) Have the prices received to date been satisfactory?

(3) Is it evident that the stabilisation plan will safeguard the tobacco farmers during the 1965 season?

Answers:—

(1) "The percentage of tobacco leaf sold after the first four days of the current Mareeba tobacco sales was 87 per cent. of the leaf offered. Such a percentage would be quite unsatisfactory if the balance were to remain unsold but the stabilisation scheme provides for its sale."

(2) "Under stabilisation proposals agreed to by Commonwealth and State Ministers, the Commonwealth Government has undertaken to ensure that a quota of 26 million lb. of tobacco leaf will, if available in Australia, be purchased by manufacturers at not less than an average minimum price of 125d. per lb. This average has been translated into a grade and price schedule which provides for a minimum price for all acceptable grades of tobacco leaf. No grower who produces, within his quota, tobacco leaf of a quality which falls within the grade schedule will receive less than the minimum price for the appropriate grade in the schedule and no tobacco leaf has been sold so far this year at less than the minimum for its grade. Since the Australian crop now being sold is expected to be below 26 million lb. all acceptable leaf from this crop could be sold at or above the minimum."

(3) "The tobacco stabilisation plan as agreed to by Ministers should definitely safeguard tobacco growers during the 1965 selling season and during each of the subsequent three seasons."

SITES FOR HOUSING COMMISSION HOUSES NEAR VIRGINIA GOLF LINKS.—Mr. Melloy, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Works,—

(1) Are plans in hand for the acquisition of land in the vicinity of Virginia Golf Links for Housing Commission purposes? If so, what area is to be acquired?

(2) When is it anticipated that the land will be available for house construction?

Answers:—

(1) "No."

(2) "See (1)."

CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSING COMMISSION HOUSES AT MOUNT ISA.—Mr. Inch, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Works,—

(1) Is there a large number of applicants for Housing Commission homes at Mount Isa? If so, what is the number?

(2) What is the reason for suspending the construction of Housing Commission homes at this centre, especially as finance has already been allocated for it?

Answers:—

(1) "At February 28, 1965, the Clerk of the Court, Mount Isa, was holding 33 applications carrying points priority for rental homes and 5 applications of nil priority. There were also approximately 75 enquiries from persons considering purchase of Commission houses. However, no figures are at present available to show how many of these applications remain effective with the disturbed industrial conditions prevailing in the town."

(2) "Approximately half the houses in the latest contract were to be built in expectation of sale but, to say the least, it cannot be considered that conditions in recent months have been conducive to the saving of deposits or the undertaking of long term commitments for home ownership or even for the payment of rent on rental houses. We could not proceed to a point where completed houses could be standing idle and subject to deterioration and accumulation of interest charges. When Mount Isa returns to normal and resumes its interrupted progress the Government will review the question of proceeding with the construction of houses."

NEW STATE SCHOOL AT DUCHESS.—Mr. Inch, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

Have plans for a new school at Duchess been approved? If so, when is it expected the construction of the school will be commenced?

Answer:—

"It is anticipated that plans and estimate of cost for the provision of a new school building and single teacher's quarters at Duchess will be completed at an early date. Consideration will then be given to approval of this project, but no indication can be given at this juncture as to when construction work is likely to commence."

HOUSING COMMISSION RENTAL HOUSES, ROCKHAMPTON.—Mr. Thackeray, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Works,—

(1) How many Housing Commission homes for rental were built at Rockhampton during each of the financial years, commencing 1957-1958 up to and including 1963-1964 and in 1964-1965?

(2) How many applicants are awaiting rental homes at Rockhampton and what are their points ratings?

Answers:—

(1) "Of 331 dwellings provided by the Commission in Rockhampton since June 30, 1957, 317 were home ownership and 14 which were not sold were rented. Of these 14 houses 9 were built in 1957-1958, 1 in 1958-1959 and 4 in 1960-1961. Over the past 5 years there has been an annual average of 17 vacated State rental houses available for re-letting."

(2) "Two at 100 points; one at 80 points; two at 60 points; twenty-nine at 40 points and 135 with nil priority."

TOBACCO GROWING IN MAREEBA AREA.—Mr. Adair, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Primary Industries,—

As concern has been expressed by tobacco growers in the Mareeba area at the large percentage of leaf unsold at the present sales, are the interests of the farmers being closely watched by responsible officers of his Department?

Answer:—

"I am aware of the concern felt by tobacco growers in the Mareeba area at the slow rate of progress of the tobacco sales and the large percentage of leaf unsold during the first few days of the sale. A new system of selling has been introduced as part of the stabilisation proposals agreed upon by Commonwealth and State Ministers and a little time must be allowed for all parties connected with the sales to become familiar with the new procedures. Under the stabilisation proposals the Commonwealth Government has undertaken to ensure that a quantity of 26 million lb. of tobacco leaf will, if available in Australia, be purchased by manufacturers during each of the four years commencing with 1965. All leaf within the 26 million lb. quota which falls within an agreed grade schedule is to be purchased by manufacturers at an average price of not less than 125d. per lb. for the whole of Australia. A schedule setting out the minimum price applicable to each grade has been drawn up and is already in operation. The Commonwealth Government has appointed an arbitrator to ensure that the correct grade is placed on any leaf which may be subject to dispute. Under this scheme every grower who produces, within the quota, tobacco leaf which is of a quality covered by the grade schedule will be assured of receiving at least the minimum price applicable to the quality of leaf he produces. He may receive more under competition. Officers of the Commonwealth Department of Primary Industry as well as a senior officer of my Department were in Mareeba during the whole of last week in order to observe

the progress of the sales and the position is being kept under very close scrutiny. I have no doubt that the Commonwealth Government will ensure that its undertaking is met."

ROSSVILLE-BLOOMFIELD ROAD.—Mr. Adair, pursuant to notice, asked The Premier,—

As the Bloomfield residents are concerned at the possible closure of the ply mill operating in the area owing to the bad state of the road section between Rossville and Bloomfield, will he take up with the Administrator of the Cook Shire the urgent necessity for the necessary repair work to be carried out on this section at an early date?

Answer:—

"The Government is aware that the present condition of the Rossville-Bloomfield Road is not in accordance with the high standards of road facilities it has set and achieved, but I would point out that the physical nature of the terrain which this road traverses presents a number of problems to which even the recent expenditure of substantial sums of money has not provided an adequate answer. The Honourable Member may rest assured that a close liaison will be maintained between our road-making engineers and the Administrator of the Cook Shire in endeavours to produce the satisfactory result that is sought."

STRENGTH OF POLICE FORCE IN BRISBANE.—Mr. Bennett, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

(1) By how many is the metropolitan Police Force under approved strength at the present time?

(2) What immediate action does he intend to take to bring the metropolitan Police Force up to strength so as to provide adequate police protection for Brisbane?

Answers:—

(1) "Four."

(2) "The position will be adjusted when transfers currently under review have been finalised."

QUESTIONABLE PRACTICES IN SALE OF EDUCATIONAL BOOKS.—Mr. Sherrington, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Justice,—

In view of his Answer to my Question in October last concerning the sale of educational books, wherein he stated that the matter of contracts with door-to-door salesmen was under review and in addition

that examination of the Victorian and Tasmanian laws relating to this subject was being made,—

(1) What progress has been made in this matter?

(2) Does the Government intend to take the necessary action to curtail undesirable practices indulged in by door-to-door salesmen?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) "This matter is still under consideration."

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ERROR IN ANSWER TO QUESTION

Hon. J. C. A. PIZZEY (Isis—Minister for Education) (11.23 a.m.), by leave: In response to a question by the hon. member for Bulimba, Mr. J. Houston, M.L.A., on 17 March, dealing with the strength of the Police Force, I replied to part 4 of question 6 as follows—

"With the intake of constables on the 31st instant, the Police Force will be up to approved strength as provided in the Estimates."

I have since been advised by the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Mr. Donovan) that the date should have read "30 June" and not 31st instant".

The true position is that after the intake on the 31st instant the strength will still be under the approved strength, but the training plan for the balance of the financial year should bring our actual strength up to the approved strength.

I regret the error, which was made in good faith on information supplied to me, and take this opportunity to correct it.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Orders in Council under—

The Forestry Acts, 1959 to 1964.

The Southern Electric Authority of Queensland Acts, 1952 to 1964.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) (11.37 a.m.), by leave: On a television programme known as "Meet the Press" on Channel 7, Brisbane, on Sunday night last, the hon. member for South Brisbane said, *inter alia*—

Mr. Bennett: I got under your skin, eh?

Mr. AIKENS: Mr. Speaker should give orders to have the hon. member's seat fumigated after every sitting. In view of that uncouth and uncultivated interruption, I shall start again.

On a television programme known as "Meet the Press" on Channel 7, Brisbane, on Sunday night last, the hon. member for South Brisbane said, *inter alia*, "Tom Aikens gets away with murder in the House. He even uses obscene language. The Speaker lets him get away with it. He has never sent him out since I have been in Parliament."

Apart from the fact that both those statements are deplorably untrue, they were said in such a way and in such circumstances as would tend to create an unfavourable and undesirable public image of the conduct of proceedings of this Parliament. It is a matter for sincere regret that this Assembly and I were so befouled and besmirched. Whilst I can, and will, treat the statements of the hon. member for South Brisbane with the contempt they deserve, I think that this House, conscious of the preservation of its dignified traditions, should take some action to cleanse itself of the odious filth with which the hon. member for South Brisbane so frenetically bespattered it.

Mr. Bennett: How weak can you get!

Mr. AIKENS: How foul can you get? A cesspit is clean compared with you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! If the hon. member for Townsville South continues in that strain, I shall have to ask him to retire from the Chamber.

Mr. AIKENS: Would it be the first time you have done that?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

SUPREME COURT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Hooper, Greenslopes, in the chair)

Hon. P. R. DELAMOTHE (Bowen—Minister for Justice) (11.40 a.m.): I move—

"That a Bill be introduced to amend the Supreme Court Acts, 1861 to 1963, in certain particulars."

The Bill is a very short one. It is proposed to the Committee by way of extra caution to cure any arguments or doubts that might result from the appointment of an Acting Chief Justice.

It has been the practice during the absence of the Chief Justice to appoint the Senior Puisne Judge as Acting Chief Justice. When the Chief Justice is absent from the State and the Senior Puisne Judge is ill, this makes the position somewhat complicated.

There is a dormant commission which provides that, in the absence or incapacity of the Governor and when there is no Lieutenant-Governor, as at present, the Chief Justice is to administer the government of the State. If the Chief Justice is absent, then the next senior judge who is not under

incapacity administers the Government in terms of the dormant commission. The Bill provides for the appointment of an Acting Chief Justice so as to accord, as far as possible, with the provisions of the dormant commission.

The Bill authorises an Acting Chief Justice who is appointed to exercise all the powers and authorities of the Chief Justice while he acts during a vacancy in the office of the Chief Justice, or while the Chief Justice is incapable or is absent from the State, or for the period during which the Chief Justice administers the government of the State, with salary at the rate payable to the Chief Justice.

Mr. Hanlon: Does that include the powers of the Administrator?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: Yes. The Bill also removes all doubts and clarifies the position as regards previous appointments of Acting Chief Justices. It provides, also, for increases in the salary of the Chief Justice and of the Puisne Judges.

It is proposed that these salaries be now fixed at the rate of £7,500 per annum for the Chief Justice and at the rate of £6,750 per annum for Puisne Judges of the Supreme Court (including the Senior Puisne Judge). At present the Chief Justice receives a salary of £7,000 per annum and the Puisne Judges, including the Senior Puisne Judge, salary at the rate of £6,400 per annum.

In relation to the increases in salaries, it is important to keep in mind that it is a tradition of the English judicial system, which was bequeathed to the Australian States as well as to the Commonwealth, that the judiciary should be independent of the Government. This independence is particularly ensured by the giving to the judges of financial security, and consequently their salaries are fixed by Parliament and are not dependent upon any appropriation by Parliament as ordinary Government expenditure normally is.

The determination of the salaries to be paid to judges is not easy, and it is difficult to apply a system of relativity as might be done in certain other spheres. Although the judges' salaries may not be related to the salaries of senior officers of the State Public Service, it might be mentioned that the salaries of permanent heads of departments and officers of equal classification were increased recently. Some relativity might also be considered in relation to standards established in earlier years, comparable salaries paid by the Commonwealth and other States, and, to a limited extent, a comparison with general standards of professional remuneration outside the Government service.

The remuneration of our Queensland judges as proposed in this Bill is materially less than the remuneration of judges in the more populous State of New South Wales, slightly less than that of judges in the more populous

State of Victoria, and slightly greater than that of judges in the three other States. It is proposed that the salary increases take effect as from 1 March, 1965.

Mr. Walsh: You are not suggesting that they should be the same as in New South Wales, are you?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: No.

Having regard to the various factors previously referred to, it is considered that the proposed salaries are fair and reasonable. I commend the Bill to the favourable consideration of hon. members.

Mr. DUGGAN (Toowoomba West—Leader of the Opposition) (11.46 a.m.): I think there will be general acceptance by members of the Committee of the first proposal, having regard to the Minister's statement that there should be a removal of any doubt as to the present position of Acting Chief Justice. At present the Chief Justice is, I understand, overseas and, as has been pointed out, it has been the practice for the Senior Puisne Judge to act in his absence. The present situation has arisen because of the immediate facts of the Chief Justice's absence from the State and the untimely death of Sir Roslyn Philp.

I do not want to take up the time of the Committee in referring to the last-mentioned person except to say that Queensland is the poorer for the passing of such a distinguished jurist. He was a very colourful and outspoken man with a tremendous fund of common sense, and he did not hesitate to direct the attention of the authorities to what he considered to be features of our law that needed amendment. He was quite courageous in his outspoken attitude at times on, perhaps, the actions of Crown witnesses and of witnesses appearing for the defence, too, for that matter, but all in all he was a very prominent person in this State apart from the contributions that he made on a legal basis. He was active in many outside spheres, which is rather in contrast to what generally happens as far as the judiciary is concerned. There are one or two members of the judiciary who accept certain public appointments that involve them in controversy but, in the main, judges lead a fairly sheltered existence in their relationship to public affairs.

I suppose it would be fair to say that Sir Roslyn Philp associated himself very actively with many public affairs in the State and I should like, very briefly and perhaps inadequately, to express our appreciation of the contribution he made over a long period of time.

It seems to me sensible that we should repair any omission from the Act to prevent doubt continuing at the present time and in the future. This Bill seems to be merely one of many that the Minister has brought down in comparatively recent times to correct conditions which apparently have

been permitted to exist for a number of years without their constitutional validity being tested. I do not know whether or not the Minister envisages a situation where there may be some challenge to the actions taken by an Acting Chief Justice, nevertheless, this seems a sensible provision to make and I offer no objection to the proposal.

In regard to the second proposal, namely, to increase the salaries of judges, I should like to have the opportunity of examining it before members of the Opposition express a definite policy on the matter. At this stage I should like to say that in 1963, when there was a similar proposal before the Chamber, the Government elected to grant a flat increase of £500 a year to Supreme Court and District Court judges. There has been no evidence to indicate that circumstances have so changed as to justify the exclusion of District Court judges on this occasion. After all, the principal difference in their respective duties is that the District Court judges have limited jurisdiction, but that is taken into account in determining their remuneration when they are appointed.

Dr. Delamothe: If I may interrupt, the Bill of which I gave notice this morning—the District Courts Act Amendment Bill—covers that point.

Mr. DUGGAN: All right; that removes the need for comment on that point. I should be wasting the time of the Committee canvassing arguments on it if the Minister has anticipated what I was going to say.

The second point is that it is rather interesting to observe that either the Press reports can be very incorrect or that there has been a change of heart in a particular matter. On 5 March there was a Press release—something which is generally pretty accurate—regarding the Government's discussions in Caucus. It was to the effect that recommendations for increases in judges' salaries had been rejected because of the general economic situation—the drought and the Mt. Isa industrial dispute. Apparently it was deemed expedient by some Government members to resist these rather large increases at the present time.

It is not that I feel that the Chief Justice or other judges should not be adequately paid. It would not be unreasonable to say that in most circumstances it would be fair to compare like with like in these matters. We do that in the lower wage rate structure. When unions apply to the Industrial Commission they invariably draw a comparison with other States on the like-with-like principle. I have no great objection to that procedure except that sometimes the lead given by some authority is followed slavishly by the other States. That occurred many years ago when very substantial increases were given to members of the High Court by the Commonwealth Parliament. I do not know how many judges there are in the Commonwealth jurisdiction at the present time, but there are quite a number. The

point is that at that time the Commonwealth Government, having determined that there should be a very substantial increase in the salaries of High Court judges and those in the Federal bankruptcy jurisdiction, set off a chain reaction in the various States. By this principle of comparing like with like every State was obliged to follow the pattern set by the Commonwealth.

Let me take a hypothetical case to show the effect of those salary increases. Say the increase in the salaries of Federal judges on that occasion represented the payment of an additional £12,000 or £13,000 a year. With 70 or so State judges it would mean the payment of an additional £70,000 a year to the judges in the various States, each of whom would then enter a higher income tax bracket, with the result that the amount collected in tax from those State judges on the increased payment of £70,000 would more than recoup the Commonwealth authorities for the additional salary allocated to judges in the Federal jurisdiction. Therefore there is not any cost to the Commonwealth Government.

What I am concerned about is that the Commonwealth Government has set a very high pattern in the salaries of most of its senior officials. I think it has created a good deal of discontent, and certainly it has resulted in a very high percentage of tall poppies in the Commonwealth Service. On the basis of comparing like with like we reach the position where many of the senior officials, including judges, are getting extremely high salaries. It is argued, of course, that we have to compare the emoluments of judges with what leading counsel can earn at the Bar. Secondly it is argued that they should be placed in a position of independence so that they can carry out their functions impartially and in the interests of everybody concerned.

Since those increases were granted there has also been a very material alteration in the protection of the security and independence of judges by the introduction of a judges' pension scheme, which provides them with a 40 per cent. pension after 15 years' service. The age factor does not apply to them as it does to members of the Public Service. Generally speaking, the longevity of judges is certainly not below the average in the community. So we have this high earning power being continued over a long period of time, which is not the case with most practising barristers or members of the Public Service. Judges retire on a 40 per cent. pension which, in the case of the Chief Justice, amounts to well in excess of £3,000 a year. No-one can say that that is a miserable sort of pension, nor can anyone argue that judges are not reasonably well provided for.

Increases set off a chain reaction in the community, and it seems to me that, in recent times, once a higher pattern is established in salaries at the Commonwealth level it is followed by an agitation to the appropriate

heads of Government in the States for increases. We therefore have a constant battle continuing and we do not seem to be getting any stability in our cost structure.

For those reasons it is not very difficult to understand why there is so much industrial discontent among those who have to spend so much, and argue so convincingly, for increases of £1, £2, or £3 a week. By a stroke of the pen, we seem to be able to grant judges and others £500 or £600 a year—very quickly and easily. It is time that somebody took some action to stabilise the spiralling salaries that many senior people in the community are getting. I know that we have to pay for brains, and that possibly many men in high positions, including members of the judiciary, could earn a higher income outside the Public Service or outside the Supreme Court or the High Court, as the case may be. However, the fact remains that they are not bound to accept the positions. They voluntarily accept the offer of the position. The remuneration is good, and their conditions of employment—if that is the appropriate term—certainly put them in a sheltered and honoured position in the community. That is highly desirable. They deserve their honoured position, with its attendant responsibilities. However, it is a purely voluntary acceptance by the people who take the position and accept the remuneration.

It is time for stabilising action by Australian Governments concerning top-salaried employees. Their salaries are getting out of hand. It is interesting to note that 100 years ago the salary of the Commissioner for Railways was fixed by statute at £200 a year. On a basis of relativity he should now be getting £20,000 a year. The Minister may be able to indicate the position of judges 80 or 90 years ago, because they then received relatively high salaries compared with the salaries paid to other people in the employment of the Crown.

I should like an opportunity to examine the position in other States. It seems that whenever adjustments are made the High Court judges say, "Prior to the increases of £500 a year in Queensland we enjoyed a margin of so much over judges in the other States." This immediately starts a cycle. That is my complaint. If we could stabilise salaries for a while and get costs down, we would be doing good for the Australian economy. We would also be creating a good deal of satisfaction in the minds of other employees in Australia who are continually faced with rising costs.

I believe that I should make these remarks today because it is time that somebody in authority—at State or Commonwealth level—made a definite attempt to stabilise the high costs which are a feature of the Australian economy at present. Inflation has gripped us to such an extent that it may be damaging our future prosperity. I do not think that particularly large increases are justified, because as soon as they are implemented a chain reaction is started because

the margin is affected for those who are receiving higher salaries. If the Minister was sufficiently candid or frank, he would admit that that is exactly what happens. It may take a few months for agitation in respect of relativity to start in the other States, but it will take place. After action is taken in the other spheres, there will be another application in Queensland, and so the whole matter gets out of hand.

I want to know how these nice, round sums of £500 and £1,000 are arrived at. At the lower salary levels unions have to produce extensive arguments on the Consumer Price Index, and a great deal of supplementary information relating to rents, food-stuff costs, and all the other attendant costs associated with the maintenance of a family and the running of a home, but such particulars do not seem to be required when we are dealing with people in positions of authority.

I do not want it to be thought that I am making an attack on our judges. I agree that we must have a high standard of men in the judiciary, and I think that, generally speaking throughout Australia, we have. Certainly their integrity and probity have seldom, if ever, been questioned. In the main they have been outstandingly successful at the Bar. Of course, there have been notable exceptions. There have been occasional allegations that a barrister has secured a judgeship earlier than he would have if another party had been in power, simply because of political affiliations. I do not think that these should be party-political appointments. In the record of appointments throughout the Commonwealth—this applies to all forms of Government—occasionally there has been a suggestion that, all things being equal, or sometimes, all things being perhaps less than equal, a measure of preference has been accorded to someone who may be personally favourable and acceptable to the Government of the day. Having said that, I repeat that I have every confidence in the members of the Supreme Court Bench in the work they are doing and in the respect in which they are held by the community.

I shall reserve general comment on the suggested salary increases until I have seen the Bill.

Mr. BENNETT (South Brisbane) (12.2 p.m.): When introducing the Bill the Minister said that it was necessary to meet the position when there is no Chief Justice or Senior Puisne Judge resident in Queensland. It might be desirable, although I do not think it would be altogether reasonable, to amend the Act for that purpose alone.

Along with my Leader, I wish to pay great respect to the late Sir Roslyn Philp, whom I admired greatly and who did much to adorn the Bench and build up the prestige and tradition of the law in Queensland. His passing was a tremendous blow to this State. He had tremendous energy, vitality, and personality. He would be the first to say,

however, that the processes of the law must go on in spite of the unfortunate death of leading jurists from time to time. Although it may seem callous to the untrained mind, it is only common sense to the keen judicial mind that we should immediately appoint someone to take his place. In saying that, I am not being at all disrespectful. I make that suggestion knowing that the late Sir Roslyn Philp, being the man of principle that he was, would insist that that be done.

The present situation appears to be an artificial one created by this Government. Why does not Cabinet make an appointment straight away to fill the vacant position of Senior Puisne Judge? We know that the Chief Justice at the moment is overseas on his leave entitlement. We must have another Senior Puisne Judge anyway, so why delay the decision? Is not the Government game to face up to the decision? Is it torn between the varying interests directed from outside this Parliament in its indecision as to whether or not it should elevate an existing member of the Bench, whether it should appoint a practising barrister from outside the court altogether, or whether it should appoint one of the District Court judges who has distinguished himself in District Court jurisdiction?

If all of those problems are besetting the Government, why has it to bring down legislation to assist it to delay its decision rather than have a meeting to meet the problem, and, after facing up to it and discussing it, appoint the person it thinks is most suited and fitted for the task? This is simply what has been going on at Mt. Isa. There has been delay, procrastination,—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. BENNETT: There has been fear in grappling with the task, and the Government is doing the same thing in this instance. What is the reason for the delay in the appointment, if there is to be one, of a new Senior Puisne Judge? At the moment, in accordance with the rule of seniority followed in the profession, and under existing legislation, in the absence of the Chief Justice the senior puisne judge—in effect, the next senior judge—fills the office. He assumes the responsibilities of the Chief Justice, and the judge who happens to be in that position now is Mr. Justice Sheehy, who has been brought to Brisbane from the Central District following recent appointments.

Incidentally, the appointment to the Central District position was a very good one. The appointee is a sound lawyer who will certainly enhance the prestige and traditions of the practice of law in Queensland.

Mr. Campbell: Is that a reflection on his predecessor?

Mr. BENNETT: I do not mind sensible and genuine interjections, but I hate the guttersnipe stuff that comes from the hon. member for Aspley. I dismiss his interjection. I am not reflecting at all on Mr. Justice

Campbell's predecessor. I share my Leader's opinion that we in Queensland have been particularly fortunate in the calibre of our judges, in spite of the background of some appointments. As a matter of fact, I am referring to the predecessor of Mr. Justice Campbell, whom I admire so much, who is Mr. Justice Sheehy. He is now in Brisbane and is the senior of the puisne judges.

Is the Government, by introducing this Bill, reflecting on Mr. Justice Sheehy? Under the law as it stands, he is entitled to be the Acting Chief Justice. I am not reflecting on him at all; I am merely saying that it is unnecessary to introduce that special legislation. I am not trying to belittle Mr. Justice Sheehy. He is entitled, under the present set-up, to be Acting Chief Justice unless some other judge is appointed Senior Puisne Judge. I am saying that such an appointment should be made without any delay, and the judge so appointed will automatically become Chief Justice during the absence overseas of Sir Alan Mansfield. Let the hon. member for Aspley ask the Government if special legislation is being introduced to avoid Mr. Justice Sheehy's automatic appointment as Acting Chief Justice. The hon. member should know that such an appointment would follow automatically, and that this legislation gives Cabinet the right to appoint somebody else.

Dr. Delamothe: It does not do anything of the sort.

Mr. BENNETT: That is how I understand the Bill from the way in which the Minister introduced it.

Dr. Delamothe: When you read the Bill, you will understand the position better.

Mr. BENNETT: Is the Minister assuring me that under this Bill Mr. Justice Sheehy will automatically become Acting Chief Justice?

Dr. Delamothe: I am not assuring you of anything.

Mr. BENNETT: No, of course the Minister is not.

Dr. Delamothe: I am correcting your misapprehension.

Mr. BENNETT: I cannot advance my argument any further if the Minister is prepared to assure me that the Bill gives legislative authority to the practice and custom under which Mr. Justice Sheehy would automatically become Acting Chief Justice during the absence of Sir Alan Mansfield. If the Bill is not designed to do that and gives Cabinet power and authority to appoint someone else, my arguments are valid. Is the Minister prepared to give me that assurance?

Dr. Delamothe: You will take a completely different view when you see the Bill.

Mr. BENNETT: It is quite true that I will have a better understanding of the Bill when I see it. Apparently the Minister is not prepared to give me any assurance. Obviously

he does not appreciate the authority that Cabinet will be given under the Bill, so I shall have to content myself by waiting till I am able to read and study it. It is a great shame that the hon. member for Windsor is not Attorney-General because I am sure he would not leave us in such a state of confusion. He would have the intestinal fortitude and ability and understanding to give hon. members some assurance on these matters so that we would know what is being done. If, as I understand the Minister, he did not say that the senior of the Puisne judges automatically becomes Acting Chief Justice, Cabinet could, under the provisions of the Bill, be given authority to appoint some other person to that position.

Mr. Walsh: Has not Cabinet got that authority now?

Mr. BENNETT: I think it has, to be quite frank. I think Cabinet can appoint any judge or acting judge, as it wishes. I cannot understand the purport of the legislation, unless it is designed to insult some of the existing members of the judiciary.

Dr. Delamothe: It is designed to protect existing members of the judiciary.

Mr. BENNETT: I am glad to have the Minister's assurance on that point.

I should like the Minister for Justice to indicate whether or not it is intended to fill this position with a judge who has already been appointed, whether it is intended to elevate to the Supreme Court Bench one or two of the distinguished members of the District Court who have done much to pioneer the reintroduction of that court in Queensland, or, alternatively, whether it is intended to appoint from the practising members of the Bar a person to fill this position temporarily. I assure him that I would not be available, in any case.

I should like the Minister to explain the real reason for changing the existing set-up. As the hon. member for Bundaberg said by interjection, Cabinet has the right to appoint an acting judge at any time—it has done so on numerous occasions—and it does seem that perhaps this provision has been introduced into the amending Bill so that it can be levelled in, as it were, with the introduction of the salary increase referred to by my Leader.

In any case, I urge the Government not to waste any time in appointing a member to fill the vacancy on the Supreme Court Bench. In spite of the economies involved there is a large list of cases still to be heard, and the main reason for this is the insufficiency of the numerical strength of the judiciary. Of course, automatically bound up with that is the inadequacy of the accommodation in the Supreme Court. Although I understand that the Minister and the Government have made some arrangements for the construction of new courts, it is about time that they galvanised

themselves into immediate action and did something about turning the first sod for their construction. The courts are terribly congested at the moment. Supreme Court sittings are held in courts that were set aside for the District Court, and one gets into a poky little room and almost rubs shoulders with the jury. The court was not constructed to be used for jury purposes and extra chairs have to be brought in because the jury cannot sit in the seats that were set aside for them. It is all very unsatisfactory. However, I will not develop the subject any further because it is not really connected with the principles of the Bill.

The only other thing that I have to say is that I believe that any delay in bringing the strength of the Supreme Court Bench up to the number of judges approved is not doing justice to the Court or to the State, just as delay in increasing the strength of the Police Force is not doing justice to the State or to the Police Force.

Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg) (12.14 p.m.): I followed the Minister's introductory speech very carefully, and I have followed very carefully the discussion that has taken place since. The Minister made a statement in reply to an interjection, and I want to be quite clear about what he said. I understood him to say that this measure, in effect, protects the right of judges at present occupying a position on the Supreme Court Bench in so far as their appointment to the position of Senior Puisne Judge is concerned.

Dr. Delamothe: To the position of Acting Chief Justice.

Mr. WALSH: Acting Chief Justice?

Dr. Delamothe: Yes.

Mr. WALSH: Not Senior Puisne Judge?

Dr. Delamothe: No.

Mr. WALSH: First of all, I should like to say that some amendments may be regarded as machinery or administrative ones on which we do not have to bother about making any critical or controversial comments. The Minister has outlined some of the reasons for amendments in relation to the position of Acting Chief Justice and the necessity, in some respects, to validate appointments that have been made in the past. I understood the Minister to say that.

Coming to the provision dealing with judges' salaries, I state now that I am against the proposal. I do not see any justification for it, no matter how the Minister may build up his case on the basis of like with like in any other State. That argument is no longer tenable in this Parliament, nor is it any longer tenable in the Industrial Commission. There was a time, of course, when the Industrial Court, or the Industrial Commission—call it what you like—was inclined to follow that submission. But apparently in recent

times it has departed from it, which would indicate that in the past some of its decisions were more than likely based on a policy of appeasement rather than on realities. It is plain humbug to say that one can determine these things, whether they be for the judiciary or any other section of the community in this State, on the basis of like with like when compared with similar positions in any other State. Such a policy does not work out, and never has.

For many reasons, particularly under Labour Governments the costs of living in Queensland were much lower, no matter from what angle they were viewed, than those in other States. It is true that they have increased substantially since this Government has been in office. It is also true that the Government has done nothing to protect the interests of the lower-paid sections of the community.

Does anyone here see any justification for bringing these measures down consistently and regularly as has been done since this Government has been in office, on each occasion substantially increasing the salaries of judges and top public servants, whilst at the same time men with large family commitments have to struggle through their unions to get a few shillings out of the Industrial Commission? They have to go to much trouble even though statistics and formulas prepared by independent authorities, such as the Commonwealth Statistician, indicate clearly that a rise has taken place in the cost of living. In spite of that they still encounter arguments put up by the employers and others in an endeavour to justify the view that no increase should be given to the worker or his family.

I think it is a little bit off the beam, as it were, to continually ask Parliament to grant these substantial increases to the top structure of the judiciary and departmental officers, or whoever they may be. I ask hon. members to contrast what is now being done with the ridicule to which members of Parliament are subjected if they seek an increase. Does the Minister realise that over a period of about nine years the salaries of parliamentarians have increased by £148?

Mr. Hewitt: Ten shillings.

Mr. WALSH: All right, add the 10s. We may as well make it 10s. 1½d. But that is the plain fact, and additions to the cost of living for judges would be no more than those for members of Parliament. In fact, it is almost certain that they would be greater for a member of Parliament, so I do not feel that I should automatically approve these Bills that are so regularly submitted inviting us to grant large increases in judges' salaries.

In introducing the Bill the Minister used the old argument that the judiciary must be independent of the Government. How frequently have we heard that? How widely is it accepted? How desirable it is that that should be so. But is it so? That is the question I ask this Committee. I am inclined to think that since this Government

came to power no longer can the judiciary be regarded as independent. If Cabinet or some other phase of public administration is not satisfied with the pronouncements or declarations of judges, ways and means are found to appoint another tribunal to indicate to the public that the judges were wrong. How can the judiciary be expected to work under those conditions? The Minister knows what I am referring to.

It amazed me that in the television programme mentioned earlier today even the hon. member for South Brisbane did not exercise his rights when he was asked a question about the judges declaring what was done in the case referred to by the police was tantamount to committing a fraud on the court. There was some question as to whether the hon. member for South Brisbane was quite right in that respect. I think he was inclined to water it down a little. The very people who asked him the questions were representatives of a newspaper that had published that very statement and quoted the remarks of the three judges—Mr. Justice Stanley, Mr. Justice Hart and Mr. Justice Lucas.

If the Minister wants Parliament and the people to feel that the judiciary is independent, and is expected to continue to be independent, of politicians or any other section of the community, he had better recommend to his Government that it refrain from taking such action as it did in that case after three judges, without any hesitation, emphatically declared, although not altogether in the same language, that a fraud had been committed on the court. It was shocking that the Government should attempt in any way to set up an inferior tribunal to question the pronouncements of the three judges of the Full Court.

The Minister will have to do more than simply make a plea in justification of the increases that the judges are being paid these very handsome salaries for the purpose of keeping them independent. The Government had better do something about its own record.

A few other undesirable features seem to have crept into the administration of justice in this State. Of course, at this stage of the legislation I cannot deal with them in detail.

I come now to the question of the Senior Puisne Judge. My recollection is that Cabinet can exercise its prerogative in making such an appointment. I think it has been exercised by Cabinet in the past. I do not know that it needs any specific law on the matter, or whether the Minister is bringing in something now that will cover any decision that the Cabinet may make when it decides who shall be the Senior Puisne Judge.

Dr. Delamothe: This Bill has nothing whatever to do with the appointment of the Senior Puisne Judge.

Mr. WALSH: I am pleased to have that assurance from the Minister. I realise that the Minister is merely asking leave to bring

in a Bill at the moment. Maybe there are many things that should be in the Bill but are not. Before he gets the leave we have the right to argue at this stage as to some of the things that should be in the Bill.

Cabinet exercised that prerogative on more than one occasion. I remember that there was some controversy when Mr. Justice Neal Macrossan was appointed Senior Puisne Judge. Many stories were circulated, quite a lot of them false. The true story has not been related whenever I have heard the matter discussed. However, as the Minister says there is nothing in the Bill dealing with this matter, I do not wish to canvass it other than to say that Cabinet exercises its prerogative on the basis outlined by the hon. member for South Brisbane. The issue is clear-cut, that is, having regard at all times to the fact that the occupant of the office is a person who would be entitled to appointment to the position. I suppose any member of the judiciary would be entitled to the appointment because all judges are appointed to the Bench on the same basis—as members of the Supreme Court judiciary. If Cabinet were to adhere to the ethics of the legal profession I suppose there would be nothing whatever to prevent their appointing as the Senior Puisne Judge a person completely outside the judiciary, provided he was sworn in as a Supreme Court judge.

The High Court has been referred to. It was the practice for many years, in appointing the Chief Justice of the High Court, not to appoint a sitting member of that court.

Mr. Smith: That was the case with the last one—Sir Garfield Barwick.

Mr. WALSH: The position is exactly as the hon. member for Windsor says, but he will agree that there were a few departures from the principle.

Mr. Smith: And in Victoria, too.

Mr. WALSH: That is so. However, I am referring particularly to the High Court. I expect the legal gentlemen in the Chamber to know more than I about the code of ethics of the judiciary and the legal profession. I imagine they have one.

Mr. Smith: The hon. members of that profession have one.

Mr. WALSH: I am glad to have that assurance.

The fact remains that it was accepted that no person who was to be appointed to that very high and honourable position should be seeking favours. Any suggestion that a sitting member should be canvassing for the higher position was altogether contrary to the accepted ethics of the judiciary, or, for that matter, the legal profession as a whole.

Over the years this Chamber has been very tolerant in its attitude to members of the judiciary. That fact should convey to the public that hon. members of this Parliament accept the principle that the judiciary should be completely independent of any section of the community. However, there have been occasions when members of the judiciary have made rather scathing remarks about members of Parliament. On one occasion I had to draw attention to a statement made many years ago by a then member of the judiciary. That is all the more reason for my emphasising that hon. members of this Chamber have been particularly tolerant over the years that I have been here—not so much tolerant as understanding of the position of judges.

The Minister may justify his statement that there should be a substantial salary increase for all members of the judiciary, but I remind him that throughout this State—and the Government must know this—there are thousands of people living under very difficult conditions because of the drought. They do not know where their next pound is coming from.

When workers go to the court they are faced with the argument, "The economy of the State cannot afford to pay these increases," or, "Now is not the right time." The Railway Department has lost something like £1,000,000 in revenue, and many other losses of income and earnings will be incurred by other sections of the community as a result of the Mt. Isa dispute. In this case it does not matter. The Government can come along and legislate a salary increase of £10 a week for members of the judiciary, without producing any evidence whatever that it is justified.

I repeat that in the last 10 years increases amounting to only £148 per annum have been granted to members of the Legislative Assembly. It can be said that that is a matter for Parliament itself, and that Parliament decides those things. That is true, but this Government has not helped much in the matter. Some members of the Parliamentary Salaries Inquiry Committee have said that we should be doing this job in an honorary capacity. I hope that the Minister is satisfied that the extra £500 will assist to allow judges to be regarded as independent and not subject to outside control.

Like his predecessors, the Minister made all sorts of explanations about the huge backlog of cases set down for hearing in the courts, particularly the Supreme Court. Before this Government came into power, there were 11 judges in Queensland. Since then at least six District Court judges have been appointed, and there have been extra appointments to the Supreme Court bench. But we still seem to be going backwards. Possibly the Minister is in a position to say whether many of the phoney writs that are issued from time to time are calculated in the backlog of cases or in the delay in hearing cases. There must be quite a number

of cases that have been sitting on the desk, as it were, for four, five, or even six years. The Court may not be to blame for that; it may be the fault of the legal profession or their clients. It is difficult for me to understand how the position is worsening when eight or 10 more judges are now sitting in the Supreme Court or in the District Court than when the previous Government was in power. The statements made from time to time are not enough to satisfy litigants who have to pay substantial sums of money for the services of their legal representatives.

I hope the Minister will get his teeth into this matter and that there will be some improvement in the near future. It is not beyond his capacity. We know him well enough to realise that if he chases a thing, he gets results. It is the feeling of the people outside that it is not enough for the Minister to simply recite a prepared memorandum that is put into his hands; he must read it. But there must be some substantial answers forthcoming to justify the excuses that are put up to warrant the continuance of the backlog, and of the mounting number of cases that still remain to be heard. All I can do now is wait until I get the Bill to see if there is anything further of interest in it which I should discuss.

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) (12.35 p.m.): I understand that the Bill provides, among other things, for substantial salary increases for Supreme Court judges. If one is able to judge from the notices of motion tabled by other Ministers this morning, it will be followed by Bills that will provide for substantial increases for District Court judges and top-ranking public servants.

I intend to oppose the Bill, and I shall do so on two premises. In the first place, I shall oppose it because the Government, whilst distributing the taxpayers' money with a lavish hand to judges, is more than niggardly or parsimonious—indeed, contemptibly lousy—when distributing money to workers, particularly the black-shirt workers. Only recently the Government reluctantly went before the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and agreed that tradesmen in Queensland should be granted a paltry increase of £2 2s. 6d. a week.

In the second place, I shall oppose the Bill because I think that if Supreme Court and District Court judges want salary increases, they should not come to Parliament for them; they should submit a list to the drunken and dangerous drivers of the State who will subscribe liberally to any increases in salary for their friends on the Bench.

Mr. Dean: A very good idea.

Mr. AIKENS: The hon. member for Sandgate says, "A very good idea."

Mr. BENNETT: I rise to a point of order. I think that is a direct insult to, and an indictment of, the judiciary. The suggestion

is that they be guilty of graft and corruption. I think the hon. member should be made to withdraw that remark.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I thank the hon. member for South Brisbane for drawing attention to that point. I ask that the implication of graft and corruption be withdrawn.

Mr. AIKENS: If any stigma arises, I will, in accordance with your ruling, Mr. Hooper, withdraw it. I remind the Committee, however, that I am under no obligation to crawl and grovel to judges, as apparently the hon. member for South Brisbane is. I do not care what they think of me, because I do not have to appear before them.

Mr. BENNETT: I rise to a point of order. I am not normally sensitive, but the remarks concerning crawling and grovelling are an insult to the judiciary, not to me. I think that the prestige of the judiciary should be maintained, and remarks of this nature should not be banded round.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member for Townsville South will accept the explanation of the hon. member for South Brisbane.

Mr. AIKENS: If it was an explanation, I will accept it. I say without any equivocation, knowing that 99 per cent. of the people of Queensland are of the same opinion, that the horrible and mounting toll of the road is due entirely to the weak-kneed attitude of Supreme Court and District Court judges.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I remind the hon. member that I have already asked him to refrain from drawing this type of inference with respect to the judiciary. If he continues in that strain and does not confine his remarks to what the Minister said when introducing the Bill, I shall have no alternative but to ask him to resume his seat.

Mr. AIKENS: It has been ruled by not only the present Speaker but by other Speakers—and quite correctly—that when Parliament is considering salaries to be paid to public servants—and judges are public servants—hon. members are at liberty to discuss the work that those public servants do for the salary that they are about to receive. I appreciate your position, Mr. Hooper, because you are bound by Standing Orders which provide that nothing worth while can be said about members of the judiciary except on a substantive motion.

Let us get down to tin-tacks, without casting any aspersions on anybody. I would be the last to cast any on the hon. member for South Brisbane. Let me say that the interrogators on "Meet the Press" on Sunday night made him look like the galah that he is. I do not want to rub salt into the wound. Let me, in all fairness, set out the duties of Supreme Court judges, as the Bill deals with

judges. As the hon. member for South Coast interjects, some judges sit only two days a week, sometimes not even that. Let us be quite frank and clear on this point. The duties of a Supreme Court judge are, first of all, not to make the law but merely to administer the law as determined by Parliament, merely to interpret the law as determined by Parliament, and, when it comes to common law, to interpret the common law in accordance with the traditions and the precedents that have been established.

If we are to debate that particular point—I think I should be allowed to do so—I believe that I am right in asking: Are our judges interpreting the law as passed by Parliament as we think they should interpret it?

Mr. Bennett: Huh!

Mr. AIKENS: I know, of course, that the hon. member for South Brisbane, who gave a snort typical of him, like an old sow wallowing in a bog, thinks that by doing so we will be interfering with the freedom of the judiciary. No-one wants to interfere with the judiciary, but I think it is about time that someone let the judges know that we disapprove of some of the things that they have done.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Obviously the hon. member for Townsville South was not in the Chamber, or was not listening, when the Minister introduced the Bill. He is right away from the Bill itself, which deals with two points: the first relates to the appointment of an Acting Chief Justice; the second relates to judges' salaries. I ask the hon. member to keep to those two points in making his speech.

Mr. AIKENS: Thank you, Mr. Hooper. In dealing with the increase in salaries, I am following the lines of a ruling, given not only by the present Speaker but also by former Speakers, that we can discuss what these people do, or should do, to earn increased salaries.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! That is quite in order provided the hon. member relates his argument to the salaries.

Mr. AIKENS: Very well. I have no doubt that you are acting strictly in accordance with Standing Orders, although you may not be acting in accordance with your personal ideas; but you, as a very good Chairman—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I do not know whether the hon. member intends to reflect on the Chair—

Mr. AIKENS: No, I am paying you a compliment.

The CHAIRMAN: . . . but I assure him that I am acting according to Standing Orders relating to the introduction of a Bill.

Mr. AIKENS: If you had let me complete my remarks, I would have paid you a very flowery and well-deserved compliment.

I wanted to say that you are one of the chairmen of this august Assembly who submerge their own individual and personal views in carrying out their duties strictly and impartially in accordance with Standing Orders. Unfortunately, you chopped me off before I could say that.

It is the rule in the House of Commons—you will see it referred to in "May," which is the parliamentary Bible; you will see it referred to in the pages of our own "Hansard"—that one can criticise a sentence after a judge has imposed it. On the other hand, one cannot criticise a judge for his conduct in the court or his conduct of the case; if one did so, one would be interfering with the freedom of the judiciary. I simply draw this comparison and leave that particular angle of it. Today, if a magistrate finds a man guilty of dangerous driving, the man will be very lucky if he gets off with a fine of £100 and the suspension of his licence for 18 months.

Mr. Bennett: That is not right, either.

Mr. AIKENS: I am talking about the magistrates in Townsville, who at least are trying to do their job in reducing the awful toll of the road. I do not know what magistrates anywhere else do. However, when a man is found guilty in the Supreme Court of dangerous driving, even if the jury has found him not guilty of manslaughter and not guilty of dangerous driving causing death, more often than not he receives a suspended sentence and his licence is suspended for a period of three months or six months. I think I am right in suggesting that, for a start, our Supreme Court judges might try to emulate the job that is being done by some magistrates, particularly the two magistrates in Townsville, in attempting to reduce the toll of the road.

Mr. Bennett: Are you crawling to the magistrates now?

Mr. AIKENS: I do not have to crawl to anybody because I pay my own way. I do not spew sectarian bigotry all over the place. I am a friend of everybody, in this Chamber as well as outside of it. I am a country lad, a simple seeker after truth. Everybody respects me and does everything he possibly can to help me. If I was going to pay a compliment to any magistrate, I would pay the best compliment of all to a man whom I have never met, Mr. Kearney of Toowoomba.

We have, unfortunately, inherited several systems from Great Britain. They may have been good systems when they were first established. We have inherited the medical system, we have inherited the legal system, and we have inherited the judicial system; and we all know—if the hon. member for South Brisbane wants to know anything about them at any time, with the generosity for which I am noted I will tell him all about them—that at one time the judges in England were, and still are, known as members of the King's Bench. They were the King's men.

They were appointed by the King to carry out the wishes of the King, and their verdicts were framed in accordance with the wishes and desires of the King. Later on, of course, with a smattering of democracy and freedom, they became what we are asked to believe—impartial judges. But because they were King's men, and because they were doing what the King wanted them to do and making the judgments that the King required, naturally they insisted on a number of perks for themselves. So under our judicial system—this may not be known to everybody; I am sure the hon. member for South Brisbane is abysmally ignorant of it—a judge is under no obligation to sit on the bench. He can refuse to sit on the bench for as often as he likes and for as long as he likes.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is again getting right away from the Bill.

Mr. AIKENS: No. I am dealing with what judges do for the money they earn.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! So long as the hon. member gets back to judges' salaries I will be quite happy.

Mr. AIKENS: I am trying to justify what I said at the outset of my speech, namely, that I was going to vote against this Bill for two reasons. One reason, as I said—and I think I am entitled to say it—is that I do not think judges earn the money we pay them at the present time, and I certainly do not think they are entitled to any increase in salary. Surely I am justified in putting before this Committee the reasons why I do not think they are earning the money we pay them.

Now, we have at the end of the year what is known as "long" leave and in that respect the members of the judiciary work nearly as big a racket as the tutors at the university, who have 22 weeks a year on full salary doing nothing. I understand that the members of the judiciary have about 14 weeks a year on full salary, doing nothing.

Mr. Bennett: How many weeks a year do you have?

Mr. AIKENS: I work 24 hours a day. I am available 24 hours a day and, in the 21 years I have been in this Parliament I have never had a holiday. My services are always available to the people. Fancy an interjection like that coming from the hon. member for South Brisbane, who boasts frequently that he earns £6,000 a year—it would be more now—at the Bar! Is he attending to his parliamentary work as he should? Is he giving a 24-hour day service to his electors while he is appearing in court and picking up 6,000 quid a year on the side—and, incidentally, letting down the tyres of anyone who happens to park a car in his parking place at Inns of Court.

Very shortly—it is all part of our judicial system—the High Court will come to Brisbane for its annual sittings, and when the

six judges of the High Court come to Brisbane they occupy the chambers of six Queensland Supreme Court judges. What the six Queensland Supreme Court judges do when the High Court judges are here occupying their chambers and their courts, goodness only knows. I have asked this question of the Minister for Justice—not the present incumbent of the office but his predecessors—on many occasions, and the Minister has replied with the same old rigmarole that one bloke goes on circuit, another fellow does something else, and someone goes down to the Gold Coast to see that the fish and chips are of good quality, and so on. For all the weeks that the High Court judges are in Brisbane they are occupying the courts and the chambers that belong to this Government and to the individual Supreme Court judges. At least our Supreme Court judges could do a little more work if this Government would say to the Federal Government, "We are sick and tired of carrying your High Court on our back. Provide your own High Court courtrooms and chambers in Brisbane so that our Supreme Court judges can carry on with their work while your six High Court judges are in Queensland." Of course, they come up only in the salubrious winter months. We do not see High Court judges up here in the summer-time, no more than we see politicians in pink shorts in Townsville in the summer-time.

I thank you for your tolerance, Mr. Hooper. I know how circumscribed you are by the Standing Orders, traditions and customs of this Assembly, which, incidentally, we inherited from Great Britain. Indeed we have an 18th century judicial system imposed on a 1965 modern age. That is the trouble with it. I could go into what you might term to be extraneous matters. I could go into the tendency of some barristers, even barristers in this Chamber, to claim that judges are not exercising as often as they should their right to take cases away from the jury so that they can decide them purely and simply on little tiddly-winking points of law, quibbles and funk-holes. But I will not digress in that manner.

I intend to vote against this Bill as a protest on behalf of all the decent, respectable and reputable people in Queensland against the weak-kneed attitude of judges in the sentences they impose on drunken killers and dangerous drivers.

Mr. HUGHES (Kurilpa) (12.52 p.m.): I would not suggest that this Bill will receive the general acclaim of all hon. members, but I feel that I echo the thoughts of many on both sides of the Chamber when I say that we have before us a Bill of the type which from time to time is necessary in the light of changed circumstances. At the same time, it does excite some interest in matters concerning the judiciary and the application of their time, talent and knowledge.

Personally, I am not very happy about salary increases which sometimes might be regarded as inflationary in comparison with

those for which people have had to fight hard to get by arbitration. I wonder what the yardstick is. The office of a judge carries more than mere talent and a knowledge of the law; it carries the necessity for the occupant to be upright and honest to the nth degree. There must be no possibility of any prostitution of the office for financial gain or other reasons. But what is the yardstick of monetary return? As I have said in the Chamber previously, it is time there was some measure or yardstick for all sections of the community, one which would not only be generally acceptable but which, indeed, would be a true measure of what should be paid at all levels of employment in our society. When the trade unions require increases for their members they have to fight their case on economic grounds. How far do we go? Is it necessary to have such large increases in such a short period? It is not long since we had a similar Bill before us.

When we relate a person's talents to the need for imposing proper penalties for breaches of our statutes we see that in many cases there is an unrealistic application of sentences for crimes. One hon. member particularly made comments along these lines, and others have made various observations. I am concerned because it was reported in the Press of 16 March that a youth was gaoled by Mr. Justice Wanstall for five years on a charge of assault against the person when he used an ether-soaked rag. This was not a case of rape.

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

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member knows nothing about anything, except how to carry on his vendetta against the Police Force and the Commissioner of Police. I suggest to him that he should stick to that because he knows at least a little about it.

Mr. Bennett: When you are talking about rape you are dealing with something that you know something about.

Mr. HUGHES: In the same paper——

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member for South Brisbane made a remark that is offensive to hon. members of this Chamber and particularly the hon. member who was speaking. Obviously he did not hear it. I ask the hon. member to withdraw the remark and to apologise to the Committee.

Mr. Bennett: Very well.

Mr. HUGHES: I did not hear the hon. member's interjection, Mr. Hooper. However, you have apparently dealt with it adequately.

There is concern in the community because it is apparent that magistrates and members of the judiciary do not always impose penalties to fit the seriousness of the crime. In the same newspaper there is a report of a case concerning a young girl of tender years—7½ years of age.

Mr. BENNETT: I rise to a point of order. I ask for your ruling, Mr. Hooper. In this debate are we allowed to discuss judges and the sentences they impose?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member for South Brisbane has drawn my attention to a matter in respect of which I was continually on my feet in calling the hon. member for Townsville South to order. I ask the hon. member for Kurilpa to relate his remarks to the Bill before the Committee.

Mr. HUGHES: If there are to be large salary increases, they must be justified. If they are to be justified surely they can bear the scrutiny of hon. members and the general public. It depends upon the amount of work a judge is called upon to do, his application, his duties, and the state of the laws that we make. Whether a person has the facility to discharge his duties properly and adequately in relation to the salaries that we determine depends on all these matters. Surely we must be able to make the necessary comparisons. We are not to be gagged because some hon. members of this Chamber feel——

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If the hon. member for Kurilpa is suggesting that I am going to gag the debate, I remind him that I am acting in accordance with the Standing Orders of the Chamber and the provisions of the Bill before the Committee.

Mr. HUGHES: I would not suggest that you would do that, Mr. Hooper, but the hon. member for South Brisbane is suggesting that you do it.

In justifying these salary increases, where can we get a comparison? In the other case to which I have referred a man was fined £30 for aggravated assault on a child, and for a drink charge, or being in charge of a car——

Mr. BENNETT: I rise to a point of order. I again remind you of your ruling, Mr. Hooper.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member for Kurilpa is trying to make his point at this stage. I will allow him just a little more latitude.

Mr. HUGHES: I will not pursue the subject because obviously the hon. member for South Brisbane is ducking for cover. I do not want to embarrass him further.

[Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.15 p.m.]

Mr. HUGHES: Prior to the luncheon recess I referred to the word "gag". I wish it to be clearly understood that my reference related to the interjection of the hon. member for South Brisbane; not to the Chair or to any other hon. member. Quite often the Chairman has been tolerant in allowing hon. members a certain degree of latitude in order to assist them to carry out their function during debate.

Mr. Davies: Particularly when you are speaking.

Mr. HUGHES: I would not say that. I believe it applies to many other hon. members. I think the hon. member for South Brisbane would admit that he has received help and latitude from the Chair.

I referred to the hon. member for South Brisbane in relation to gagging because I remember when he, Mr. Aboud, and others gagged free speech at Fairfield. I have made that explanation because of the possible misconception of what I intended to imply.

Continuing to debate the seeking of leave to introduce a Bill, I believe that a man is worthy of his hire whilst with honesty and purpose, and diligence, he carries out his duties to the satisfaction of his employer. However, I believe that we must be cognizant of all factors, economic and otherwise, in these matters. I should like to hear the Minister's comments on the diligence and the duties of the judiciary, and on the justification for these salary increases. The public at times has criticised some of the penalties imposed by the judiciary, although not at all times being in full possession of the facts of the case. There appear to be some grounds for concern, particularly in matters referring to sex crimes and the like. I believe the assurances that the Minister could give would assist most of the members in this Chamber.

However, I should like to express the view that there should be some understanding among members of the judiciary on sentences imposed by judges and magistrates, and that there should be some degree of uniformity, considering the circumstances of the case. There could be extenuating circumstances or factors. To give one man five years for using an ether-soaked rag in an assault and to fine another man a paltry £30 for an animal-like attack on a defenceless 7½-year-old girl whom he waylaid on the way home from school instances weakness in application and penalty.

Mr. Bennett: You cannot dispense justice in the same way as you get sausages out of a machine.

Mr. HUGHES: That is a point well made. I admit my lack of knowledge in relation to the technicalities of the law. But I feel that I am expressing what the public feels about it. There are different circumstances in every case and there may be some extenuating circumstances in some of them. It is hard for the average citizen to say, "Here is a man with certain talents in his profession, commanding thousands of pounds a year, and doing his job to the fullest extent in imposing penalties as provided by law," when in fact he sees what appear to be glaring anomalies. One man is fined a paltry few pounds for a terrible, animal-like attack on a girl, while another gets years of imprisonment.

Mr. Thackeray: The case you are referring to was a shocking one.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes, it was. I will take the matter up with the Minister at a later date. I am not giving details at this stage out of consideration for the parents and victim concerned.

I believe that where brutality and savage sex crimes are committed lengthy gaol sentences should be imposed—savage sentences to match to some extent the savagery of the crime. I believe that where these things are initially savage they are more savage when children are involved; they are horrible. Whereas members of the public think these things but do not always have an opportunity to give expression to their thoughts, members of Parliament have the opportunity to raise their voices in the right place. I believe that savage crimes should be punished by savage sentences; the penalty should fit the crime. It is my opinion that judges have been too lenient in these matters.

In conclusion, I feel that if the Minister will give hon. members an assurance on matters to which I have referred, particularly those which concern parents of young children, he will put public fears and criticism to rest. Hon. members on both sides of the Committee will be able to make more worth-while contributions when the Bill has been presented. Drunken-driving offences and sex crimes, which are more prevalent in the community today than they have ever been, call for more realistic action by those in authority, whose salaries are the subject of debate today. I make a plea that judges use to the utmost the powers granted to them. If the statutes do not provide for the imposition of sufficiently heavy penalties for some crimes, it is up to us to do our job and amend the law accordingly.

Mr. HANLON (Baroona) (2.22 p.m.): I did not intend to enter the debate at this stage. However, following some of the contributions made subsequent to the speeches of the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for South Brisbane, I rise to reiterate what was clearly stated by the two hon. members to whom I have referred. The Minister has introduced the Bill, and, as both the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for South Brisbane pointed out, Opposition members would like to see it before adopting any definite attitude to it.

As the Leader of the Opposition mentioned, the Minister said that the need for the Bill arose from the illness of the late Sir Roslyn Philp, the absence from the State of the Chief Justice, and, I suppose, the impending temporary absence of His Excellency the Governor when he assumes the duties of Administrator of the Commonwealth, which will require his absence from Queensland for some months. The doubtful validity of practices that have been followed in the past arose, and this seemed to the Minister to be a suitable opportunity to clear these matters up.

As the hon. member for South Brisbane pointed out, the Minister's explanation was not sufficient to enable Opposition members to decide whether to support the contents of the Bill. For that reason, we take the attitude, as we have done repeatedly on other occasions, of not opposing the introduction of the Bill and reserving our decision on it till all of its clauses have been examined.

As the Leader of the Opposition mentioned, this applies equally to consideration of proposed salary increases for the Chief Justice and the puisne judges. As has been pointed out time and again, it is not desirable for judges to be involved in any form of what could be described as a public dogfight over salaries generally. When their salaries, which are fixed by Parliament, come before us, it does not mean to say that those factors can be ignored, irrespective of the suitability of any increases that might be proposed. In considering that, we must consider also the general wage and salary position in the community.

Mr. Aikens: What do you think the black-shirt workers are going to think about it?

Mr. HANLON: I was about to make that point, more particularly because the President of the Industrial Court is himself a Supreme Court judge and carries out his duties as President of the Industrial Court without additional remuneration. There is a desire to keep judges' salaries away from the general hurly-burly and rights and wrongs of salary and wage increases in the community, but the fact that a member of the Supreme Court Bench is also President of the Industrial Court inevitably brings the question very much closer to that.

The Minister has told us that it is proposed to increase the salary of the Chief Justice by £500 and the salary of puisne judges by £350 per annum, which will mean that since August 1959 the salary of a puisne judge of the Supreme Court will have increased by just over £42 a week. In contrast to that, as an hon. member interjects, we must have regard to the fact that the basic wage has increased by just over £3 a week and the average wage by, perhaps, not much more than £4 a week.

I do not intend to go into these matters in detail. I mention them merely to indicate that it is necessary for consideration to be given to all the matters raised by the hon. member for South Brisbane when we have an opportunity of studying the Bill in detail. Although the Minister endeavoured to give us the background to the proposed Bill in his introductory speech, he could not tell us exactly what provisions are in it. Therefore, although we do not oppose its introduction—indeed, we support its introduction—we reserve our decision on its provisions in detail, to be indicated on the clauses in Committee.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (2.27 p.m.): I rise to record my protest against the proposed salary increases outlined by the Minister. I do not wish to take up the time of the Committee; I simply wish to indicate that, in my opinion, the proposal is unwise, untimely, and unjust. It is unwise because of present trends in the economy of the State and because of the clamour that we now hear for increased wages and salaries throughout Australia.

As late as last week we were fighting here about the trouble at Mt. Isa, where the wage-earner was told he was not entitled to anything. He struck against the law and we had to try to put him in his place. To my mind, it is little wonder that we have unrest in the community. Worse still was the decision of the Commonwealth Government some time ago to increase salaries and wages. We saw the reaction of people in the community to that legislation, and I believe that people over the length and breadth of Queensland will be absolutely disgusted by this proposal.

I do not wish to say very much more. I am sure that every hon. member is alive to what the repercussions may be to the proposed Bill and to the effect it will have. If we bring down legislation such as this, how can we defend action to prevent a further rise in the basic wage, or, for that matter, in the wages of anyone? This is a very difficult period and a big percentage of the people of the State are not even earning the basic wage—some of them not even half of it. The primary producers are expected to feed the people of the nation, but in many instances they are not receiving any wage. They still have to meet the increased cost of production and cost of living, and any further action along the lines proposed in the Bill will increase those costs still further. In the name of Heaven, Mr. Gaven, how can actions such as this be justified? It is wrong—in fact, I will go as far as to say that it is wicked, unjust, and unfair—and I propose to vote against the motion.

Hon. P. R. DELAMOTHE (Bowen—Minister for Justice) (2.30 p.m.), in reply: There has been a great deal of loose talk on, and fears expressed in regard to, this Bill, and later I propose to go over its contents very slowly and in words much smaller than I used in introducing it so that hon. members may be apprised of what is in it.

The Leader of the Opposition, as could be expected, associated himself at the beginning of his speech with the sorrow we all felt at the death of Sir Roslyn Philp. I pay a tribute to him for going out of his way to associate himself and members of the Opposition with what the Government has done to show its respect for the deceased judge and his family.

The Leader of the Opposition cast some aspersions on what has been done by previous Governments. Since only aspersions were cast, I should like to know just what previous Governments, of which I was not a member, did. I myself have made three

appointments to the judiciary and I believe they were received with approbation both within and without the legal profession.

Mr. Duggan: I know one particular appointee who may have been uphill if the Liberal Party had not been in office.

Dr. DELAMOTHE: I would not know the political affiliations of any one of them.

Mr. AIKENS: I rise to a point of order. It would appear that the Minister thinks he is having a little private conversation with the Leader of the Opposition. I should like to remind him that he is addressing the Committee and that we would like to hear what he has to say. He should take a couple of his excellent throat tablets, which may improve his voice.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Gaven): Order! I remind the hon. member for Townsville South that I am being no more tolerant with the Minister today than I have been with others in the past.

Dr. DELAMOTHE: The hon. member for South Brisbane, of course, produced his usual type of speech. I have never yet been able to make up my mind whether he sets out deliberately to confuse hon. members or whether he himself is confused. I say that in all seriousness, because the other day I was talking to a prominent member of the profession to which the hon. member for South Brisbane belongs and I said to him, "The hon. member for South Brisbane talks quite a lot in the House and is listened to, by me at least, as one who could be expected to have a knowledge of the law. Can you tell me just how good that knowledge is?" He said, "Well, of course, he practises a branch of the law—that is, defending counsel, mainly—where knowledge of the law can be a possible disadvantage."

At this stage, because of the confusion that has been engendered, let me say that the Bill sets out to remedy a doubt that exists in the minds of all those who have advised me in this matter. It is quite clear that in the absence of the Chief Justice for any reason the appointment of the Senior Puisne Judge as Acting Chief Justice is quite in order, but there is no legal authority for appointing the next senior judge if, for some reason or other, the Senior Puisne Judge is not available for appointment. The position of Acting Chief Justice is an office of profit under the Crown. If the senior judge, who is not the Senior Puisne Judge, was appointed, then almost certainly, if challenged, his taking of this office would be vitiated. Imagine what a mess it would get the whole of the State into if everything he did after he acted in the office of Chief Justice was challenged because of the vitiating of his judicial commission. As far back as we can go senior judges have been appointed in this manner. We have to validate their appointments so that in cases of doubt their decisions and actions over the years cannot be challenged.

Mr. Duggan: If that is the case—and I accept it as being so—that is why we want to help you. But we reserve the right to discuss the other matter on its merits.

Dr. DELAMOTHE: The salaries, yes. I hope now that every hon. member is able to follow clearly what we are setting out to do in the Bill, and why we are doing it.

The hon. member for South Brisbane raised the question of acting judges. He should know that at the moment there are no acting judges. They are all permanent appointees. When I was making the appointment of another judge, knowing that Sir Roslyn Philp was desperately ill at the time I anticipated his retirement—this would normally have taken place in June—by some months and appointed a second permanent judge. He will fill the vacancy unfortunately left now that Sir Roslyn has passed on.

Mr. Bennett: You still have one vacancy?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: Yes.

Various points of criticism of the judges have been raised. I should like to strongly defend the judiciary. They are not in a position to defend themselves. A lot of misapprehension has been expressed. Parliament, the highest court in the land, assesses and grants judicial salaries. Judges are chosen from those at the top of the legal profession, where they are making a great deal more money than judicial salaries are ever likely to amount to. When they are appointed they receive no promise whatever of future reward. In order to protect them from possible accusations of venality, adequate salaries are necessary. For that reason judicial salaries must be constantly examined, and from time to time when a Bill such as this to recommend a small increase in their salaries is introduced it should be considered in that light. Parliament is sitting as a court, as it were, and instead of rashly vilifying and attacking judges, as a court we should adopt a judicial attitude and approach the subject with seriousness and due thought.

Mr. Duggan: You cannot truthfully say that we have attacked them today in order to prevent you from giving effect to your wishes on this matter.

Dr. DELAMOTHE: No, not the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Duggan: Not our side.

Dr. DELAMOTHE: Various matters were raised. Most of them, such as the new Supreme Court building and what it ought to hold, delays in court hearings, and penalties inflicted, are outside the scope of the Bill.

I should like to refer to the recommended increases in salaries, on which many hon. members have expressed resentment. The total increase in the salaries of judges of the Supreme Court and the District Court will amount to roughly 6 per cent. of their present salaries. I will compare that first

with the latest increase in the basic wage to about £15 which was granted roughly a year ago and represented a greater percentage increase than judges are getting. One hon. member queried whether this was the right time to do it because of what has happened at Mt. Isa. I think hon. members will recall that at Mt. Isa the average wage was formerly about £18 a week plus the bonus. Those men have now been granted an increase of £3 a week, an increase of roughly 16 per cent.

Mr. Duggan: If you are castigating us for raising these objections, what were the objections of your own party members in Caucus when they opposed these increases?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: As with the Labour Caucus, the opinions of the Government Caucus are not disclosed outside.

The recommended increase is quite small. I believe it would have been much larger had conditions not been as they are. The various matters that have been raised in objection to the increases were some of the points taken into consideration in arriving at this recommendation.

Mr. Bennett: Do I understand you to say that it would have been larger except for the opposition in your Caucus?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: No. My recommendation would have been for a greater increase except for the drought and the various other matters brought forward.

Mr. Hanlon: At the end of 1963 judges' salaries rose by £12 a week. Do you think that what has happened in the last 12 months justifies another 6 per cent increase?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: It is almost two years, and I think that an increase of 6 per cent. at this stage is not at all grandiose or exorbitant. On the contrary it is a very small increase.

Mr. Hanlon: What has happened in the last 12 months, after the £500 increase at the end of 1963, to justify this increase?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: I have just given hon. members a comparison. An hon. member referred to black-shirt wages having gone up by a very much higher percentage. Also, there is the judiciary in other States, if hon. members want to compare like with like. We should go on that.

Mr. Hanlon: The black-shirt worker did not get an increase in 1963. His basic wage did not increase for a couple of years.

Dr. DELAMOTHE: He got it earlier. The judges are last on the list to get the increase that was given to all members of the Public Service and other statutory officers. They have all had their increases and, as always, the judges are on the end of the line. I believe that this recommendation is modest. I believe that it is necessary and when hon. members see the Bill and the other provisions in it, they will readily accept it knowing the reasoning behind it.

Question—That the motion (Dr. Delamothe) be agreed to—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 56

Mr. Armstrong	Mr. Lee
„ Beardmore	„ Luckiss
„ Bennett	„ Lloyd
„ Bjelke-Petersen	„ Lonergan
„ Bromley	„ Marsden
„ Byrne	„ Melloy
„ Camm	„ Munro
„ Campbell	„ Murray
„ Chinchin	„ Newton
„ Cory	„ Nicklin
„ Davies	„ O'Donnell
„ Dean	„ Piibeam
Dr. Delamothe	„ Pizzey
Mr. Donald	„ Ramsden
„ Dufficy	„ Richter
„ Duggan	„ Row
„ Fletcher	„ Sherrington
„ Graham	„ Sullivan
„ Hanlon	„ Thackeray
„ Hanson	„ Tooth
„ Herbert	„ Tucker
„ Hewitt	„ Wallis-Smith
„ Hiley	„ Wharton
„ Hodges	„ Windsor
„ Hooper	
„ Houghton	
„ Houston	<i>Tellers:</i>
„ Inch	Mr. Ewan
„ Jones, R.	„ McKechnie
„ Jones, V. E.	

NOES, 5

Mr. Adair	<i>Tellers:</i>
„ Diplock	Mr. Aikens
„ Müller	„ Coburn

Resolved in the affirmative.

Resolution reported.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I have warned hon. members previously about moving round and leaving their seats to go to other seats while I am on my feet putting a resolution. I warn them again. It is highly disorderly and I will not countenance it in the future.

FIRST READING

Bill presented and, on the motion of Dr. Delamothe, read a first time.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I have just warned hon. members that when I am on my feet, or when the Chairman of Committees is occupying the chair and is on his feet, they must not move round in the Chamber.

MEAT INDUSTRY BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(Mr. Gaven, South Coast, in the chair)

Hon. J. A. ROW (Hinchinbrook—Minister for Primary Industries) (2.57 p.m.): I move—

“That a Bill be introduced to consolidate and amend the law relating to the meat industry.”

The meat-producing industries, and particularly the beef cattle industry, are of great importance to Queensland. For many years Queensland has been the leading cattle-producing State in the Commonwealth and at present carries nearly 7,500,000 cattle, which is about half the number of cattle in

Australia. The sheep population of the State is about 24,300,000, which is about 15 per cent. of the Australian total. Dairy cattle, the source of considerable quantities of veal and tinner beef, number 1,120,000.

During the year ended 30 June, 1964, beef and veal production in Queensland amounted to 328,000 tons, mutton and lamb to 43,000 tons, and pig meats to 29,000 tons. In that year, 150,800 tons of beef and veal were exported from Queensland, which was equal to 52 per cent. of total Australian exports of these commodities. In addition to beef and veal production from slaughterings within the State, about 300,000 live cattle and 24,700 pigs crossed the border into New South Wales. With an industry of such proportions, high standards and facilities must be maintained at all times. The Government has been fully conscious of its responsibilities in this regard and, through the Department of Primary Industries, has taken a very active and practical interest in the provision of facilities and the slaughter of stock for human consumption, both in Queensland and for export.

In this respect, the Government has had as a major objective the provision of a hygienically slaughtered and handled meat supply for domestic consumption. To this end, my department has exerted a special effort in its administration of the provisions of the Slaughtering Acts and the Abattoirs Acts.

The Slaughtering Acts were designed to control the slaughtering of stock in Queensland so as to ensure the highest possible standards of hygiene in slaughter-houses and butchers' shops, and generally a wholesome meat supply for the consumers of the State.

There are two methods of providing a meat supply to towns and cities—killing at a central abattoir or the multiple slaughter-house system. Centralised killing is far preferable to the multiple slaughter-house system for the following reasons—

It permits—

(a) preparation of meat in an up-to-date and hygienic facility;

(b) a full-time inspection service at abattoirs covering the inspection of stock prior to slaughter and throughout the dressing process;

(c) better dressing, chilling and holding facilities leading to better presentation of meat to the public;

(d) chilling of carcasses immediately after slaughter, which prolongs keeping quality and renders meat more palatable and wholesome;

(e) classifying and grading meats for the benefit of the public where so desired; and

(f) more economical utilisation of inedible parts of carcasses by providing facilities for the manufacture of by-products such as edible oil, tallow and meat-meal.

The first four reasons I have mentioned are most important to public health. Full-time inspection, which is possible only at central abattoirs, ensures that meat is slaughtered and handled hygienically as well as being inspected for freedom from disease. The successful operation of voluntary grading schemes for beef at Brisbane, Ipswich, Toowoomba and Townsville has indicated their popularity with consumers.

Easily distinguishable marking of such meats as lambs, hoggets and yearlings has been of considerable assistance to housewives, enabling them to readily select with assurance meat of the quality they desire whilst avoiding any possibility of other classes of meat being substituted.

The complete utilisation of inedible offals, bones and other waste material provides a very definite economic benefit to the meat industry, as well as providing a source of many products valuable to other industries. On the other hand, the multiple slaughter-house system has many disadvantages, the chief one being that it is impracticable to arrange full-time meat inspection.

Facilities for hygiene are also often below modern standards and the full value of by-products cannot be obtained. The Government of the day in 1930 was well aware of the shortcomings of the multiple slaughter-house system which was then in operation in Brisbane, and took action to correct this position by the purchase of an abattoir in the Brisbane metropolitan area to provide a central killing facility for Brisbane.

Mr. Sherrington: Now you are going to wreck it.

Mr. ROW: Oh, no.

The Abattoirs Act was introduced at that time to establish the Queensland Meat Industry Board to operate the abattoir and its associated saleyards. Control of slaughtering of stock for human consumption in the metropolitan abattoir area and the introduction of meat into that area was vested in the board with the objective of assuring a wholesome meat supply for the consumers of Brisbane.

The slaughtering of stock for consumption in Brisbane was given priority at all times over slaughtering for other destinations, such as interstate or export, which at times proved to be more lucrative to operators. Provision was also made in the original Act for the Q.M.I.B. to establish other public abattoirs in Central or Northern Queensland but this power was never exercised by the board.

The operation of the Q.M.I.B. over the years has been successful in supplying the hygienic meat requirements of the city of Brisbane. The Cannon Hill abattoir has also been developed and modernised from time to time to meet the demands of the export trade and to handle the increasing turn-off of the grazing industry. The success of the central killing facility at Cannon Hill prompted the Government in 1949 to give

consideration to the establishment of smaller abattoirs in the larger cities and country towns in Queensland to cater for local consumption.

The Abattoirs Act was accordingly amended at that time to enable the establishment of local abattoirs by local abattoir boards (composed of representatives of local authorities) in order to extend the provision of a hygienic and fully-inspected meat supply to consumers in such areas. A local abattoir was authorised to slaughter stock to supply meat for its own area only, and, following its establishment, slaughter-yards in its area were closed down, and butchers then sent their stock for slaughter to that abattoir. No meat from outside local abattoir areas could be introduced into those areas without the consent of the Minister. Action was taken under the 1949 amendment to set up a local abattoir at Toowoomba, which began operations in 1955.

Between that time and 1959 further local abattoirs at Bundaberg, Townsville, and Ipswich were established. Because of the successful operations of the Toowoomba local abattoir, it became obvious that these abattoirs could extend their activities to supply hygienically slaughtered and inspected meat to places outside their areas, and so utilise their capacity more fully.

The Abattoirs Acts were accordingly further amended in 1958 to make provision for such abattoirs to be utilised to full capacity by killing stock for consumption outside abattoir areas. The designation of the abattoirs was changed at that time from "Local" to "District." However, boards killing for outside their areas were required to give priority at all times to the slaughtering of stock for consumption within their areas. Such abattoir boards were empowered to borrow money from the Treasury or by the sale of debentures to defray costs of establishment, preliminary expenses and working capital.

Loans were guaranteed by the Government, and boards were required to adjust their income in order that costs of operations and interest and redemption on loans were fully met. The principal sources of income of a board are from slaughtering fees charged to operators and the sale of by-products.

Thus, to service expenditure on operations and repayment of loans, slaughtering fees have to be so adjusted as to balance this expenditure less the income from sale of by-products. It should be noted that public and district abattoirs do not trade in meat, but merely provide as a service the slaughtering of stock on behalf of local butchers and/or operators in the export or interstate fields.

It has become increasingly obvious in recent years that changing circumstances warrant a new approach to many facets of the meat industry. For instance, until about ten years ago the majority of slaughtering of stock for export was carried out by three

meat companies: Borthwicks, Swifts and Vesteys, having meatworks at Townsville, Bowen, Rockhampton, Gladstone and Brisbane.

In the past ten years considerably more competition has been brought about by the establishment by private enterprise of an additional 15 meatworks in Queensland, slaughtering principally for the export trade. Ten of these works are in South-east Queensland, whereas previously there were only two works in this region killing largely for export—Cannon Hill and Borthwicks Moreton Freezing Works.

With a view to ascertaining whether a review of its policy in relation to the meat industry generally was desirable, the Government last year appointed a committee of inquiry to inquire into matters concerning the livestock and meat industry. This committee consisted of the Director of the Commonwealth Bureau of Agricultural Economics (Mr. Douglas McKay, who was chairman), the Chairman of the New South Wales Metropolitan Meat Industry Board (Mr. Stanley Hill), and the Manager of the Goulburn Municipal Abattoir (Mr. Albert Towns), whilst an officer of my department (Mr. Lloyd Harris) was secretary. Mr. Harris was later appointed as an additional member consequent upon an accident to Mr. Stanley Hill.

The committee was given wide terms of reference, but briefly it was set the task of investigating the following matters:—

- (a) The expected production of meat in the next ten years and the anticipated volume for home trade and for export;
- (b) The capacity and adequacy of existing abattoirs;
- (c) The need for additional killing facilities;
- (d) The necessity for a scheme of co-ordinating and licensing facilities in the meat industry;
- (e) The operation of franchises under the Abattoirs Acts in respect of Cannon Hill and district abattoirs;
- (f) The means by which facilities should be provided in future; and
- (g) Other matters pertinent to the economic welfare of the industry.

The committee visited many parts of the State and took both written and oral evidence from all interested parties. It reported its findings in October last and these were presented to Parliament at that time.

After careful consideration, the Government decided to adopt in principle the recommendations of the committee and the Bill now before the Chamber includes the provisions necessary to give effect in practice to the recommendations. The Bill repeals the Slaughtering Acts, 1951 to 1958, the Abattoirs Acts, 1930 to 1958, and the slaughtering provisions of the Poultry Industry Acts, 1948 to 1959, and consolidates provisions of these repealed Acts with appropriate amendments where necessary.

At the same time opportunity is taken to repeal several old Acts which are no longer operative. Consolidation of these Acts has been recommended by eminent counsel as conflict between the Slaughtering Acts and the Abattoirs Acts as at present constituted, has been evident in practice. Apart from other reasons, the poultry slaughtering provisions are included in the Bill because the same branch of my department undertakes inspection of both stock and poultry slaughtering, as well as meat generally. This will contribute to making administration more convenient and efficient.

The poultry slaughtering provisions included in the Bill relate to the hygienic slaughtering and inspection of poultry and include provision for licensing, which procedure has proved a valuable means of protecting the legitimate slaughterer of poultry against unfair competition from back-yard operators who often slaughter poultry under unhygienic conditions.

Members will know full well the fantastic growth in the production of broiler chickens in the last few years. What is perhaps not so well known is the tremendous improvement in the conditions under which poultry is slaughtered for human consumption as a result of the control now exercised. Apart from the important consideration of better hygiene, amendment of the Slaughtering Acts is also desirable to remove any legal doubt regarding collection of fees for meat inspection.

These fees are used to finance the costs of meat inspection and in the past few years collections have amounted to approximately £70,000 annually. The Bill provides for the setting up of a meat inspection account at the Treasury into which all fees shall be paid and from which costs of inspection will be met. Fees levied will be such as to ensure that the income therefrom, as nearly as may be, equals the expenses incurred in providing inspection services. Under these circumstances, such fees should enable the meat inspection services provided by my department to be largely self-supporting financially.

It is essential, of course, that finance available be adequate at all times to maintain an effective meat inspection, which is a major public health service. It is also considered necessary to amend certain provisions of the Slaughtering Acts which in practice have been found deficient, and to overcome anomalies that have become apparent. These relate mainly to powers of inspectors, slaughtering of horses and other animals and the use of their flesh for pet food, penalties, and the power to make regulations to implement the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. Hanson: Are these inspectors to be for export meat as well?

Mr. ROW: No. Commonwealth inspectors handle export meat.

The Bill includes many important amendments to provisions of the Abattoirs Acts and, as already mentioned, these are largely

based on the recommendations of the committee of inquiry. The Bill provides for the establishment of a Queensland Meat Industry Authority, which I will refer to as the "authority".

Whilst essentially an advisory body, the authority has nevertheless been given a very positive role in industry affairs. This follows one of the main recommendations of the committee of inquiry. The authority will be constituted by persons qualified to bring sound knowledge and experience to bear on industry problems and public policy in relation to the meat industry.

It will be composed of six members, namely, an independent chairman appointed by the Government, an officer of my department, and four members representative of producers, abattoir boards constituted under this Bill, owners of proprietary abattoirs, and operators at service works, respectively.

Representative members will be chosen from panels nominated by industry organisations or bodies directly concerned. The Bill sets out the functions of the authority which in the main are to investigate, advise and make recommendations on matters of public policy in relation to the meat industry, and to carry into effect policy as determined by the Government.

An important duty of the authority, and one recommended by the committee of inquiry, will be to approve private abattoirs for the supply of meat in public or district abattoir areas. In this respect the authority will act in a licensing capacity, on the one hand to ensure suitability of such killing and treatment facilities as a source of wholesome disease-free meat, and on the other hand to co-ordinate orderly development of abattoir facilities by refusing, suspending, or cancelling its approval where any additional capacity proposed is determined by the authority to be beyond the reasonable needs of the meat industry.

Mr. Lloyd: Will these men have the qualifications necessary to carry out that work?

Mr. ROW: Yes.

Provision has been made in the Bill for an appeal to the Minister against a decision of the authority in respect to any question of approval. Provision is also made in the Bill for the financing of the authority by contributions from public and district abattoir boards, by fees payable by private abattoirs approved by the authority, and by appropriations of moneys by Parliament, the latter being necessary more particularly in the formative years of the authority.

Following another recommendation of the committee of inquiry, the Bill provides for the Queensland Meat Industry Board to be renamed the Metropolitan Public Abattoir Board and for its activities to be confined to the Greater Brisbane area and to the operation of the Cannon Hill abattoir and its ancillary undertakings, such as the public

saleyards and public meat markets. Provision is made for the constituting by the Governor in Council of other public abattoir boards to provide public abattoirs elsewhere in the State if and when found necessary.

Mr. Lloyd: You said that this authority will have power to approve of abattoirs in any part of Queensland. Will the men comprising the authority include representatives of the existing abattoirs?

Mr. ROW: Yes.

The chairman of the authority, or a person delegated by him, will be an ex-officio member of all abattoir boards (including the Metropolitan Public Abattoir Board) and have full voting rights. The Bill introduces important procedural changes to streamline the provision of district abattoir facilities in future on a sound basis and with a minimum of expenditure.

District abattoir areas and district boards have been constituted in the past at the request of the local authorities concerned. The Bill now places the initial responsibility for planning additional public or district abattoir facilities in the hands of the authority, but provides for representations to be made by local authorities or other interested parties to the authority before any determination is made by it. The authority will carry out investigations into the provision of centralised killing facilities in appropriate centres anywhere in the State.

It will recommend in due course the declaration of district abattoir areas, the constituting of district abattoir boards, and the method by which a district abattoir is to be provided. At the time when an abattoir board is actually constituted, all preliminary investigations will have been completed, thus enabling the board when formed to proceed without delay to provide its district abattoir, the authority assisting with necessary administration.

Mr. Houston: Who will constitute the boards?

Mr. ROW: It will be the same set-up as local authority representation on abattoir boards.

Mr. Houston: What will be the composition of the boards?

Mr. ROW: It will be on the same principle as local authority representation.

Mr. Lloyd: When you say that there will be four members on the authority—

Mr. ROW: Six.

Mr. Lloyd: Four members representing producers, abattoirs, and operators. How many representatives of the producers will there be?

Mr. ROW: One

Mr. Lloyd: And three members representing abattoir boards in existing areas in Queensland?

Mr. ROW: There will be an independent chairman, one officer from the Department of Primary Industries, one representative of producers, one of district abattoirs, one of private abattoirs, and one of the operators.

Mr. Lloyd: Three men will have a vital say in whether a new abattoir will be created in any part of the State.

Mr. ROW: There are six on the board.

Mr. Lloyd: But three will have a vital say.

Mr. ROW: Previously all investigations were made by district boards after their formation. This has resulted in considerable delay in providing district abattoirs, with resultant considerable cost increases, which may now be avoided.

Provisions in respect of borrowing by boards are strengthened by requiring the authority to report and make recommendations to the Treasury on every application by a board to borrow money. Provisions included in the Bill enable public and district abattoir boards to slaughter stock for consumption outside their areas, but subject to such restrictions on the supply of meat to other public or district abattoir areas as may be prescribed from time to time.

The Bill provides for the relaxation of existing provisions of the Abattoirs Acts relating to restrictions on slaughtering within, and supply of meat to, the metropolitan public abattoir area, this also being a recommendation of the committee of inquiry.

A private abattoir, which has been approved by the authority, may slaughter within, or send meat to, any public abattoir area, or to any district abattoir area, the board for which has been authorised to slaughter stock for human consumption outside its area.

However, any abattoir area may be excluded by the Governor in Council from the operation of this provision. In this regard, the authority will be responsible for keeping the financial situation of boards under review. As a result of the system of approvals by the authority, a hygienic and fully inspected meat supply will continue to be ensured in abattoir areas, whilst allowing a freer flow of trade.

The supply of meat slaughtered under lower standards of hygiene, and without full-time inspection, to abattoir areas is prohibited by the Bill except in an emergency, such as the existence of an industrial dispute. In such a case, provision is made for consent to be given by the Minister to the entry of meat to the area concerned, from any source.

The Bill provides for the marking of carcasses and meat to enable the provisions contained in the Bill to be implemented in practice and any offences to be detected. The Bill also provides for increases in penalties. Previously the maximum penalty under the Abattoirs Acts was a fine of £20, and under the Slaughtering Acts a fine of £100 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months. A maximum penalty

of £200 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months, plus a daily penalty of up to £50 in respect to a continuing offence, is now provided.

Opportunity is taken in the Bill to repeal Section 87 of the Abattoirs Acts, a section that provided for the acquisition of cattle or meat. It has never been utilised and has been considered objectionable in some quarters. The subject matter of regulations contained in the repealed Acts is also consolidated and has been extended where necessary.

The amendments and alterations that have been effected have been made to allow the provisions of the Bill to be fully implemented.

I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. DUGGAN (Toowoomba West—Leader of the Opposition) (3.26 p.m.): The Minister has glossed over the reasons for the introduction of the Bill by trying to emphasise that the Government has been actuated primarily by its desire to improve the supply of meat in hygienic condition to the people of Queensland.

I say at the outset that the Bill, reflecting the policy of the Government, represents a complete abdication by the Country Party section of the coalition to the minority Liberal Party section in the Government. The former Minister for Agriculture and Stock, Mr. Madsen, faced this agitation when he took over the portfolio some years ago, but, to his credit, he was able to persuade his Cabinet colleagues and, through them, influence the Caucus of the coalition parties to thwart the persistent campaign waged by the Liberal Party to effect the emasculating of the Queensland Meat Industry Board and permit the entry into Brisbane of meat from some of the big beef barons of Australia.

I do not think that Australia has very much to thank the big meat firms for. They have never been very greatly concerned about Australian consumers. They have been concerned primarily with winning profits for themselves in the supply of meat from what they thought was a cheap-producing country to markets overseas and with having meat transported in ships that, in a number of instances, they owned themselves. They have put very little of value back into the Australian economy. There was the case of Swifts meatworks here, which was bought, possibly at an extravagant figure, many years ago. We have all seen, I think, a recent newspaper report on the conditions of aborigines in which it was stated that, on some of Vestey's stations in the north-western part of Australia, the cattleyards were better than the accommodation provided for the stockmen. As I said, I do not think we have a great deal to thank these great overseas shipping concerns for in Australia.

Because they think the time is now opportune to enter the domestic market, they have made a series of representations to the Government for permission to enter the trade in Brisbane, and because of the gradual eroding away of the powers that the Queensland Meat Industry Board had exercised—powers that were given to it by a Labour Government—they have been able to demonstrate to some degree that the financial structure of the board justifies drastic financial and administrative surgery. That is what lies behind the Bill.

It seems to me to be extraordinary that in Queensland, the principal cattle State in Australia, when a committee of inquiry was appointed by the Government not one Queenslander was a member of it. The Government went outside the State and brought people here to advise it on what should be done. It was only as an afterthought that Mr. Harris, a very highly respected and efficient officer of the Department of Primary Industries, was given what were virtually the combined duties of secretary and member of the committee. Apart from the Government, the only people who seem to be satisfied with the recommendations in this report are the principal firms to which I referred, namely, Swifts, Vestey's and Borthwicks.

Mr. Chinchin: What about the consumers?

Mr. DUGGAN: No concern is shown for them at all. They did not have representation on this board. Hon. members opposite deal with many of these things by getting a respected person like Mrs. Gabrielle Horan to support them by trying to further her candidature as a Liberal at some future date; but they do not make any provision for a consumers' representative on the board. On the Minister's own frank admission today, one of the provisions of the Bill has been designed purposely to cope with industrial situations rather than hygiene. The Government is saying that there has to be a certain standard for export purposes and, in effect, the local requirement is not good enough, that we want something higher for the Japanese and something higher again for the Americans—I will deal with the American situation later—but, when there is an industrial dispute, anything will do for the people of Brisbane.

What is being done in Brisbane? The Government proposes, by implementing this report, to reduce the importance of this large undertaking, which, despite difficulties, has been able in its period of operation to build up assets roughly £1,000,000 in excess of liabilities and, what is more important, it has been able to provide facilities for the killing of stock at a price lower than that operating in any other metropolitan abattoirs in Australia.

Mr. Chinchin: What is the problem, then?

Mr. DUGGAN: There should not be any problem but, by this Bill, the Government intends to make one.

Mr. Chinchin: Do you believe in monopoly for the Brisbane area?

Mr. DUGGAN: All I am saying is that we could do with more monopolies like the Queensland Meat Industry Board, which has been able to carry out its functions at about half the cost at Homebush in Sydney and other such undertakings in the South. It is not a bad sort of a monopoly to have.

Mr. Pilbeam: This one was making a big loss whereas the others are paying.

Mr. DUGGAN: It is true the report of the Queensland Meat Industry Board disclosed an operating deficit of something like £123,000 last year. I think £92,000 the year before that. The board has been operating for over 30 years and those were the only two periods of loss. Most of that was the result of taking the cost of building reconstruction down there out of the ordinary revenue of the undertaking. If the board had done as private enterprise does—amortized the capital cost—it would not have shown those losses. Another prime reason for those losses being shown is that the Government has permitted some of these people to come partly into the field. It was not game to allow the companies to come into Brisbane in one fell swoop and operate unrestrictedly, as is now proposed. It said they could operate in certain cases when the export markets—

Mr. Chinchin: They were licensed.

Mr. DUGGAN: The hon. member talks about licensing but all he means is putting a rubber stamp or an official seal of approval on what these companies want. By action of this sort the Government builds up these companies and in the process seeks to destroy some of the district boards, as in Toowoomba, Ipswich and other places, if it gets a chance, because it says it will give permission to outside people only if they combine the operations and provide meat to the local people covered by their franchise. The district board in Toowoomba last year was able to operate at a profit of, I think, £32,000 or £36,000 despite a catastrophic drop in the price of tallow and such things, yet the Government is going to allow Melbourne financial interests, operated on overseas capital as they are, to come in here and take over.

I am a great believer in friendship with our American neighbours, but I draw attention to the latest figures I have here from the "Monthly Bulletin of Overseas Trade Statistics" of January, 1965. They show that for the seven months ended January, 1964, our total imports from the United States of America were worth £144,888,000. Over the same period our total exports to the United States were £92,370,000, making an excess of imports over exports of £52,518,000. But for the

seven months ended January, 1965, the total imports from the U.S.A. have risen to £206,638,000 whilst our total exports to the U.S.A. have dropped to £80,439,000, making the excess of imports over exports for those seven months £126,199,000. That is because the American people are calling the tune. It has led to the estimated expenditure of about £12,000,000 to meet the export requirements of the United States.

What happens when we build up the so-called efficiency of our industry in hygienic and other standards? The unions were very concerned about the introduction of automation in the works because of its impact on the livelihood of their members. Fortunately a series of industrial disputes and arguments has been resolved so that, generally speaking, industrial peace has been restored and the industry is working fairly effectively.

The Government is acting at the behest of the Americans, who have made it clear that the moment we build up the volume of our overseas exports because of increased efficiency in the meat industry, they impose all these prohibitions against the importation of beef from Australia. They do not mind our having an excess of imports into this country from America over exports from this country to the United States of £126,000,000 in seven months; they do not expect us to squeal and say, "You cannot send us all that stuff unless you take some of ours back."; but the moment we start developing our export trade, they threaten to impose quotas. It was only through strong lobbying by the Federal authorities that they were able to come to a compromise decision the other day.

All this business of restricting the Brisbane Abattoir to a kill of 1,000 carcasses a day is wrong in every way. Let us look at one of the chief reasons for the operating loss last year. In 1962-63 259,305 cattle were killed whereas only 172,815 were killed last year. The overhead must necessarily increase. Apart from other considerations there has been this gradual encroachment on the retail trade in the metropolitan area from sources outside the Queensland Meat Industry Board's normal jurisdiction.

I mention the American influence here because I forecast that, once the Act becomes operative and these people know what they can do and cannot do, we will find this big consortium of Swifts, Vesteys and Borthwicks making inroads into the retail distribution. The housewives of Brisbane will certainly get it in the back of the neck later when they try to obtain control of retail outlets in this city. At present we secure for the small butcher the right to come in and get his meat at the same charge per head as the bigger operators, but the Government is gradually taking that away from him. There is nothing to say that these people will not make a piecemeal attack—Borthwicks down here and Vesteys

and Swifts in Central and North Queensland making a pronged attack—on the smaller traders and perhaps making it uneconomic for the district boards to operate. There will be two avenues open to them. They will either confine their operations to domestic consumption or forgo the franchise, or the right given to them, if they engage in export activities. If the Government is so keen about decentralisation, what is wrong with the idea of many smaller shows developing outside? The report discloses that 11 inquirers from places as far afield as Quilpie and Charleville and up to Mt. Isa, have asked for authority to provide killing works in their areas. In their report the members of the committee of inquiry said that they did not think there was justification for more killing facilities, yet our population is increasing tremendously, and it has increased for the last 30 years. Nevertheless, the Government still proposes to cut down by one-half the treatment facilities in the Brisbane area.

I should like to give some figures relating to costs compiled by people who are in a position to give an authoritative opinion about the metropolitan abattoir in Adelaide. For example, it has a charge of 2.15d. a lb. for slaughtering a bullock for the domestic trade. For a bullock with a dressed weight of 442 lb.—which is the average weight of bullocks killed at the Brisbane Abattoir over the last five years—the fee charged at Adelaide would be 79s. 2d., whereas at the Brisbane Abattoir the charge would be 36s. 6d. If we multiply by 200,000 the difference between the prices charged we have last year's loss more than recouped; it becomes a very substantial profit.

For export slaughter, Adelaide charges 3.06d. a lb. for beef whereas Brisbane charges 1.875d. a lb. On a 500-lb. bullock the Brisbane fee would be 78s. 1d., as against Adelaide's 127s. 6d. Thus, Adelaide's charges are 63 per cent. higher than Brisbane's. When Government members talk about operating losses in Brisbane they should take those factors into account.

We see in the report also that the private companies are not limited. That is important. The Government does not say to Vesteys, Swifts, or Borthwicks, "We will give you a licence to operate at that rate." The Government lets the companies determine their own rate of expansion, but, to the Government instrumentality, which is operating for the people, the Government virtually says, "It does not matter whether Brisbane has a population of 2,000,000, you will confine your killing to 1,000 beasts a day." It is manifestly wrong to put that millstone round the neck of the administration.

The unions were against this. Government members may say, "They would be against anything we proposed." But in this instance the United Graziers' Association condemned the recommendation of the people appointed

to the committee, who, as I say, were outsiders. They may be good men, and I am not questioning their ability or their integrity. But why not get someone who knows the local situation and exactly what the possibilities are for development in Queensland? The Government should have got men with experience. I do not say that union members should have been appointed, but the Government could have appointed Mr. Wilson, or some other authoritative spokesman in the industry. There are any number of people who are competent and who know what is happening with brigalow development, beef roads, pasture improvement, the application of beef fattening schemes and all sorts of things. They would be more competent than outside people to consider the effects of all these things.

The unhappy fact is that the number of beef cattle today is roughly the same as it was in 1890. It is not much better than it was in 1893, with all the closer-settlement schemes, all the road-building, pasture improvement, water conservation, and so on. We have not advanced very much on 80 years ago.

So many of these aspects call for condemnation by the people of Queensland. I do not know why the Country Party group should capitulate to the Liberal interests. There is justification for rationalisation in planning in the development of our beef industry in this State when we are spending so much money. There should be rationalisation, but we are not getting it. We are only creating an opportunity for the powerful groups, financially domiciled outside this country, to take the bit in their teeth to the detriment of the Australian people. They use us when it suits them to use us, just as they do with the domestic market. These people have no obligations here, and if they can make more profit by sending their meat to America, Europe, England or somewhere else, they say, "To hell with the local people." They are not concerned about them but, when the pinch comes from some of these places and they think they can either reduce their operating losses or make a profit, they come in and want to compete against the established authority set up to look after the interests of the public of Queensland.

I think that that is wrong, and that we should have an opportunity to examine microscopically some of the provisions of this Bill. It is a good idea to find out where we are going. I do not think that the report discloses much information not generally known to those close to the industry. One has only to peruse most of the statistics available in the publications we have now to be able to compile a report along the lines of that submitted to us for our consideration. I do not think it is a constructive report at all; nor is it encouraging to the development of the meat industry in Queensland.

On behalf of the Opposition I say that I am surprised and disappointed that a Bill of this kind should come before us. We will have to look at it closely. I do not think it is good for the State, for the Australian economy, or for the consumer. The Government has shown a patent disregard for the rights of the consumer; it is not going to give him any consideration at all.

Mr. Chinchen: We are giving him competition for the first time.

Mr. DUGGAN: It will be interesting to see what sort of competition we will get from the amalgamation of these companies. The Federal Country Party leader, Mr. McEwen, has expressed strong condemnation of this taking over of the food groups in this country. I am surprised that the Country Party has not taken more notice of Mr. McEwen. On occasions I have paid him compliments. He talks more common sense in this regard than most of his colleagues. If we are increasing production in this country, well and good—I approve of these things—but the taking over of the ice cream companies, the biscuit factories, the flour mills, and now the abattoirs, is not good for Australia at all. I think that we should repose these concerns in the hands of those who have demonstrated, in general terms, their ability to give good service over the years.

There have been arguments from time to time that price fixing resulted in people not getting the choice cuts of meat to the same extent as they are available in Sydney, where the price is 50 per cent. higher than here. I have seen rump steak in Sydney at 9s. and 10s. a pound. If our quality has suffered, obviously our price has not. If that is what is worrying the Government, it can insist on higher quality by having the beef branded, for a start. We laid down that, if the Government wants to protect the consumer, it should get the inspectors to brand the beef so that the consumers will know that they are purchasing first, second, or third-quality beef. The Government has not extended that opportunity to the consumer.

This matter has not been discussed in our Caucus. There will be an open discussion so far as I am concerned. As Leader of the Opposition, I shall give my colleagues an opportunity to express their views freely. Then, when we have had an opportunity to examine this matter, I shall be surprised if they do not subscribe to many of the views and suggestions I have put forward on their behalf this afternoon.

Mr. PILBEAM (Rockhampton South) (3.49 p.m.): I support this Bill entirely. I feel that I have a right to speak on it because I have always taken a wide interest in the main industry of Rockhampton, which is the centre of the largest beef-cattle population in Australia. I am happy to see this Bill give the green light to the development of the cattle industry in that area, where we will surely have two first-class meatworks in

competition with each other, with no thought of amalgamation. One is a company financed by overseas capital, and the other, T. A. Field Pty. Ltd., an Australian company. I am assured that that company has never had one take-over in its history, and that it intends to ensure that there is no take-over in the future. These two meatworks will soon be in operation on a highly competitive basis. The Central Queensland Meat Export Co. Pty. Ltd. is embarking on a general modernisation scheme to bring its works up to first-class modern standards. T. A. Field Pty. Ltd. will have one of the most modern and hygienic works in Australia, and it expects to begin operations at the end of next month.

Much has been said about the advantage of a price margin derived from the works in Brisbane. With access to a population of only 46,000, the proprietary works in Rockhampton has been killing at rates the same as, or slightly lower than, those charged by the Queensland Meat Industry Board in Brisbane for some years past. The undertaking given by both T. A. Field Pty. Ltd. and Vesteys is that they will continue to kill for other operators at a price the same as that charged in Brisbane.

In addition, both these companies are adding substantially to the industrial development of the city of Rockhampton and its port. In addition to building modern meatworks, they are constructing modern freezing works at Port Alma, which is something that we have not had before.

Let me congratulate the special committee of inquiry on its admirable report. The Leader of the Opposition has criticised the composition of the committee. I am going to say much the same as is often said in the world of sport—if you want a fair opinion, you get a neutral referee. I see nothing at all wrong in obtaining members of the committee from another State. It should be borne in mind that at least two of them are connected with public abattoirs, so it can reasonably be assumed that they would not make any biased findings in favour of private firms. I congratulate them on the preparation of an excellent report containing many recommendations that must be of value to the industry.

By adopting the report, the Government has indicated that it will take advantage of the very astute findings of a well-informed committee. No hasty decisions were made. Committee members travelled round the State visiting all places where the industry was being developed, and their findings were made as a result of such detailed investigation.

Generally, their statement that there are now enough meatworks in Queensland is acceptable. They saw what was going on, and that was their opinion. Generally, I think we must accept their recommendation that franchises be allowed only in those areas where no export licences have been taken out. That is merely a matter of common

sense. If an abattoir is able to compete on the export market, it should not require protection. On the other hand, if it is being formed locally to slaughter hygienically in a central place, it should be entitled to some protection till it finds its feet and reaches the stage at which it can take out an export licence and kill for the export market. I regard that as a sound recommendation.

Most of Queensland is generally free of franchises. Only two small areas, namely, Townsville and Bundaberg, or three if Ipswich is included, are covered by franchises. I am sure that as a result of these measures the people of Brisbane will be able to obtain better and cheaper meat in the future.

An Opposition Member: That's a laugh.

Mr. PILBEAM: The best meat obtained here comes from Rockhampton, and it should be available to the general public, not to just a few of us.

I strongly support the provision relating to the composition of the advisory authority. I say "advisory authority", but actually it is an authority with powers greater than merely advising. It has the right to license and de-license abattoirs, for example. However, an appeal to the Minister is provided against any mandatory decision that the authority makes, so the public are well protected in that respect. I believe that the composition of the authority is very representative of the various sections interested in the industry, and I look forward to its working because I think it should improve the development of an industry that is of such great importance to Rockhampton.

The only exemption allowed under the Bill to the provision that no area with an export licence shall get a franchise applies to Rockhampton. That is because the Government made an arrangement with the two works, C.Q.M.E. and Fields, that provided they were given a franchise in relation to local killing, they would allow 20 per cent. of their works to be used by other operators. I am pleased to know that the Bill will allow that very important project to continue. The report of the committee of inquiry recommended that this procedure was desirable and said, in fact, that some way should be sought to enlarge agreements of this type in other parts of the State. I am happy to tell you, Mr. Hodges, that the agreement has almost been completed and will be operative at the same time as Field's plant comes into operation in Rockhampton. There will be competition up there that I am sure will be of benefit to everyone; it certainly will not be to the disadvantage of consumers in Rockhampton.

I am interested particularly in employment, and the exemption will have a good effect on employment in Rockhampton. The director of the labour bureau has already stated that he expects a serious labour shortage this year when Field's meatworks comes

into operation. That is a fairly new situation for Rockhampton, and that is why I am grateful for the way in which the industry is proceeding. I am very happy to see that the green light has been given to enable us to proceed along the lines on which we are already moving.

A great deal of comment has been made about the future. I do not think we need fear the future when we have an authority that is well fitted to take charge and put the industry on a firm footing. The authority can recommend the establishment of public abattoirs or district abattoirs in any particular area if the need arises. Under the proposed Bill, the authority does not have to wait until a local authority takes up the cudgels; it can initiate proceedings in regard to new meatworks. That is a very good thing. Of course, nothing can be read into the Bill that will prevent a private operator from erecting meatworks and going into the export market.

Mr. Row: No.

Mr. PILBEAM: I cannot see one undesirable feature in the Bill. I strongly recommend that all who doubt its efficacy should read it thoroughly, and read also, in conjunction with it, the initiating document, the report brought down by the committee of inquiry, an independent body composed of people from outside the State who, because of their profession, their education and their background, were able to make recommendations that formed the basis of the Bill.

I strongly support the proposed Bill.

Mr. O'DONNELL (Barcoo) (3.59 p.m.): I was shocked to sit in this Chamber and have revealed to me that the recommendations made by the committee of inquiry had been adopted virtually in toto by the Government. On other occasions we have had reason to compliment the Minister on legislation that he has brought before this Assembly; but I think he has been unfortunate in the advice tendered to him on this occasion. To tell the truth, I am very sympathetic towards him. I cannot understand why the committee of inquiry came to the conclusions it reached. I tried to catch your eye, Mr. Hodges, a moment ago but the hon. member for Rockhampton South got the call and, as a consequence, he stated his case which we know was solely for Central Queensland Meat Export Co. Pty. Ltd. and T. A. Field Pty. Ltd.

I invite the hon. member to look at the report of the committee of inquiry on the need for additional killing facilities. Central Queensland has been agitating for a district abattoir for a long time, but as a result of representations by the hon. member for Rockhampton South, with the support of the Nicklin Government, that has been denied to the people in that area. I will deal more fully with that point later on. Let me deal with the reference in the report to requests for additional killing facilities. It states, among other things—

"However, the United Graziers' Association and the Central Coastal Graziers' Association raised the point with the Committee that whilst they accepted that capacity over the State was adequate they believed that facilities in Central Queensland were inadequate."

Those parties sought a service abattoir in Central Queensland. They did not stipulate the centre, but it would have been to the advantage of the hon. member for Rockhampton South because the first inquiry was based on a Rockhampton site.

When this suggestion was rejected there was the idea of perhaps establishing an abattoir at Gladstone, and then we had the more localised advocacy of an abattoir in the Emerald district. I shall perhaps deal more fully later with the matter of an abattoir in the Emerald district, but first of all I want to deal with the question that has been raised regarding this meat inquiry committee's report. Strangely enough, in the interim—in the years we have been discussing an abattoir for Central Queensland—approval was given for the establishment of an abattoir at Mackay.

The next section of the report to which I wish to refer reads—

"The second event of consequence was a Government decision that the Rockhampton District Abattoir Board should negotiate with T. A. Field (Brisbane) Pty. Ltd. and C.Q.M.E. Pty. Ltd. with a view to these companies making 20 per cent. of their capacity available to operators. These negotiations are still not settled."

This is the important point—

"The approximate number of cattle involved is 300 head per day."

According to the information I have, the C.Q.M.E. works kill 1,100 cattle a day but they will have a project target of 800 a day when T. A. Field Pty. Ltd. is in operation, and that is the target for that company as well. Eight hundred a day from each works looks a very good figure, but 200,000 cattle a year are passing through Rockhampton en route to southern markets. Whilst this is going on, the graziers of Central Queensland—the producers—are fully confident that there is room for more competition by the establishment of additional abattoirs in Central Queensland. Furthermore, they feel that there is a greater need for competition at the saleyards in Rockhampton.

It has been said to me by producers that they feel that if they take their stock to Rockhampton and refuse to sell they become marked people. If they put them up again later, perhaps the next day, the "ring" says, "No, we are not going to bid for those. If the producer is not satisfied, it is just too bad for him. If he is not prepared to take what we offer, that is the end of it." That means that those stock have to go further afield.

On other occasions hon. members have heard me oppose the closing of the Roma-Injune railway line. There was a strong feeling among producers in Central Queensland that if that line was closed it would mean that in certain parts of my electorate—in the brigalow area that is being developed—there would be a conscription of stock into Rockhampton. While that railway line is there it will give producers an outlet to Roma, even though it is a proprietary works, or to Cannon Hill if they so desire.

It is important to realise what Central Queensland means to the cattle industry. Let me give figures of the present cattle numbers and the estimated turn-off percentages. The total for South Queensland is 1,805,000 (19.5 per cent.), for Central Queensland 2,285,000 (20 per cent.), and for North Queensland 1,930,000 (15.2 per cent.). It is obvious that when I am speaking for Central Queensland I am speaking for the State's most important cattle-producing area. Consequently there should be every opportunity there for abattoir development—even proprietary development, if anyone wants to put it that way. Undeniably this fact was placed before the committee of inquiry. They could not give an intelligent answer to it.

The producers in Central Queensland have regarded the Government with suspicion because their simple request for the establishment of a district abattoir was rejected. I realise that the Emerald suggestion was possibly a little premature. When we see Arcturus Downs and one or two other places that have gone in for lot feeding and crop feeding, we can understand the enthusiasm of cattlemen who look to the future. They can see the possibility of a local industry. Of course, the development of the local industry would solve the difficulties of getting their stock to the meatworks quickly without losses from bruising, etc.

We want it clearly understood that in Central Queensland the brigalow development scheme is going ahead. We have the prospect of a tremendous burst of production in that area. Unless the Government is wise enough to take advantage of the development that is going on and give the producers what they want in the form of their own abattoir on the spot, I am afraid the producers will be extremely disappointed. I know it will be said that the area is too sparsely populated, but I am thinking of the future. However, there is good argument at the present juncture for a local district abattoir such as we envisaged in the Emerald district.

These things do not mean something only for the producers; they also mean something to the local people. The hon. member for Rockhampton South said that 400 men would be employed at T. A. Field Pty. Ltd. We envisage employment being provided in the same way in the Emerald district. I understand that with his Liberal philosophy the hon. member for Rockhampton South will continue to advocate such places being

operated by people like C.Q.M.E. and T. A. Field. There are other people, particularly rural people in this State, who are not so wrapped up in the C.Q.M.E. and T. A. Field, or their agents, firms and saleyards. They are considering their own prosperity and they very strongly advocate the establishment of a district abattoir.

One of the mistakes disclosed in the introduction of the Bill is the removal of the franchise. The Minister will find that most of the debate, from this side of the Chamber particularly, will centre on that important point. There are people in Brisbane who have a very intimate connection with the Queensland Meat Industry Board, which is to be known as the Metropolitan Public Abattoir Board.

I was strongly impressed when the Minister said—

“ . . . a hygienic and fully inspected meat supply will continue to be ensured in abattoir areas whilst allowing a freer flow of trade. The supply of meat, slaughtered under lower standards of hygiene and without full-time inspection into abattoir areas is prohibited. . . ”

That is quite good up to that point. If this activity is prohibited in establishments which do not meet the necessary standard of hygiene for the activity they should, by law, be demolished. If they were demolished there would be no need to carry on and say that these sub-standard slaughter houses can be used in emergency. I admire the Minister for his frankness; the emergency he quoted was an industrial dispute. If that practice was prohibited I would say it was a very good provision. I believe that any sub-standard building should be destroyed. After all, the Bill provides somewhere for compensation if slaughter houses are not up to standard.

Mr. Pilbeam: Working on another basis, meat could be introduced from another area.

Mr. O'DONNELL: I am not arguing on the wrong basis at all. The hon. member is trying to suggest, “If something went wrong at Rockhampton they could kill out in the backblocks and bring the meat in.” I am talking about the position in the metropolitan area.

Critics of the Bill will advance further arguments based on figures that are well known. I wish to quote some of the figures. The population of Brisbane rose from 565,200 in 1956-57 to 656,800 in 1962-63, an increase of 91,600 in six years. What do the slaughtering figures for that period disclose? In 1956-57 the total number of cattle slaughtered at the Brisbane Abattoir was 299,944, while in 1963-64 the figure fell to 172,815. Hon. members can see the tremendous fall in the put-through at the abattoir compared with the rise in population. How can people believe other than that somehow the abattoir's activities have been sabotaged when they learn that it is to be replaced by more up-to-date premises in the near future, and

is to have the cattle kill reduced to 1,000 a day? I can understand why the Leader of the Opposition made much of that point. I am quoting these figures—I do not remember his quoting them—to show that in those years—

Mr. Row: I did not quote the figure of 1,000 a day in my introductory remarks.

Mr. O'DONNELL: The committee's report quoted it. I should like the Minister to understand that I am not critical so much of him as I am of the report of the committee of inquiry. That is one of the reasons why I am very indignant that we should have this expression of opinion adopted in principle by the Government, which now endeavours to put it into practice in toto. That is the criticism I offer. The report does not give a great deal of consideration to the producers, nor does it give any thought at all to the consumers, or to the future of the employees at the abattoirs, particularly the one in Brisbane, where there is export as well as domestic-supply activity. Considering all of those aspects, it is obvious many people must have given incorrect information or advice to the committee of inquiry. I do not know why, as the Leader of the Opposition said, some committee was not set up to examine those recommendations in detail and to advise the Minister on matters in respect of which there could have been the possibility of error. I am disappointed that someone did not give that advice; it could have been a group of departmental officers.

These figures are very good for Australian Labour Party political propaganda. If 1957 is taken as the year this Government took over, it will be found that there has been a falling off practically all the way in the activities of the Brisbane Abattoir. That indicates that, by some means, the private companies have been able to reduce the capacity of the work of the abattoir to the position as we know it today. It is very important for the Government to realise that there is a barometer of interference with a proposition which has been profitable except during the last two years.

If we are versed in accountancy and examine the statements contained in the Q.M.I.B. report and the committee of inquiry report, we may be able to criticise the allocation of some of the costs, receipts, expenditure, and so on. I am not competent to do that; but I am competent to say that when we have before us a Bill based upon the committee of inquiry report, which has obvious errors in it and which does not give consideration to all sections of the community, particularly the producers, the consumers, and the employees of the abattoirs as they are set up, the inquiry as such was not wide enough in its approach to this most important matter. It has already been pointed out that Queensland is the leading State in beef production.

It is very puzzling why the committee of inquiry did not get down to deciding why there has not been a very great increase in

cattle numbers in Queensland since 1890. Cattle in Queensland at present number over 7,000,000, I think the Minister said, which number has not varied greatly except during drought periods over the years. There is a slight upward trend now. If progress is to be made at the rate that has applied since 1890, which is a long time ago, I am afraid we shall not get very far. When I see the opening of the brigalow country and the possibilities of that area, and when I consider the rough deal that Central Queensland seems to be receiving, despite the attitude of producers, who in many instances are the backbone of the Government, all I can say is that figures, although they tell the truth, are not appreciated.

Mr. CORY (Warwick) (4.22 p.m.): I should like to congratulate the Minister on bringing down the Bill. I speak now as one who has made a living from the beef industry over quite a number of years. If one is involved in an industry, one is concerned with all sections of it, and its success depends on each doing his little bit right along the line to the consumer.

To me the most desirable part of the committee's findings was their limited support of franchise areas. When the committee was investigating these matters, I was a little concerned that they might support a building up of franchise areas rather than a limitation of them. The opening of the Brisbane meat market to producers in southern Queensland will have a very marked effect on the efficiency of the industry. This will be of assistance to country works that are expanding their operations, forming a very good usage of labour, and increasing their efficiency. It will also be a great boon to producers because they will be able to compete in the market for prime-quality crop-fattened cattle, in which field they have been able to operate only to a limited extent. The only market for this type of beef has been interstate and, to a limited extent, overseas. The opening of the Brisbane market will overcome present restrictive practices under which the free entry of meat could not take place. I think it should be remembered that only last year, during a period of industrial trouble, better meat at competitive prices was delivered in Brisbane right from the outset.

The Opposition also mentioned that lower-standard works may be used for the production of some of this meat. I should like to point out that only approved works will have access to any market. Meat entering the Brisbane market will come only from such works. A great deal of money is being spent to bring country meatworks up to the highest standards of efficiency and hygiene, and the standard is now second to none in the State.

It has been said, too, that the number of cattle in Queensland has not increased very greatly since 1890. What was not mentioned was that the cattle tick had not appeared in Queensland before 1890, and I think all hon.

members will agree that numbers decreased after that. Beef cattle are now being marketed at 2½ years of age instead of at 6 or 7 years of age, and at the same time much more beef is being produced. This indicates not only that the average is younger but also that there are more efficient beasts producing more meat. The gradual build-up in cattle numbers in the last five years has been achieved in spite of the cattle tick. A start had to be made with far fewer cattle than we had in Queensland in 1890, because the cattle tick had reduced cattle numbers greatly over many years.

It has been mentioned that the Brisbane Abattoir has been killing smaller and smaller numbers of cattle over the last few years. That has been brought about by the inability of the operators of the Brisbane Abattoir to compete on the export market, because the reduction has taken place only in the export kill, not in the domestic kill. It has proved the efficiency of privately-owned country works, which have outstripped the operators of the Brisbane Abattoir, and, if they can compete on the export market, they certainly can compete on the domestic market.

Mr. Muller: There must be some reason for these outside people being directed to the abattoir. Have you given any thought to that?

Mr. CORY: The people who own the country works have to make their living from their works.

Mr. Muller: They are run more efficiently?

Mr. CORY: Yes. They depend on the success of their works for their livelihood and they have to be competitive. That is what they have been doing, and no doubt they will be equally competitive if they are allowed to operate on the domestic market and in the metropolitan area.

I think it is very significant that the findings of the committee of inquiry recommended the setting up of a meat industry authority. The meat industry has gained a greater and greater prominence in recent years, and I think that we must all approve of the setting up of an authority to co-ordinate all aspects of the industry. In today's highly competitive world, an authority is needed that is capable of looking at all facets of the industry, making decisions, and giving sound advice to those sections that are in need of it. However, we must make haste very slowly in the field of central killing works and the setting up of district abattoir boards. In quite a number of areas, such works are run very efficiently, but I do not think there is any great need to move into this field in some parts of the State. I hope that the authority will conduct with discretion an investigation into any area that it thinks may be suitable for the establishment of a district board and that it will make its

decision only after it has taken into account all the personalities and problems in the area.

Another important facet is the provision for trade between board areas when the need appears desirable. I think we must always leave the gate open for trade within any part of the State if it is in the best interests of the industry and the consumer. We know that, from time to time, certain areas of the State will be short of certain types of meat, and we must always have available machinery whereby meat can be moved from one part to any other part of the State with the least possible red tape or delay.

I think for the success of the industry, and its maximum progress, we must make as flexible as possible all facets of its operations. Particularly in the marketing field—we must be able to move as quickly as possible our meat from one part of the State to any other part where a market arises. From the producers' angle, we must look at the finance that will be required to operate this authority. Regardless of who actually pays this money, the finance is broadly shouldered by the producer. At the present time he is paying his Australian Meat Board levy for research and marketing.

Mr. Sherrington: Don't you think the consumer pays his share?

Mr. CORY: He is not paying this. We simply get so much less for our cattle.

Mr. Sherrington: It is still passed on to the consumer.

Mr. CORY: These operators pay this money regardless of what the levy is. Under the Bill there will be a new levy for the authority, and the producer will be paid a little less for his beef. We favour this because we feel we will get the advantage of a more organised industry, but we must watch that the authority is operated on very businesslike lines and that the money is used to the best advantage.

I should like to mention one problem in the slaughtering section in the beef industry. It is the condemning of cattle, supposedly for disease. In years gone by, if a beast had a lump or any abnormality it was condemned. We got over the problem a couple of years ago and, where those cattle were only regarded as suspect, they could be auctioned and the buyer was allowed to bid for the suspect cattle and got for them what they were worth on the market.

Now a small problem appears to be arising. Many of these inspections will be purely outward or superficial inspections, and not so much on a post-mortem. We know that in our industry are many cattle that, for various reasons, whether through injury or a tooth abnormality, a deformed jaw, or something of the sort, are quite likely to develop a lump outwardly that has no effect whatever on the health of the beast. We

have cattle also that are inclined to get cancerous eyes. Only a very small section of these cattle can in any way be condemned. There is no risk to other parts of the body and we feel that we must be very fair and give inspectors quite a lot of discretion in the method by which they condemn these cattle. No producer wants to be paid for a diseased animal; no producer wants to sell a diseased animal; but he wants to be treated fairly and paid for all healthy beasts. For that reason, stock should not be condemned merely on a superficial examination when a post-mortem might be necessary to make a correct diagnosis. I consider that too many beasts are condemned purely on a superficial examination. Very often a post-mortem examination would confirm the findings made on a superficial examination; but sometimes the decisions to condemn are harsh and unjustified.

I feel that the greatest advantage from this measure will be freer trade in the meat industry. Our country works will compete far more actively at country auctions. We hope that the young prime beef will be regarded as premium-quality beef because that type of beast costs a lot to produce. Only when the producer gets the top price for it can he afford to produce it. If we allow country works, which up till now have operated only on the interstate and export market, to operate on the closer domestic market, such as the Brisbane market, the advantage will be felt right throughout the industry, from producer upwards. I take very much pleasure in supporting the Minister's introduction of this measure.

Mr. NEWTON: (Belmont) (4.37 p.m.): No doubt during the remainder of this session and the early part of the August session, we will have a great number of Bills introduced, either by way of amendment or consolidation, as the result of reports that have been presented to Parliament by various committees of inquiry into various phases of industry. That will not amaze us because, with the elections 12 months off, no doubt the present coalition Government will endeavour to bring many measures before Parliament so that they can go to the people that bring pressure to bear upon them and say that, during the Government's last term, they have carried out what those people wanted. However, it does amaze me to hear hon. members opposite get up one after another, as they have done in the past, to support the extension of the activities of private enterprise throughout Queensland.

I want to make the Australian Labour Party's attitude quite clear. During our term of Government those people mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition—the three biggest meat companies in the State, plus a number of others—were allowed to operate without any interference in any way. What we need to watch is what is going to happen throughout Queensland as the result of the present measure based on the various reports before us. Everybody is hoping that, in future years, a general take-over by the bigger

companies will not take place, as has been the experience in this State in the past, with bigger companies taking over the smaller ones. If that should happen, everything that the Minister is hoping for in the consolidation of the Acts, and everything he has pointed out at this introductory stage, will be lost. Experience has shown us what takes place in other spheres when take-overs occur. It is to be hoped that it will not happen in this industry.

Quite a number of hon. members on this side of the Chamber will have some comments to make about the Bill. There is no doubt that members representing electorates like mine, namely, Wynnum, Bulimba, and Mt. Gravatt, will have some comments to make, for in our electorates are many people who have worked in the meatworks in the metropolitan area, and one must rise to protect the interests of people who have worked in the industry for 40 or 50 years. In the Cannon Hill area are the Queensland Meat Industry Board abattoirs, Borthwicks, and a number of bacon factories, all associated with this measure. The Queensland Branch of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union has covered the personnel in those callings for many years. It is vitally interested in what may take place as a result of the report of the committee of inquiry. It may well have a big effect on the future, and the prosperity, of the union as it applies to the metropolitan area, and Queensland as a whole. There is no doubt that, particularly in the post-war period, this industry has had a boom in Queensland.

I was amazed to hear of the proposal to cut down the killing rate at the Brisbane abattoir to 1,000 head a day. I remember that, in the post-war period, when I was working in the meat industry, the kill was about 2,000 a day. I will later advance some reasons for the deterioration in the kill.

The hon. member for Warwick spoke on behalf of the producers. When we talk about this matter we must consider everything—the producers, the operators, and the people who handle the beef, such as the meat industry employees, and relate all those matters to the consumer. I assure the Minister that I have already received a number of deputations from women's organisations in the metropolitan area asking me to do everything in my power to see that the functions of the Brisbane Abattoir are not curtailed in any way. In these discussions it has been pointed out clearly that, while the Brisbane Abattoir operates in the metropolitan area, it will stop other companies from carrying out what they intend to do if they get the whole of the metropolitan franchise. There is no doubt that the first concern of these organisations was the quality of the meat available in metropolitan shops. I challenge anybody to go to some of the meat shops

in the metropolitan area and see what is available under the present grading system. I do not believe that there is any system of grading at present; it is a case of take what you can get and pay what you have to pay. That is what these organisations are complaining about. They are the people who have to do what they can with these cuts of meat in an effort to feed the breadwinner. They say that there should be a proper system of grading to ensure that they get good-quality meat. If this were done, price-fixing could be applied as it was by the A.L.P. when it was the Government. If hon. members on one side of the Chamber complain because it affects them, it is up to the Opposition to put the point of view of the people it represents.

A good deal has been said about the position at the Brisbane Abattoir. I hold the Government responsible because it has been on the Treasury benches since 1957. I regularly visited the Brisbane Abattoir from 1954 to 1960, when I was State organiser of my union, and I have made visits since I became a member of Parliament. Recently I was accompanied by the hon. member for Bulimba on one visit. It was not one of those conducted tours with six or seven men making sure you see only what they want you to see. We were accompanied by only one person, and we made it clear where we wanted to go and what we wanted to see.

Owing to the renovations taking place there at present the abattoir cannot kill the numbers of cattle normally handled. The buildings have become weak and the foundations have to be reinforced. Endeavours are being made to save this particular building, several floors high. On every floor, including the killing floor, the walls are tommed up. The employees have to work around these obstacles. If the Minister or any other Government representative has had any experience of killing works, he will know that this sort of thing should not be allowed. Whether the treatment is done by hand or by the modern method now used in the Brisbane Abattoir, namely the rail system, there must be a clear floor and everything must be kept moving. That is the only way any abattoir can kill the number of stock that should be treated every day.

Whilst it is true that the on-the-rail system has been installed on this floor, we found on our visit to the calf-killing section that the system applying years ago was still being carried out. I believe that it is proposed, as some time in the future, probably when the building is restored to the order in which it should be, to install an on-the-rail system in that section. Let us therefore be realistic about making comparisons between what is happening at the Brisbane Abattoir and the works of private companies today. I have been in a number of more modern abattoirs

that have been built in recent years, and things there are entirely different from what they are in older works. It is hardly fair to compare the position in modern abattoirs with that in a plant in which endeavours are being made to bring it up to modern-day requirements. That is the problem at the Brisbane Abattoir now.

Let me say that it is to be hoped that the assurances given by the Minister when the Estimates of his department were before the committee will be carried out. There is no doubt that an abattoir of this size, with all its associated facilities, cannot be allowed to be placed on the scrap-heap overnight. It is the intention of the Queensland Meat Industry Board (to be known as the Metropolitan Public Abattoir Board, I understand, under the Bill) to endeavour to bring its works up to modern standards to enable it to compete freely with new enterprises established in Queensland. There is no doubt in my mind, or in that of anyone else who has been to the works and seen the amount of space that will be available when the new killing systems are in operation, that there will in due course be ample space for many things to be done. Already, because certain things have taken place, some parts have been sublet to several firms.

There will be ample storage for the plant. When the work being carried out to ensure that the Brisbane Abattoir does not go out of existence is completed, the storage space then provided will be a considerable asset. Space will be available for renting by those who have been using the abattoir for the export trade.

Linked with this question is the provision of sale-yard facilities at Cannon Hill. Much has been done in maintaining these yards because of the advantage that they are to people throughout the length and breadth of the State who send cattle to them for sale. Not only cattle but pigs and sheep are handled. Anyone familiar with this area knows that the facilities for those wanting to purchase stock are remarkable, and have been kept in good order over the the years by previous governments and the present one. When we are discussing this question, I think we should bear in mind the area that the abattoir covers.

Much has been said, too, about the transport of cattle over the length and breadth of Queensland. The competition has resolved itself into rail transport against road transport, and a great deal has been said about what has happened to cattle that have travelled by rail to the Cannon Hill sale-yards. From my own experience—I still go back to Cannon Hill on occasions to see what is going on there—I should say that I do not think road transport can carry cattle as efficiently as can rail transport in Queensland. I say this because, no matter whether it has been coming from Cairns, Winton, Charleville, Cunnamulla, or somewhere else, I have always seen two stockmen on the train. As hon. members know, stock trains

stop at various sidings because of the traffic on the lines, and I have seen the two stockmen move round the cattle wagons, inspect the cattle, make sure that they were all right, and put back on their feet again any cattle that were down. If anything was wrong, they rectified it. On the other hand, I have seen road transports leaving Brisbane with cattle and proceeding along Shafston Avenue with a leg hanging out the back and a leg hanging out the side. Who looks after those cattle? Only the driver of the truck, who is in the front cabin. If he does not look in his rear vision mirror to see what is happening in the back of the truck, the cattle could be hurt within half a mile of being loaded. If anything happens to the cattle, it does not need very much imagination to know what happens to the meat.

Mr. Lloyd: What happens to the person driving the car that hits them?

Mr. Newton: I have not time to go into that question now. I have something further that I wish to put before the Committee.

Officers of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union compared costs at the Brisbane Abattoir with similar costs at the metropolitan abattoir at Adelaide, and I should like to refer to their findings. For example, the metropolitan abattoir at Adelaide charges 2·15d. a lb. for slaughtering a bullock for the domestic trade. For a bullock with a dressed weight of 442 lb. (the average weight at Brisbane Abattoir over the last five years) the fee charged at Adelaide would be 79s. 2d.; at Brisbane Abattoir the charge is 36s. 6d. The only extra services performed at Adelaide and included in their fees are paddocking and feeding for a period not exceeding one week and delivering the carcass and edible offals to the owner's premises. For export slaughter, the metropolitan abattoir at Adelaide charges 3·06d. a lb. for beef, whereas Brisbane charges 1·875d. a lb. On a 500-lb. bullock, the Brisbane fee would be 78s. 1d. as against Adelaide's 127s. 6d. Thus, Adelaide's charges are 63 per cent. higher than Brisbane's.

In the past, the Brisbane Abattoir has fulfilled its main function—to slaughter live-stock hygienically for the public of Brisbane—but at the same time it has been a cheap export works for various meat exporting interests, including those who have instigated a persistent "knocking" campaign against the abattoir's franchise for the domestic market. Having seen what is done at the Brisbane Abattoir to assist private operators in the metropolitan area and having inspected the facilities provided there for the export trade, I am satisfied that it has done a very good job in the past. These companies—and especially Borthwicks—were established purely as exporting companies. That was explained this morning by the Leader of the Opposition. It is a well-known fact that, since World War II, and one could say right up till 1960, these people were not interested

in the domestic market at all because overseas there was a boom for meat in most countries throughout the world. That is why these companies were not interested in the domestic market. Borthwicks had been able to get contracts overseas, particularly with America, for certain types of meat. I can remember on one occasion they had quite a large contract to supply hamburger meat to America. In my days—and I have had experience on the land—those beasts were called “tinnors” and one would be lucky to get 30s. each for them. In the main, they were cows that were no longer of any use in a dairy herd.

Mr. Campbell: They were fit for human consumption.

Mr. NEWTON: It is true that they were fit for human consumption, but again it was an entirely different treatment. As the name implied, they were slaughtered, cooked, and put into tins for such things as the bully beef we ate in the Army. Even in that form it was a poor sort of meat to eat.

(Time expired.)

Mr. McKECHNIE (Carnarvon) (5.2 p.m.): This Bill is based on the report of the Committee of Inquiry into matters concerning the Development of the Livestock and Meat Industry. To my mind there are three very interesting principles in the Bill, the first one being the abolition of the monopoly at Cannon Hill. I am very happy to see this monopoly at the Brisbane Abattoir abolished, because on many occasions in my early days I was the victim of it. I have acted as a train drover, and in that capacity I have come to Brisbane to save expense and have arrived at the Brisbane Abattoir only to find that there is a strike in progress, a state of affairs brought about by the monopolistic position of the Brisbane Abattoir. I can assure hon. members that, acting as a train drover to get a cheap trip to Brisbane and then finding that the cattle you have brought down are unsaleable places you in a very unhappy frame of mind.

This Bill aims at reducing Cannon Hill to about half its present killing capacity. That is a very progressive step because it will encourage the killing of the same number of cattle at country centres so that there will not be the wastage of beef that is now occurring. The operator in the country can afford to pay more for a beast that he will kill than he can at Cannon Hill because he gets more beef from it. One has only to lose 15 lb. on the trip from the country to Cannon Hill to lose the price differential that is quoted in the killing rates at Brisbane as against Adelaide.

Mr. O'Donnell: How do you account for the 200,000 cattle coming from Central Queensland to the South?

Mr. McKECHNIE: The same thing occurs to Sydney. I will give the hon. member some figures shortly to show him what goes from Queensland to Sydney to be killed.

The third point that interests me is the fact that the proposed authority will be essentially an advisory body, although it has power to control any new works or any increase in killing capacities. I am very happy to know that the Minister has the final say in such cases. That is a necessary safeguard, because many unforeseen circumstances can arise. I cite an example in my own area. We were not covered thoroughly by the report because we are influenced so much by stock going south of the border. In the 12 months to 30 June last 302,904 cattle crossed from Queensland into New South Wales, mainly in the area I represent. In the same period 101,535 travelled in the opposite direction. There is that loss from Queensland into New South Wales. In that year it meant a loss of 201,369, which was more than the number killed at Cannon Hill. I have forgotten the figures, but I think the Leader of the Opposition said it was nearly 200,000. We have that loss across the border because New South Wales has departed from the principle of central killing at Homebush by establishing a line of abattoirs in its northern districts adjacent to Queensland at places such as Gunnedah, Moree, Inverell, Glen Innes and Tenterfield, all of which draw cattle from our area. If we had works on our side we could prevent some of this loss to New South Wales.

Mr. O'Donnell: You would like a district abattoir?

Mr. McKECHNIE: I should like an abattoir. I am not fussy what type of abattoir it is, but I should like an abattoir. Of course, that area is developing, as are all the brigalow areas. In future there will be more crop fattening. Within a 200-mile radius of Goondiwindi there are almost as many sheep as in the rest of Queensland. This provides a great opportunity for the export of mutton through Brisbane. The basis of this approach is to get local industries in country areas and to see that our exports go through our ports rather than New South Wales ports. In the past Cannon Hill has unwittingly been directly encouraging industrial unrest.

Mr. Aikens: Do you mean the management?

Mr. McKECHNIE: I mean that the set-up generally has been conducive to industrial unrest, particularly the fact that it has been a monopoly and other meat has been kept out. Quite a bit of inefficiency has crept in which has resulted in losses to those who supply cattle to Cannon Hill. I have sent down cattle which have arrived when a strike has been in progress. They have had to remain there for perhaps a week, under adverse conditions. There was the possibility of their contracting redwater in that time as they had come from clean areas. If that occurred losses could be high, and to avoid the risk of such losses the producer sells at a low price. In that way he loses. Of course, part of the loss due to loss in weight has to be borne by the consumer.

I concede that it is desirable to retain the Cannon Hill abattoir to the extent suggested, that is, with half its capacity. It is most desirable from both the producer's and the consumer's point of view that a place be reserved for the small, independent operator. A kill of 1,000 head a day will keep about 117 small operators going at Cannon Hill.

Mr. Aikens: Will that supply the metropolitan area with all the meat that is needed.

Mr. McKECHNIE: No, it will not. But it will certainly be a help, and it will keep the small businesses in operation as a steady-going factor on the market. When Cannon Hill first came into operation there was a problem with a few big works controlled by the companies. It was essential to control the operations of those works. We are now fortunate in that there are 30 abattoirs in Queensland, with about 20 of them situated in the south-east quarter of the State. The possibility of a monopoly being created by the big meat interests has gone, thanks to the diversifying of killing facilities in the country centres of South-east Queensland. It is most desirable to encourage this development. Brisbane Abattoir meat is dearer than meat killed in country centres. As I said earlier, there is loss in transit.

Mr. Beardmore: Loss in weight.

Mr. McKECHNIE: They lose condition. In addition, it is lower-grade meat when it arrives at the abattoir—not only is there a loss of quantity; there is also a loss of quality. The closer meat is killed to the source of supply, the better it is for all concerned.

Mr. Beardmore: And there is cheaper transport, too.

Mr. McKECHNIE: Yes. It is certainly much cheaper to transport beef in a chilled state than on the hoof, and it is more hygienic when it has to be transported by rail or truck through built-up areas.

All meat for Brisbane must go through a meat hall to be certified or inspected. It is pleasing to note that the Bill contains a provision that it must go through a specified or suitable meat hall. It need not necessarily go through Cannon Hill. This provision was certainly a bone of contention for some time in that all meat had to go through Cannon Hill before distribution. That provision probably added $\frac{1}{2}$ d. or 1d. a lb., or probably more, to the cost of all meat brought into Brisbane.

The Leader of the Opposition said that the number of cattle in Queensland is little greater now than in 1893. That may be so. However, by improved husbandry and handling methods we are turning off many more cattle than in those years. We are turning off fat stock; we are crop fattening to get them away. We have much more water and do not have the terrific losses through drought that we had in those years. Consequently, with a more efficient industry and a greater turnoff with approximately the

same numbers, despite the introduction of ticks and the fact that some of the best cattle lands in 1893 are now producing cane and grain, we are better off. There has been a loss by the cattle industry to other industries which produce more to the acre, such as cane and grain, but men in the cattle industry should be complimented for the job they have done.

At Cannon Hill there is a mutton kill, which I understand will not be affected greatly.

Mr. Houston: Have you been over Cannon Hill?

Mr. McKECHNIE: Not since I took a mob of cattle there about three years ago. There was a strike in progress and I had to sell them at a loss. Prior to that I was there two or three times a year as a train driver bringing my own and other people's cattle to the abattoir. During the last three years I have been only to the waterfront in front of the abattoir with the Treasurer, Hon. T. A. Hiley.

The abattoir will carry on mutton slaughtering more or less as at present, and the number of sheep and lambs killed there will be gradually reduced so that mutton can be treated in the same way as beef.

The hon. member for Belmont said that the situation has deteriorated. If the hon. member means that we are killing fewer beasts in Brisbane, to my way of thinking that is an improvement, not a deterioration, as it achieves what is desirable in the industry, namely, decentralisation and the production of a better article at a lower price.

In conclusion, as a producer of both beef and mutton I support the Bill and express appreciation for the records and the research of the Minister's officers.

Mr. THACKERAY (Rockhampton North) (5.16 p.m.): When I was listening to the Minister introducing the Bill, I was thinking to myself, whom is he trying to appease, members of his own party or the people in the South-west—no doubt some Country Party members have shares in the abattoirs out there—or is he trying to soft-soap the Liberal Party as far as the slush-fund account is concerned?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to relate his remarks to the measure before the Committee and not to indulge in personalities, which do not relate to the debate in any way.

Mr. THACKERAY: This is the first step towards killing Cannon Hill and the other district abattoirs in Queensland. As the hon. member for Carnarvon said, the kill at Cannon Hill will be reduced by at least half. That means that half of the employees at Cannon Hill, members of the A.M.I.E.U. and affiliated unions, will lose their jobs.

Of the district abattoirs at Townsville, Bowen, Ipswich, and Toowoomba, three are paying propositions, and no doubt Ipswich is the most lucrative.

The hon. member for Carnarvon said it is absolutely necessary to have the abattoirs close to the cattle so that the beef can be turned off in better condition. If that applies in his area, the same must apply in Central Queensland. Over the years I have advocated the establishment of a district abattoir and export abattoir in Central Queensland.

Mr. Windsor: Fred Graham got one for Mackay.

Mr. THACKERAY: He was able to get one from Mr. Evans. One should have been established in Central Queensland, but it was not. The reason, as the managing director of the Central Queensland Meat Export Company Ltd., Mr. Mark Hinchliff, and the hon. member for Rockhampton South have said, was the financial assistance that the Vestey empire and T. A. Field Pty. Ltd. have given to the Liberal Party since this Government has been in office. In Central Queensland the United Graziers' Association and other associations connected with the meat industry wholeheartedly support the establishment of a district abattoir and, subsequently, an export abattoir.

This Government is a coalition Government formed by the Country Party and the Liberal Party, and one would think that its first thoughts would be for the people on the land and for the establishment of a district abattoir at Rockhampton. We were denied the right to have a district abattoir in Rockhampton or elsewhere in Central Queensland, which produces more beef than any other part of the State. In the southern portion of the State there are 13 abattoirs, compared with two in Central Queensland.

Let us go back a little and consider the cost of meat to the consumers. About 12 months ago I mentioned here the rises and falls that took place in the price of cattle on many occasions, not only at Cannon Hill but in saleyards throughout the State, yet never once was any reduction in cattle prices passed on to the consumer.

Another racket is to be found in the bacon trade. Pig prices have increased and decreased in the past, yet the price of bacon has never been lowered. Bacon manufacturers have a complete monopoly. About two months ago I bought a pig at the saleyards at Rockhampton, and the price of the pig and the dressing of it meant that the bacon, delivered to my home, cost 4s. a lb. The Darling Downs Co-operative Bacon Association and other bacon manufacturers charge from 7s. 6d. to up to 10s. a lb. for bacon and ham. There is another reason why there should be price control, not only on beef but also on mutton, bacon, and other essential commodities.

Let us now take a look at these large meat companies, such as the Central Queensland Meat Export Co. Pty. Ltd., Swift Australia Co. (Pty) Ltd., and Thomas Borthwick & Sons Ltd. The C.Q.M.E. Co. has bought

more than 50 per cent. of the retail butcher shops in Rockhampton—the figure would be somewhere in the vicinity of 70 per cent. That gives them an "open go" to pass on to the people of Rockhampton meat that is not fit for the American or English trade. This could be any cracker beef or any other stuff that they care to buy, for which they always pay their own price. That is the position now, and within 10 years, or perhaps a little longer, there will not be one privately owned butcher shop left in Queensland. They will all be owned by these meat cartels. The consumer will have no say in the type of meat that he buys or from whom he buys it, because the large companies will own not only the meatworks but all the retail outlets as well.

Mr. Campbell: Are you saying that this meat is unwholesome?

Mr. THACKERAY: I am saying that they will be able to force upon the people any type of meat that they feel is not suitable for the export trade. Meat not up to the standard required for the American and English trade will be forced on not only the people of Rockhampton but those elsewhere throughout the State, without any grading or price control. That is exactly what will happen, and the Bill is the first step in that direction.

Already the Minister has introduced a Bill to kill the Brisbane Abattoir and the facilities at Cannon Hill. Damage has been done already—

Mr. Row: That's tripe.

Mr. THACKERAY: I do not eat tripe, and, if the Minister is a sample of tripe, I would not eat him. He should stick to sugar cane. He knows a bit about c.c.s. but not much about rump steak.

Let us look at another of the schemes that the hon. member for Rockhampton South told us was going to be introduced at Rockhampton, namely, the Rockhampton Mutton Supply Company. He said that there will be keen competition between the Central Queensland Meat Export Co. Pty. Ltd. and T. A. Field Pty. Ltd. Let me say quite openly that if there is keen competition between these two companies I should like to know why the manager of the C.Q.M.E. Co. and his engineer had the plans of T. A. Fields' works in their car and went down every day to give the constructing authority ideas on how the floor should be put down and how the building was progressing. This was the company that was supposed to be in direct competition with Fields. The manager, the engineer, and the works manager, Mr. Day, used to be down there at least once a day. We hear from hon. members on the other side of the Chamber a great deal about healthy competition! I have no doubt that the hon. member for Clayfield was correct when he said that this is a hillbilly Government.

When Mr. Morris, now Senator Morris, was Minister for Labour and Industry, he told us that Fathom Fisheries, with a paid-up capital of £250,000, intended to process seafood in Central Queensland. That was another of the grandiose schemes that he dreamed up when he was not chasing the Comms. The hon. member for Rockhampton South told us about the Rockhampton Mutton Supply Company. I asked the Minister for Primary Industries a question about this company, and I asked him whether its works were going to be built at Gavial Creek on land that was below flood level and near a septic installation. He said it was quite hygienic. The principal of the Rockhampton Mutton Supply Company appeared in court because he had not paid various debts that he had contracted round Rockhampton, but only recently he published an advertisement in the newspaper calling for people to invest in this bogus company. How can the Minister and the hon. member for Rockhampton South say that this is a bona-fide company when its principal has been fined in the Magistrates Court for not paying his debts? The hon. member for Rockhampton South lends his support to some extraordinary ventures.

Mr. Tucker interjected.

Mr. THACKERAY: As the hon. member for Townsville North says, he has dogs tied up everywhere.

We hear of all the new industries that are coming to Queensland. This one will never operate in Rockhampton; its principal is nearly bankrupt.

That is the position in regard to the Rockhampton Mutton Supply Company. If I am not telling the truth, I invite the Minister to get up and tell me where I am wrong. I know that he cannot. I invite him, too, to tell me what the Government is doing for Central Queensland. The people there are being denied their inherent right to a local district abattoir, and the Government has gone against the wishes of members of the Country Party in this respect. In my opinion, this is the first step towards doing away with public abattoirs, not only in Brisbane but also over the length and breadth of Queensland, and setting up meat cartels that will eventually handle the whole retail distribution of meat and thus be able to foist onto the people of Queensland meat that is not suitable for overseas markets.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (5.29 p.m.): I welcome the introduction of the Bill, and I wish the Minister well in his efforts to put the slaughtering and distribution of meat in the city of Brisbane on a better footing.

I should also like to compliment the committee of inquiry on its very comprehensive report. It has gone to a good deal of trouble to examine the position thoroughly and make recommendations that I think will be of advantage to the industry.

For the last few years growers and fatteners of cattle have been very unhappy about the situation at Cannon Hill saleyards. The hon. member for Carnarvon said earlier that he had not been there for three years because of the fright that he got at that time. Many other people have had similar experiences. In my opinion, the decrease in the price of cattle has some relation to the fact that people have not been satisfied with what has been going on at Cannon Hill. The remedy is not to surrender but to try to correct whatever weaknesses there are. I am not critical when I make that statement; I am not for a moment suggesting that the Queensland Meat Industry Board has entirely fallen down on its job. However, I think there is tremendous room for improvement.

I have three points in mind that I should like to place before the Committee. I think they are largely responsible for the position in which we find ourselves. In the last few years the proclamations of the weight of cattle and the prices quoted have been very misleading. Approximately two years ago I made a statement in this Chamber that the weights and the prices paid for cattle as published in the Press were quite wrong. I am not going to ask hon. members to accept my statement for that; those views were really endorsed by the growers themselves because they have decided to divert their cattle elsewhere.

Again and again we see cattle going to Cannon Hill quoted, as I said at that time, at £9, when sometimes the actual sale was closer to £7. I did not actually use those figures, but from time to time, that would happen. That cannot go on if Cannon Hill is to retain the confidence of those who support it.

I make no secret of the fact that when that abattoir was established the objective was really good. It had the effect of cleaning up many of the unsightly slaughter-yards, and resulted in better supervision. People are not getting the quality of meat they would like, but the whole of it is in one centre and it is all capable of being thoroughly examined both at the slaughtering end and in the distribution.

At that time we did not have the problems we have today. There have been strikes and hold-ups at the abattoir, things that should not happen at an abattoir. Men can strike, if they like, if they are gristing wheat or making bricks or doing something of that kind, but I want hon. members to realise just what a serious matter it is to hold up an abattoir. With cattle in the yard and cattle slaughtered on the floor, to walk out and leave things in such a mess is perhaps one of the most wicked things I have ever heard of.

Mr. Sherrington interjected.

Mr. MULLER: I am not critical of the men alone. Some of the butchers I know are real tradesmen. I take off my hat to them. They are highly skilled in action and

they should be paid properly for the work they do. However, the remedy is not to walk out and leave everything as it is, because the hardest hit is the poor unfortunate who is working his eyeballs out to produce the beef. There should be a better means of settling disputes between management and men than walking out and leaving the producers' meat to rot on the floor.

Mr. Sherrington: It is a pity the Government did not wake up to that.

Mr. MULLER: That, I think, is one of the problems. There is another one, and it is even worse. To those hon. members who are interjecting, I say that I am not saving anyone in this matter and I do not care what anyone thinks. Cannon Hill sales have developed into something in the nature of a ring of buyers and nobody can convince me that in a great many cases when cattle are sent in, buyers are competing against one another. That is what has sickened men like the hon. member for Carnarvon, and it is what has sickened me. I think everyone knows what happens. People have been selling their cattle on weight to the meatworks. Even though they were offered perhaps 10s. or £1 a 100 lb. less than the quoted price at Cannon Hill, they knew exactly what they were going to get. And, what is more important, the meatworks were prepared to allow them to see their cattle killed and to see what weight there was.

I am not asking the Committee to accept my version. The very fact that people send their cattle to other works and sell them by weight instead of sending them to Cannon Hill is proved by the fact that the committee of inquiry found that the numbers at Cannon Hill were falling off alarmingly. Cannon Hill has not carried out the function for which it was intended because people have had the fear that their cattle might be left on the floor unslaughtered and, as the hon. member for Carnarvon pointed out, every day clean cattle are in ticky country they run the risk of developing redwater or some other disease. There is also the loss-in-weight factor.

I am not happy about reducing the capacity at Cannon Hill. When the Brisbane Abattoir was first established the Brisbane area had little more than half its present population. Brisbane is growing rapidly and it does not look like progress to me to reduce the capacity of the works. In all industries of this kind efficiency is governed very largely by turnover. If the numbers are lower, efficiency must suffer. I invite all hon. members to go to Beaudesert and have a look at Tancreds. It would do them good to see the way the men work in harmony with the management, and the numbers and weight of cattle treated there. Why can we not get together and have this work carried out everywhere in the greatest spirit of harmony?

I know what it means to become part of a ring. I suppose it is the buyer's duty to buy as cheaply as he can, just as it is the seller's responsibility to ensure that he gets the best possible price. For a long time I have been urging the installation of scales at Cannon Hill. I am not the only one. The former member for Aubigny, Mr. Sparkes, has urged for this for a long time. I suppose nobody has had wider experience than Mr. Sparkes in the breeding and marketing of cattle. He has examined the position in the United States of America and other parts of the world. We have been told that with scales it would be impossible to get through the number in the time but Mr. Sparkes' investigations proved that works using scales were putting through four times the number of cattle going through Cannon Hill. I do not believe that it is not practical to use scales, and I hope that in the future the board will investigate the possibility of installing them. I believe that would provide the answer to the problem of the declining numbers.

Nobody wants more for his stock than their worth, but everybody wants their true value. The position today is very much different from what it was. In the last 12 months I have not had cause on any occasion to doubt the weights of cattle I have sent in. A couple of years ago that nasty type of thing did happen, but today I feel that the weights are fair. Indeed, in my experience during the last 12 months on several occasions I have felt that the weights shown were even a little better than I expected. I have spoken to some of the agents on this point. To show just how serious the position was, I point out that they were not game to say anything about it because it might lead to their being boycotted. The buyers could simply side-step the cattle they offered. Can hon. members wonder that people have lost confidence in Cannon Hill? The remedy lies in the installation of scales. People in the trade also know that this would be a means of overcoming the difficulty. I am not suggesting that it is an easy matter, but the board will have to go into it.

In days gone by many of the big exporting companies bought cattle in the yard, and I sold to Borthwicks for years without having any complaint. Highly qualified men estimated the weight of the cattle, and, if we objected to the estimates, we could have the cattle weighed.

I do not know if the board can do anything about this important point. One very disquieting matter for many cattle men is that they do not know what the people in the trade want. A few years ago the demand was for young, chubby-fat beef but today that class of beef is not wanted. I do not suppose the trade can afford to pay for fat, which is useless. No-one will go into a butcher shop and pay ridiculous prices for fat. I had experience recently of a butcher buying at a show sale. He said, "If I bought those cattle and put them through my shop

I would have them in the shop for a fortnight. People would not buy the meat." We fatten cattle for shows and win prizes with them and then find that they are too fat.

There have been so many changes from time to time that the grower does not know what class of beef is wanted. Until the last year or two a handsome premium was paid for young, light beasts, but in the last couple of months cattle people cannot help but notice that that premium has almost gone. A fortnight ago I read a report that bullocks weighing 700 lb. realised more per 100 lb. than cattle at 500 lb. Whether that is correct or not, it is true that if people go to Cannon Hill, or read the reports on Cannon Hill from week to week, they will find that today the heavy bullock does not bring much more than a younger one weighing about 500 lb.

For some unknown reason female beef and heifer beef are very unpopular today. A few years ago speyed or young heifers would probably sell at a premium as high as a 400 or 500 lb. bullock, but today they are sold for pounds per 100 lb. cheaper. It is pretty hard for a grower to understand what is going on. I found myself in that position with some speyed heifers that I bought up north. I thought they were all right at the price I paid but after I had grown them I found that the price had fallen by £2 10s. per 100 lb. When that happens, cattle people are lucky if they can come out on top.

Mr. Bromley: That is the risk taken with all shares.

Mr. MULLER: I can understand cow beef not being in demand. After cows have had a few calves we cannot expect the quality of the beef to be the same, but when speyed heifers are sold at pounds per 100 lb. less than bullock beef it is pretty hard to understand. If this scheme is to be a success, as hon. members who have spoken have said, the confidence of the growers must be gained. If the new scheme does not win the confidence of the growers and if the board does not do its job, we can expect prices to decline. That would be the result. If the scheme is not put on a correct footing it will probably be true to say that cattle can be slaughtered outside and brought in more efficiently and cheaply than by being brought in on the hoof. To my mind, that assertion is debatable. If cattle are brought in by road transport and are properly handled, there will not be much difference in the cost of supplying the meat to the retailer.

Mr. Bromley: Would there be a future in the air transport of cattle?

Mr. MULLER: No. That would be too costly. Road transport has an advantage over rail transport, but there is not a great deal of improvement in the quality because the cattle brought by road are bruised more. The difficulty is getting them to rail.

Mr. Sherrington: What if Mr. Chalk has pulled up the railway line?

Mr. MULLER: I have no control over that.

One difficulty in walking cattle to the rail is the class of road we have today, and the class of people who know little more about the beast than the beast knows about them. Every minute a beast is walking to rail, your heart is in your mouth wondering what will happen next.

There is a tremendous job ahead of the board if it is to solve this problem. Other works have been brought in because of what has happened. If Cannon Hill had been run as was intended the committee of inquiry would not have recommended that beef be brought in from outside or that the capacity be reduced. All angles must be considered before recommendations of this kind are made.

I refer to what has been done at some of the outside works. I am not drawing a comparison between the Meat Industry Board and the management at these places. But I feel that what can be done at some of the private killing works should be capable of being done at Cannon Hill. To do it we need more than efficiency in killing and treating; we need the confidence and the co-operation of the people working there. If anyone can say at the drop of a hat that a certain meatworks will be closed tomorrow, can we wonder that people lose confidence? Some action must be taken to get over that difficulty, otherwise it matters little what the Board does; it will still be in trouble.

The hon. member for Warwick referred to slaughter levies. This is outside the control of the Minister's department, except that his officer is supposed to collect the levies. I am not happy about the slaughter levies. I did not mind the shilling, two shillings, or three shillings, if it was properly deducted. But a few weeks ago I sent in some calves and bullocks. The levy of 3s. 3d. was applied to the bullocks, the bigger calves, and even half of the calves which were small animals only four months old. I understood that the levy was applied only to cattle weighing 200 lb. or more. I complained to the agent, who said that he was obliged by law to pay the levy on the cattle. Calves sold in the country do not attract the levy. If a calf is to attract a levy of 3s. 3d. at Cannon Hill and there is no levy in the country, people will become dissatisfied.

Mr. Row: Is that the inspection levy?

Mr. MULLER: Yes, for research purposes. Like the hon. member for Warwick, I do not object if the money is wisely spent. It must be remembered that it is easier to strike a levy and create a fund than it is to spend the money to advantage. These levies are added to those already in existence till producers are almost inundated with a multiplicity of them. If a levy is to be applied, I feel that it should be fair and should not be charged on calves that are under weight. It is an easy matter for anyone at a sale to make this information known to the agent.

Another matter requiring consideration relates to high values. After all, high prices do not mean very much to producers because costs are increasing in proportion and profits are perhaps even a little lower than they used to be. When levies are struck, those required to pay them want to know how the money is going to be spent. If it is to be collected, every effort should be made to see that it is spent to advantage. There is so much to do in this industry.

Without being critical of cattle-owners, I may say that in days gone by, for some reason hard to find, beef producers did very little for themselves. I am one of them, and I speak with some knowledge of the subject. I have been dairying and I have also run cattle. I devoted the best years of my life to organisations for dairymen. I held every office, State and Commonwealth, that the dairying industry had to offer. I spent 20-odd years on the Dairy Export Board, and devoted all my time to the formulation of the equalisation scheme. I was chairman of the Butter Marketing Board, besides being chairman of my own association. That experience has given me some knowledge of the industry and placed me in a position in which I am able to make comparisons, seeing that I have been running a few beef cattle at the same time.

When one looks at what dairy farmers, cane-growers, fruit-growers, and wheat-growers have done, one realises that their objective has been the control of their commodities from grower to consumer. Dairy farmers, without taking too much authority, control their product from the factory floor to the time of its sale on the markets of the world. We have promoted sales all over the world. We have held production in times of over-supply and released it for sale when required. Let that be compared with what has been done in the beef industry. Beef is stored in the dairying industry's cold stores at Hamilton; the beef industry has not even its own cold stores. I do not know what is happening or why something has not been done. Even now no move is being made in this direction. The time has arrived when the beef industry has to do something for itself.

(Time expired.)

Mr. HANSON (Port Curtis) (5.54 p.m.): In speaking on this very important piece of legislation this afternoon, I am quite conscious of the fact that, because the Bill relates to the meat industry, it is of vital importance to virtually every member of the Committee. Throughout the history of this State, the meat industry has played a very prominent part in its development. It has been responsible for making available much employment to many people. It has used very successfully many of the services provided by the State, particularly rail transport, and generally it has been of great financial benefit to Queensland.

I listened with interest to the remarks of the hon. member for Fassifern. As a member of the Opposition, I am very grateful for his contribution to the debate. He has had a great deal of experience with primary industries, and his words of advice to the meat industry—"Go out and help yourselves"—are very sound because he is conscious of its needs.

I agree with the Leader of the Opposition, who said that he would like to study the various clauses of the Bill before commenting upon it in detail. It will, of course, be studied very closely by committees of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

My Leader said, also, that he saw what seemed to be a great abdication by the Country Party in favour of the Liberal Party monopolists and those who are very conscious of the dictates of big business. If we liken the situation to what happens in the meat industry, we might say that members of the Country Party in the coalition evidently have been hit with a needle from a tranquiliser gun, put into the cattle race, gone into the knock-down stall and, under our modern method of beef dressing, been hung on the rail, boned on the rail by the boners, and put into a carton before they have woken up. As a matter of fact, I might go one step farther and say that some of them have been put into the freezing chamber ready for shipment to the United Kingdom or the United States of America.

It is very noticeable that the committee of inquiry said at page 2 of its report, paragraph 8—

"During the course of its inquiry in Queensland, both in evidence and during its tours, the Committee was made acutely aware of a considerable depth of feeling concerning what was described to it as the monopolistic position of the 'big three overseas meat companies'. It seemed to the Committee that this feeling was more a reflection of past events and fear for the future, than a reflection of current conditions in the industry. The Committee believes that it is not within its competence to make any judgments—one way or the other—on the events of the past. It has been asked however, to hazard a view on the future."

If the committee did look into the past, it did not have to look very far, because only a few months before it carried out its investigations at Gladstone—I, for one, would say that a couple of members of the committee were in the bag before they were appointed—it would have found that there was considerable evidence to show that these fears were correct. They still exist in the minds of not only the working people who are associated with the meat industry but also the producers and the graziers of Queensland who have been fleeced, year in and year out, by the monopolistic companies that the proposed legislation will allow to make further

inroads into the meat industry and to show that they are the financial masters of the State.

[*Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.15 p.m.*]

Mr. HANSON: I was making the point, as advanced by my Leader today, that we in this country have nothing to thank the huge meat combines for. If one were to study their history in this country, one would see the avarice that has prompted much of their direction and management and has caused considerable concern to many of the people who follow the meat industry and, in the main, depend upon it for their livelihood. I was emphasising the point that was apparently missed by this committee of inquiry when certain ideas were advanced relative to the town in which I reside and which had suffered adversely from the treatment of one of these huge meat monopolists.

I hope and trust that this Bill, which seems to be the application of Liberal interests by members of the Country Party, will result in the establishment of an abattoirs in the central area or a service works at Gladstone, which could be of considerable benefit to a very large producing area. Within 100 to 150 miles of the town, a very large proportion of Queensland's cattle numbers exist.

Whilst I am on the subject of the treatment that has been handed out to various people engaged in the meat industry by those under whose financial direction it operates, I wish to draw attention to several changes that have occurred in it in the last few years. We have seen a change from the State export award to a Federal award and, whilst listening to various speakers this afternoon, I realised that several smaller concerns have sprung up and decided to kill cattle. I think in all about 15 were mentioned, some of which have gone to the Industrial Court with their own awards to be ratified. This has been of considerable financial benefit to the companies concerned and much to the detriment of those who, over the years, have followed employment in the meat industry. They have had to accept lower remuneration for their labours, on the rates ratified by the commission and, in addition to this, the quotas insisted upon by these killing centres and works have been considerably increased—as I say, at the same time as the pay has been considerably reduced. This has caused much dissatisfaction throughout the industry. It is no good beating about the bush. It has happened only in the last four or five years but it has been a paramount factor in causing considerable industrial strife throughout the meat industry.

American departments require stringent hygienic conditions in our meatworks and killing centres and insist upon all different types of floor arrangements such as the on-the-rail system for slaughtering and for boning-out and the removal of heavy obstacles by the taking away of bones after

the processed meat has been removed. As a result, a conveyor-belt system operates both in front of, and at the back of, the boner, taking the processed meat to the packing centre for cartoning and the bones for dressing and disposal. It is a system of automation.

Whether it be in the meat industry or any other industry, once automation is introduced every person engaged in that industry is entitled to receive some of the benefits that flow in its wake. Automation should not be used only to line the pockets of the huge combines with great profits. All those employed in the industry should be able to enjoy the benefits of automation, and it is essential that these be equitably distributed.

Emphasis has been placed on the need for the hygienic treatment of meat. The Minister tells us that one of the aims of the Bill is to promote that principle. We must at all times be cognisant of the need to ensure the hygienic treatment of meat so that it will be quite safe for human consumption. Whether the meat is for export or local consumption, its hygienic treatment is paramount. This need should be uppermost in the thoughts of the people controlling the various meat establishments and those actually handling the meat. I have been through many meatworks and at times have seen things that are far from hygienic. They were not the fault of those working in the industry but of the management, which sometimes included Government servants who should have been more wide awake to the unhygienic practices.

While dealing with hygiene, I refer to a question I asked recently about foot-and-mouth disease in cattle. I say quite frankly that the door is wide open in this country for the introduction of tropical diseases that could seriously injure our cattle industry. Adequate protection is certainly not provided at many of the State's ports. I asked the Treasurer whether he had any knowledge of the quarantine regulations and the insistence of many leaders in the grazing industry and many highly responsible veterinary officers in the State and Federal departments—

Mr. Chinchin: What about the Bill?

Mr. HANSON: This has a lot to do with the Bill. If foot-and-mouth disease were introduced into this country, there would be no meat industry and all the graziers would be broke. I want to see the industry prosperous; I want to see it advance.

The hon. member for Fassifern said that the meat industry should get out and help itself. I am not merely voicing the opinion of the people in the industry, I am voicing common sense, when I request that the Minister and his Cabinet colleagues take positive action to prevent the introduction of cattle diseases, particularly foot-and-mouth disease.

For many years I was associated with a port authority. We had a system for the disposal of ships' garbage. That system

was introduced during the period of my chairmanship. I do not think it was adequate but at least it was an attempt. At various ports throughout the State when ships are taking on meat, either in cartons or quarters, the rat guards are not even put up. Not far from where a ship was being loaded I have seen Lascars' rags and all sorts of rubbish thrown onto the deck, much to our disgrace for not preventing such undesirable practices.

In answer to the hon. member for Mt. Gravatt—I am only raising what I think, in the interests of the meat industry is a very important matter, which has a bearing on the Bill. Anyone who refuses to recognise the importance of this matter is either a knave or a fool.

I note that it is proposed for the authority to have an independent chairman appointed by the Government, a representative of the producers, a representative of the proprietary abattoirs, a representative of the abattoirs boards, and a representative of service works. Several hon. members this afternoon, particularly on this side of the Chamber, have deplored the fact that there is no consumer representative. I voice my protest about the omission of a consumer representative. Who eats the beef? Who pays for it? Who is the person to whom the beef finally comes? Who are the most important people in the industry? To my mind the most important people are the producers and the consumers. The Government has a very serious responsibility to the community in framing legislation to protect the right of people to process a particular product, whatever it may be. The failure to put a consumers' representative on the board is a very serious omission. I want to know whether the Minister will institute some action to rectify this. Meat is part of our staple diet and, if we do not have satisfied consumers in the community, if people are not happy with the hygiene in the works, the meat industry will go into a decline, prices will be depressed and the affairs of the industry will be chaotic.

In the area where I reside there are many cattle and it is extremely important for a meatworks of some description—an abattoir, a service works, or a private works—to be established. I do not want to work the parish pump to death but in my town many people are unhappy because the town is without a meatworks. There are men in the town who, from their early working life, have been trained and become skilled in all facets of the meat industry. Now that the meat season has started in northern works, these men are going many hundreds of miles from their home town to get employment. It is terribly unfortunate for them that they have to keep two homes. Towards the end of the meat season here, some men go to the mutton works in Victoria, where their services are eagerly sought as they are very skilled and adept in their calling. Apparently it escaped the notice of the committee of inquiry, for

the committee has not made any recommendation for the town. Members of the Government parties may say, "Well, so-and-so is coming to your town; don't be greedy." However, for 70 or 80 years the town of Gladstone had a meatworks that provided employment for many highly skilled people. It is indeed regrettable that they are unable to pursue the employment for which they have been trained, and in which they are so adept.

On page 5 of the report of the committee of inquiry appears the following—

"No specific request was made as to location or capacity but the impression was left with the Committee that a works at either Rockhampton or Gladstone with a throughput of about 600 head per day was being sought.

"The Committee had to consider the existing situation in Queensland as a whole as well as in Central Queensland in examining this matter. While the pressure for a service works in Central Coastal Queensland has a long history . . ."

The history would not be long, it would be only seven or eight years—because the Central Coast Graziers' Association has been fighting for many years, even when Swift Australia Co. (Pty.) Ltd. was in existence in Gladstone, for the establishment of some type of service works or abattoir in the Central District, and that suggestion had a considerable amount of merit in it.

The hon. member for Rockhampton South said this afternoon that this particular abattoir idea has been done away with because both private companies operating in Rockhampton decided to give 20 per cent. of their killing facilities and space to meet the needs normally supplied by the abattoir committee. There has been considerable negotiation and argument about this particular facility. The companies consider that they are being generous in allowing 20 per cent. but what is worrying me is whether, in the case of a serious obstruction to their activities, either financial or industrial, the 20 per cent. would apply and whether they would bear 80 per cent. of the burden of the hardship and the cost. Judging by their previous form, I doubt it. I do not want to adopt the attitude of Upton Sinclair when he exposed the whole of the meat chicanery in his famous book "The Jungle".

I shall continue to quote from page 5 of the report, where it enumerates some of the fears advanced by many of these people against the monopolies in this State. It reads—

". . . recently four events have occurred which bear largely on the consideration of what might be done in the near future. The first is the erection of a domestic and export service abattoir at Mackay which is expected to commence operation late in 1964. This works has an initial capacity of 240 head per day.

"The second event of consequence was a Government decision that the Rockhampton District Abattoir Board should negotiate with T. A. Field (Bne.) Pty. Ltd. and C.Q.M.E. Pty. Ltd. with a view to these companies making 20 per cent. of their capacity available to operators. These negotiations are still not settled. The approximate number of cattle involved is 300 head per day.

"The other two matters which bear on the question of killing capacity in Central Queensland and the competition for cattle in that area are the closure of Swifts Works at Gladstone and the decision of T. A. Field (Bne.) Pty. Ltd. to build a new works at Nerimbera near Rockhampton."

If they build a new works—and I am not opposed to that—they will provide employment in the different areas. Whether Vestey's have a shareholding in these particular works is open to conjecture.

As was mentioned by the hon. member for Barcoo, 200,000 head of cattle are sent south from the Central District each year, and over 100,000 head are normally stationed at Bajool, which is a resting-place, because it is imperative to spell cattle every 24 hours or every 300 miles.

(Time expired.)

Mr. SHERRINGTON (Salisbury) (7.34 p.m.): When introducing the Bill the Minister said that he was giving effect to many of the recommendations contained in the report of the committee of inquiry into the meat industry. While he has indicated certain measures that are to be adopted following on the report, as yet he has not disclosed the fate of the Brisbane Abattoir on the committee's recommendation to reduce its franchise to 1,000 head per day. While that part of the debate was taking place, I was amazed to hear from members of the Government the suggestion that at last healthy competition will come to the meat industry in the metropolitan area. To me that is so much shadow-sparring. Already the Government has subscribed to monopoly control in the bread industry in Brisbane, and other monopolistic enterprises have arisen with its full approval, since it assumed office.

There is in Brisbane a public abattoir that has operated for the last 30 years. It has produced meat dressed under hygienic conditions, and has had its influence on the retail price of meat through the low cost at which stock have been treated. Because it was set up as a Government instrumentality and a previous royal commission made a recommendation, the so-called champions of private enterprise now have a complete abhorrence of it and anything that smacks of monopoly control. In spite of this attitude, monopolies are to be found everywhere, and hon. members opposite do not show any concern over them.

Mr. Hughes: We are destroying a monopoly in Brisbane. Surely you understand that.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: The hon. member for Kurilpa says, "We are destroying a monopoly in Brisbane." If that is so, why do not hon. members opposite do something about the monopoly that has been set up in the bread industry since they became the Government?

I feel that, in the report of the Committee of inquiry into the meat industry, too many questions have been left unanswered and many others have been glossed over. Whilst it has been said that the committee was given wide terms of reference, it will be found in the summary of the terms of reference that most of the things that the committee was asked to inquire into were of a very restricted nature. Many important aspects of the processing and marketing of beef were overlooked.

For instance, the committee subscribed to the view that it is essential to have hygienic processing of meat and rigid inspection of slaughtering facilities. It seems, however, that what happens to beef after it leaves the abattoir has not been considered by the committee. For many years now, there have been numerous complaints about the method of delivery of meat to suburban shops. There have been complaints about the use of unhygienic vehicles for this purpose. There have been complaints also about the handling of meat and the way in which it is left hanging, unguarded from contamination, in wagons with the doors open. Such complaints have been very prevalent over a number of years. In spite of that, no reference is made in the report to this very important matter. I felt sure that some investigation would have been made into it. I felt sure that the committee would have given some consideration to the use of polythene or plastic bags or plastic sheeting to cover carcasses and seal them from contamination whilst being delivered. I know that, in the past, cheese-cloth was used to cover various types of meat; but I am not entirely convinced that that method was satisfactory, because it could, in itself, be a source of contamination. Surely the committee of inquiry should have endeavoured to ensure that no possible risk of contamination occurs in the delivery of beef.

Another point that I have raised on a number of occasions, and which was raised more recently in this Chamber by the hon. member for Belmont following the report of the Health and Medical Services, is the use of sulphur-dioxide as a preservative in meat. Today, with modern refrigeration, I do not think that there is any case for the use of sulphur-dioxide for this purpose. As has been pointed out on several occasions, the greatest danger with sulphur-dioxide is that it can be used to give meat that has already begun to decompose the appearance of being fresh and wholesome. In my opinion, the

committee of inquiry should have investigated the use of preservatives in meat because of the risk to the public that is involved.

Mr. Campbell: Do you claim that butchers are selling decaying meat?

Mr. SHERRINGTON: Well, there have been many prosecutions for the over-use of sulphur-dioxide in sausage meats. I do not say that all butchers do it, but the opportunity is there for the unscrupulous butcher. The fact that the number of prosecutions is increasing year by year is ample evidence that this undesirable practice of using sulphur-dioxide as a preservative has not been discontinued. With modern refrigeration, I do not think there is any need to use preservatives.

Mr. Chinchin: You are talking to the wrong Minister.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: At least I am on my feet making a speech.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Hodges): Order!

Mr. SHERRINGTON: All I have heard from the Liberal Party rebels is inane interjections.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I am not going to allow them to distract me from my purpose.

I wish to turn now to the practices operating in the sale of beef at Cannon Hill saleyards. The hon. member for Fassifern referred to this earlier in the debate and showed that there is evidence that buying rings have been operating at Cannon Hill. This has been a source of constant irritation to me since the Government decontrolled meat prices, because it has lent itself to a very undesirable practice. Under the formula used now, the price of meat is calculated on the price paid for a pen of bullocks. A buying ring can depress prices and then raise the price for a particular pen. Having done that, it can then base all its meat prices on the high price that was paid for one pen.

It appears that no investigation into the weighing of beef and the effect this system would have on marketing was carried out. I have no doubt that the weighing of beef will eventually be adopted as part of our selling system.

I feel that this question of auction is far too chancy for the producer. I know of cases where producers have submitted cattle to a certain auction and, because they were not satisfied with the prices offering for their cattle, have refused to sell and have been marked from that day on. Whenever they have brought beef to the same auction room, it has been quite noticeable that there has been very little bidding for it. Here again the committee could well have investigated the advantages or disadvantages of the principle of weighing beef for sale. I was somewhat disappointed that they did not

because this has been a subject that has intruded itself into discussions on the marketing of meat for many years. There does not seem to be any specific reference to that in the report.

It is rather significant that, in a report prepared at the direction of this Minister on the fruit and vegetables industry and the various facets of its marketing, there was a certain disclosure of the prices structure, whereas the only reference I can see in the report of the committee of inquiry into the beef industry is the statement that it was difficult to ascertain just what effect treatment costs had on the retail price of meat because they were fixed at a certain figure irrespective of the size of the beast and not on a poundage basis.

Price has a very important bearing on our meat industry, because, in the report, it was forecast that in 1972-73, with a population of 1.9 million and a per capita-consumption of 150 lb., we would need to produce 130,000 tons of beef. This, I feel, has not been satisfactorily explained in view of the recent history of decline in the per-capita consumption of beef not only throughout this State but throughout the Commonwealth. According to the latest figures we have, the per-capita consumption today is 130 lb., so in the next 9 or 10 years we are supposed to see consumption increased to 150 lb. a head.

Such an increase does not seem to me to tally with a report I have here, prepared by the Queensland Meat Industry Board, which says that there has been a definite decline in beef consumption since 1938-39, when the wholesale price per 100 lb. was 30s. 10d. In 1960-61 the price was 235s. 10d. per 100 lb. and there was this decline in the per-capita consumption. I can see no evidence that, unless we can bring the price of meat into a more realistic relationship with the domestic budget, we can hope to see this increase to 150 lb. per head by 1972-73. I repeat that there has been definite evidence over the years that, while the price of beef continues to rise, there will be a definite decline in consumption. There has been a significant increase in the consumption of many of the offal meats because the average housewife finds that the better cuts of meat are being priced out of the family budget.

The report of the committee of inquiry did not deal with the effect on the abattoir of the conceding of partial trading rights to the various meat export companies. However, the Annual Report of the Queensland Meat Industry Board made a feature of the fact that—

“The Board is not a marketing authority trading in competition with other establishments and consequently is not associated with the present variable economics in the merchandising of meat products, but is conscious of the fact that in conceding partial trading rights within the Metropolitan Abattoir Area to other works, the

result has been at the expense of volume of throughput and the overall economy of the public abattoir.

"The Board's economy, and consequently that of its operators who own no facilities but use the public abattoir, is being disadvantaged by the competitive price influence of other works who operate primarily as export works, but have the current economic advantage of merchandising export cuts on the domestic market, thus providing such works with a substantial economic flexibility in the procurement of their livestock supplies in direct competition with operators at the Brisbane Abattoir."

There is nothing in the report of the committee of inquiry that shows to what extent that has affected the economy of the abattoir, or whether, after almost 30 years of economic operations at that abattoir, it did contribute to the fact that in the last two years something like £170,000 has been lost. Nor did the report of the committee of inquiry give any cogent reason for limiting the abattoir franchise to 1,000 head a day.

The Minister paid tribute to the Government of the day when the abattoirs were established for its foresight in the introduction of the principle of a public abattoir to ensure the hygienic processing of meat for consumption in the metropolitan area all under one roof, an establishment that would provide for efficiency in the marketing of hygienically treated meat. No reason has been given in the report for curtailing the operations of the board to 1,000 head a day.

Although the Minister has said quite clearly and distinctly that he is giving effect to the findings of that committee of inquiry, he has not disclosed the fate of the Metropolitan Public Abattoir, as it will become known with the passing of this legislation. Quite frankly, I think this is a question that needs answering. From the Annual Report of the Queensland Meat Industry Board for the year ended 30 June, 1964, we learn that the average weekly cattle slaughtering for the domestic trade this year were 1,986, compared with averages of 2,257 in 1962-63 and 2,637 in the peak year of 1956-57. The report shows that the committee recommends a cut in the kill to 1,000 head a day and what is possibly worse, not only is the figure to be set at 1,000 head, but it is never to be increased. It sounds to me very much like a death sentence, or like the case of a person who has his papers endorsed, "Never to be released."

It seems that there has been a succumbing to the pressures in this State from the various meat monopolies for permission to enter the Brisbane market. Apparently the Government has finally succumbed to the pressure. I pay a tribute to the late Hon. O. O. Madsen, who steadfastly refused to yield to this pressure for entry into the Brisbane meat market.

There is no indication in the report as to what will happen after we have restricted the metropolitan abattoir to a quota of 1,000 head a day, and what might be the fate of the meat consumers in Brisbane should there be a sudden rise in the price of meat in the American, English, or any other overseas market. The meat monopolies would have a particular interest and would clamour to send their meat overseas if there was a chance of a sharp increase in their profits. There is no indication in the committee's report as to what would happen if this situation should arise, or how the Brisbane beef market would then be supplied.

Some time ago, when one company was vainly trying to gain entry to the metropolitan market, a representative of the company was asked whether his company could guarantee cheaper meat for some time to come. He said that quite frankly the company could not forecast what would happen in the future. It is quite evident that, if there were suddenly a lucrative market in some overseas country, these people who have clamoured to get in on the meat market in Brisbane (which I think was adequately covered by the operations of the abattoir for a number of years) would not care two hoots about the meat consumers in Brisbane.

Mr. Hughes: Do you think they would—

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I have only a few minutes. If the hon member wants to make a speech, I ask him to do so. I will then have an opportunity to interject.

It is rather interesting to note the composition of the authority that is to be formed following the report of the committee. There is provision for a chairman, a representative of the producers, a representative of the abattoirs, a representative of service works, and so on, but no reference is made to representation of the public interest. The report of the 1928 royal commission contained a specific reference to a representative of the public interest on the abattoir board and I believe that a member of the Meat Industry Employees' Union should be on the authority in this capacity.

Mr. SULLIVAN (Condamine) (7.59 p.m.): As I have been in Tasmania, this is the first opportunity I have had of speaking since Parliament reassembled. I am indeed pleased to be here today to participate in this debate and listen to the views advanced by hon. members on both sides of the Chamber. I commend the Minister for the way in which he introduced the measure. With all due deference to the Leader of the Opposition, this is something for which the producers have been waiting for many years. Leading the debate for the Opposition, he claimed that the Government had been "pressurised" by the Liberal section of the coalition. That is so absurd that it does not warrant contradiction or comment.

Since I have been in this Chamber I, and the man whom I succeeded, Mr. Sparkes, a man more qualified than most men in Queensland, and in the Commonwealth for that matter, to speak on beef matters, have always advocated what is envisaged in the Bill. To say that the Country Party section of the coalition has been opposed to this measure and has been "pressurised" by the Liberal Party is so much utter—there is a word for it.

Mr. Murray: They are bereft of argument.

Mr. SULLIVAN: I thank the hon. member for Clayfield. I shall not endeavour to comply with the normal rules of debate and refute the arguments put up by members of the Opposition; I know that the Minister will do that very effectively. So many hon. members opposite have been thrashing the air. Perhaps we should tolerate that because they might know something about the point of view of the consumers; on the contrary we, as the Government, know the point of view of both the producer and the consumer.

The Government's decision to appoint the committee of inquiry to inquire into and investigate all aspects of the meat industry was a wise one. During the course of the debate the Government has been criticised for appointing a committee consisting of men from outside the State. The hon. member from Rockhampton South hit the nail on the head when he said that in doing that we appointed men who were unbiased and had no personal interest in the matter. The men who were engaged in this inquiry had a wealth of knowledge; they were the top men in this class of inquiry, and had been used in the same way in other parts of the Commonwealth. For those reasons their recommendations should be accepted.

The decision to do away with the franchise in Brisbane is something that has been advocated by producers for many years. There are many reasons for that. I shall quote the case of one man whom the Minister for Works and Housing and I know very well. He is Stuart Redman, one of the top fatteners of cattle in Queensland. To send his cattle to Cannon Hill by road transport costs him 10s. per 100 lb. in wastage and bruising; on a 600 lb. or 700 lb. beast, that represents £3 or £3 10s. This man fattens a large number of cattle. He pays big prices for his store cattle and runs them on dear country. He sells all of his cattle to Keong at Oakey. They are conveyed by road transport. We have to take notice of men like him.

This man—I mention him only as an example—is one of many in the same locality who think the same way. When the report of the committee of inquiry was about to be released, he was a little concerned. Press statements had been published and recommendations had been made to the committee, and he felt it possible that the committee would recommend closing down the Brisbane Abattoir completely. He was very opposed to that,

for the obvious reason that if there were no service works in Brisbane producers could get into the clutches of big business interests. It will thus be seen that he is a fair-minded man and typical of most men in the beef industry.

The report, of course, recommended that the Brisbane Abattoir be rebuilt as a service works to a treatment capacity of 1,000 head of cattle a day, or perhaps slightly in excess of that. That was readily acceptable to him.

Some may ask why growers want to see the kill at the Brisbane Abattoir reduced. To those of us who have grown up in the industry, answering that question is fairly elementary. Mr. Sparkes has for many years claimed that the most successful way to produce beef acceptable to the consumer is to have it treated as close as possible to the point of production. I think that those who, for political or other reasons, are violently opposed to what is envisaged in the Bill will not argue on that point. After all, we all know that over the years stock have been brought to Cannon Hill by rail, in the main, or perhaps road transport, and, because of the capacity of the works and the number required to be killed here, it has been necessary to hold them for days, during which very great wastage has taken place.

People in the industry realise that it is essential to have a killing works in Brisbane to provide for local consumption and for those operators who are exporting. There is no doubt that the Cannon Hill market is the thermometer of prices throughout the State. On many occasions, particularly in the more far-flung areas such as the Gulf country, the North-west, and many parts of Central Queensland, cattle are sold in the paddock. Today, with market reports readily available in radio bulletins, graziers or fatteners are pretty well acquainted with the run of the market. If a grazier has a buyer coming out to look at a mob of cattle, he knows very well when the buyer offers a price if he is near the market or is having a shot at him.

Reference has been made to the reduction of the kill at the Brisbane Abattoir to 1,000 head a day. In recent years, I think 13 or 14 private abattoirs have been established within a radius of 200 miles from Brisbane. They are to a large extent treating beef killed for export. I have been given figures that show that in the last 12 months approximately 220,000 head of cattle have been slaughtered at the Brisbane Abattoir. That works out to approximately 1,000 head a day.

I feel that the Government is acting wisely in giving this freedom to people associated with the meat industry. I feel that this will be a wonderful thing for the producer and for the consumer, too. We must bear in mind that the trend now is away from the more mature type of beef

and towards younger beef. There is no doubt that the closer to the point of production it can be killed, the better will be the beef that goes onto the plate of the consumer. Hon. members opposite claim to be putting a case on behalf of the consumer. Surely that is what the consumer wants. I think that ample proof has been put forward, too, to show that beef killed close to the point of production can also be put on the table at a price considerably lower than that of beef from a beast that has to be transported live to Brisbane and killed here.

Mr. Murray: We don't want a mob of pikers like those who sit on the Opposition benches.

Mr. SULLIVAN: No. I was perhaps a little bit disappointed because the report of the committee of inquiry did not recommend another meatworks somewhere on the Darling Downs.

Mr. Dufficy: Or perhaps farther out.

Mr. SULLIVAN: The hon. member can put that argument forward when he gets an opportunity. I represent an area on the Darling Downs in which some of the best cattle in Queensland are produced, fattened, and sold, and for that reason I will argue that it would be better placed somewhere in that area.

A very good case was put to the committee of inquiry in Dalby. Admittedly there is a meatworks at Toowoomba and Keong's meatworks at Oakey, and no doubt both those draw their cattle from the Dalby saleyards. It is not for me to say whether an additional meatworks should be situated at Dalby or farther west—at Chinchilla, say—and I think that is something that the proposed authority possibly could recommend to anyone who might be tempted to build a killing works in the area. With the development of the brigalow country and the swing to crop-fattening of cattle and better husbandry of the soil, the turn-off of fat cattle and sheep in the area probably will induce someone to consider the possibility of establishing a meatworks there in the near future. I realise that it is possible for someone to build a meatworks there now if he gets an export licence; but unfortunately, under the recommendations of the committee, as I understand the position, he will not have access to the Brisbane market. If that is not correct, I am sure the Minister will correct me in his reply. As I said, the report was a disappointment to me in that respect, because the figures put forward—I am not going to bore hon. members with them—by the people who put the proposal to the committee of inquiry did not, in my opinion, receive the favourable consideration that they deserved.

An industry new to Queensland—the fat-lamb industry—has been mentioned during the debate. Most hon. members have directed their attention to the beef industry;

but the fat-lamb industry is very closely associated with grain-growing in Queensland, and I believe that, although it is more or less in its infancy, it should receive the serious consideration of the Government. A very good class of fat lamb is produced on the Darling Downs, and for some time we have been considering the possibility of extending our market to North Queensland. I may add, Mr. Hodges, that I have brought this matter to the notice of the Government previously and the Minister is well aware of my thoughts on it.

In North Queensland, no fat lamb or prime lamb of British breed is produced. For that reason, I feel that special consideration should be given to this industry in an endeavour to extend it. The sucker lamb will not travel. It is of a perishable nature, and for that reason the closer to home it can be slaughtered and delivered to a market the more to its advantage it will be. With the recommendation and what is envisaged by this Bill, namely that the Townsville abattoir shall retain its franchise, we are deprived of the opportunity of putting carcass lamb into the Townsville abattoir area, and also into the Bundaberg abattoir area. Meetings of lamb-growers have indicated their keenness to extend into these areas. I had an opportunity this afternoon to discuss this matter with the Minister very briefly, and I should like him to give us some assurance on it. I have indicated to him previously that the chairman of the Townsville Abattoir Board, Mr. Strube, would be prepared, seeing that lamb is not produced in the Townsville area or anywhere close to it, to allow Queensland carcass lamb into the Townsville abattoir area. Through you, Mr. Hodges, I should like the Minister's assurance that he will make every endeavour to see that that privilege is offered to the producers of fat lambs in Queensland.

Mr. Thackeray: How many would you turn off a year.

Mr. SULLIVAN: I am not pushing my own barrow. I run about 350 ewes and I turn off about 300, but I am speaking on behalf of all fat-lamb growers in my area.

I may be reiterating and boring members of the Government because I have spoken on this before, but, for the benefit of the Committee and those members opposite who might be interested, under the present system Queensland lamb-growers are at a very distinct disadvantage compared with New South Wales growers, who, under Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution, can put their carcass lamb into the Townsville area. After all, many of them are possibly closer to Townsville than the Darling Downs is, and they do this with no competition from us because, under present conditions, we cannot do it.

Mr. Murray: Over the years the only mutton in North Queensland was frozen ewe mutton from Melbourne, so your proposition is very sound.

Mr. SULLIVAN: I thank the hon. member for Clayfield for his interjection that my proposition is sound. I would not be putting it forward unless I thought it was.

Mr. O'Donnell: According to the meat industry report there is little increase in the fat-lamb industry in Queensland.

Mr. SULLIVAN: I can assure the hon. member for Barcoo—

Mr. O'Donnell: Assure the people who wrote the report.

Mr. SULLIVAN: He would know that we can produce fat lambs on the Darling Downs—

Mr. O'Donnell: That is right.

Mr. SULLIVAN: Equally as good as anything produced in New South Wales. All we want is an opportunity to market them and we do not want to be at a disadvantage. I should like the assurance of the Minister that everything is being done in this regard in order that lamb-growers will get their deserts.

The fat-lamb industry has extended from the Darling Downs out into the St. George area. The hon. member for Balonne is not here but he could bear me out in this. Although it seems hard to believe, hon. members would know that we have an irrigation scheme on the Balonne River and farmers on 600 acres and 800 acres are producing lambs. I have followed the sales at Cannon Hill through the columns of "Queensland Country Life", and the prices they are getting for their fat lambs compare very favourably with those on the Darling Downs. We have spent a lot of money there giving these farmers water but I think we should go further now and assist them in the marketing of their product.

At a recent meeting in Dalby there was talk about the road transport of lambs to Townsville for slaughter at the Townsville abattoir. The Minister indicated this afternoon that the board had reduced the killing charge from 9s. to 5s., but to my mind to transport sucker lambs over 900 miles is just not economic. The figure given to me was that it would cost about 18s. a head compared with 3s. or 4s. a carcass if they were killed close to the point of production. If sucker lambs were on road transport for 36 hours, by the time they got to Townsville the meat would be nothing like the same quality as if they were killed locally.

Mr. Thackeray: What would be the average weight of the carcasses?

Mr. SULLIVAN: Different butchers like them at different weights, but about 30 to 32 lb. When I was getting some figures from one of the agents in Brisbane I was told that producers are sending lambs as far as Townsville by rail. They are around 38 to 40 lb., but they are not sucker lambs. When I was in Tasmania recently I had a fairly

close look at the lamb industry there. Producers go in for intensive farming on very small areas. They turn the lambs off at about 10 or 11 weeks. They are raising them in summer months on natural pasture whereas we do it in the winter months off crops—oats and things of that nature.

Mr. O'Donnell: What would be the Queensland lamb slaughterings per month in the last 12 months? About 20,000?

Mr. SULLIVAN: Oh, no!

Mr. O'Donnell: Against 300,000 a year introduced from New South Wales.

Mr. SULLIVAN: At a rough guess the slaughterings in Queensland would be far in excess of 100,000.

Mr. Dufficy: To what extent?

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Hodges): Order! I remind the hon. member that he is not obliged to reply to interjections.

Mr. SULLIVAN: I was of the opinion that the hon. members were seeking genuine information.

(Time expired.)

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (8.24 p.m.): I listened with great interest to the Minister's introduction of this measure and the speeches made by other hon. members opposite. It seems strange to me that although this Bill deals with the Brisbane Abattoir and abattoirs in other cities throughout Queensland, as well as abattoirs in country centres, as yet we have not heard any opinions from Liberal members. I suppose that is because they have been told—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Hodges): Order! I ask the hon. member to deal with the Bill before the Committee.

Mr. HOUSTON: There have been many interjections by hon. members opposite. I intended to refer to them. However, falling into line with your wishes, Mr. Hodges, I will not pursue that line of thought.

It may be said with truth that this Bill will go down in history as one of this Government's great confidence tricks. Over the years we have seen many attempts by various firms to convince Premiers and Ministers for Primary Industries to carry out exactly what is being done by the Government today. An article emanating from Thomas Borthwicks confirms that statement. I will read it for the information of hon. members—

"The company has made many approaches to the present and previous Premiers, Messrs. Nicklin, Gair and Hanlon; to Agriculture Ministers, Messrs. Madsen and Collins, and Treasurers, Messrs. Hiley and Walsh, and to the Q.M.I.B. itself.

"Despite arguments we have submitted showing how permission to allow this killing would be of benefit to Brisbane and the rest of the State it has been withheld."

Over a long period, those gentlemen, who belonged to Labour Governments and the present Government, refused to carry out what I believe is only a confidence trick. It has been said that this legislation, above everything else, will provide cheaper meat for Brisbane people and other consumers in Queensland. However, no evidence has been advanced by the Minister, nor is there any in this report, or from any Government speaker, to show that, in fact, Queensland consumers will get cheaper or better meat.

Let us look at what determines the price of beef, mutton, lamb, veal or any other product sold in a butcher shop. There is the cost of the beast in its live state, the processing charges, the wholesale profit margin, the retail profit margin, the various cartage charges associated with the transport of the live beast and, later on, the cost of transporting the carcass. On top of that there are the wages of the employees at the butcher shop and the wholesale establishment. In all of these variables, the only charge related to an abattoir, particularly the Brisbane Abattoir, is the killing charge. It does not matter whether the abattoirs are privately owned or publicly owned; the only factor by which they can bring about a reduction in the price of meat is the killing charge. As the Minister admitted when I spoke on his Estimates, the charges at the Brisbane Abattoir are the cheapest in Australia. I think he will also agree that these charges were cheap because they were based on factors with which no other killing establishment in Queensland could compete. For a start, at that time they were based on a very efficiently run abattoir where the cost of production, machines, and so on, were kept to a minimum and the men working there turned out a product second to none in the State. Because of those factors the operating costs at the Brisbane Abattoir were the cheapest in the Commonwealth. In fact, the figures in New South Wales at abattoirs of a similar nature where the killing charges and processing charges are known, are far above ours. It is strange that in this report, every time the companies concerned were asked for their killing charges or processing charges, none could give a figure. They said, "We will charge the same as the Brisbane Abattoir." That is ridiculous. They cannot just say they will equal something unless they have facts to back up the statement. Apparently the committee of inquiry accepted their statement.

The present charges are based on a killing far in excess of what the abattoir turned out last year and the year before that. It is unfortunate that when the charges were worked out, I presume by the board's accountant, he assumed that a certain number of cattle would be passing through

the abattoir. Unfortunately, in practice, that number was not reached. Therefore the budget was not balanced.

I do not want to quote the Minister's reply at length. So many other factors come in that the loss of £170,000 over two years at the Brisbane Abattoir would not be a trading loss but a book-entry loss, taking into account moneys used for capital expenditure and factors outside the normal control of the board. Therefore it is wrong to say that the Brisbane Abattoir operated at a financial loss to the State. The only error made was the assumption as to the number of cattle that would pass through the abattoir, and as a result the charges were lower than they should have been.

The Bill provides that the number of cattle to be treated at the Brisbane Abattoir will not exceed 1,000 a day. That means that the killing charges at the Brisbane Abattoir will be increased because it will be faced with the same overhead expenditure and capital outlay charges. It is true that under the Can-pak system the number of employees has been substantially reduced and that there has been an increase in wages during the same period, so that in regard to costs, one would balance the other. When the five companies said that their charges would be no more than those at the Brisbane Abattoir, I feel sure that they had in mind the fact that the abattoir charges would be increased because of the reduced kill.

Over the years the abattoir has had an average sheep and lamb killing of 4,800. A Government member said that if the private firms came into the Brisbane district they would do some of the sheep and lamb killing. He said that quite a substantial number would be killed by the private firms and not at the Brisbane Abattoir. As there is only one major company at present, namely Borthwicks, I take it that that company would come into this type of killing. That will again increase the charges that the abattoir will have to impose to balance its budget.

Apart from all those matters, according to the report on which the Government bases its case the committee says that it does not expect any increase in the consumption of mutton and lamb in the foreseeable future. If the committee does not expect any increase in consumption, there must be a reduction in the number killed at the Brisbane Abattoir.

It has been said that, because of competition, the quality of the meat will be improved. Surely we are not going to try to fool the public into thinking that the Brisbane Abattoir, which is purely a processing works, at any stage of the game owns the cattle or sheep that pass through its processing works. The cattle are owned either by meat companies or by private butchers. They buy cattle from producers or their agents and send them to the Brisbane Abattoir merely to be killed and dressed. How then can the abattoir have any influence at all on the quality of the product?

Mr. Hughes: Competition will force them to kill better beasts.

Mr. HOUSTON: I am astounded that a Liberal member should try to make a speech by interjecting. I suggest that he listen carefully and he might learn something. The facts are that the hon. member is the leader of a group of housewives who come to him and complain about prices. Only a few weeks ago he himself made a public statement to the effect that he was shocked at increases in the price of meat and meat products. Therefore if prices of meat are increasing, how can it be claimed that changing killing operations from the Brisbane Abattoir to private abattoir will reduce prices? As I said before, during a period of price increases the processing charge has remained constant at, I think, 36/6d. a beast. There must be other factors coming into it. The producer must be getting more for his stock, or the wholesaler or the retailer is making a greater profit. I do not know which section of the industry is reaping most benefit and I am not concerned about it at this stage except to deny the assertion that allowing other operators in will make meat cheaper.

It has also been suggested that a greater variety of meats will be available. I notice in the committee's report, in paragraph 79, that the committee "recognises that the operation of the franchise system is restrictive to trade and limits the consumer's choice of meat." I do not see how the abattoir can limit the consumer's choice of meat; it merely handles stock provided for treatment. It plays no part in determining where any carcass goes to be sold. The person owning the beast receives the carcass when treated at the works and either puts it in a shop he owns or sells it to a retailer whom he supplies. From that stage the type of meat sold is entirely up to the butcher concerned. If a retail butcher decides that he wants only the legs of sheep or trunks, or some other type of meat, he buys accordingly. It does not matter how much we may like fillet; there is only a limited amount available from each beast, as everyone knows. I believe it is completely false to claim that the Bill will do all these things.

I think it important to consider what has happened in recent years. As I mentioned before, Thomas Borthwick & Sons Ltd. in particular have for many years been agitating for the right to enter the domestic market. Of course, it is easy to see why. This company has an export licence and there are times when it has gluts of cattle. It is also true that there are times when the export market is very unstable. It would be very nice and profitable for it to have the local market to fall back on at such times. Over the years meat suppliers have said to the housewives, "You cannot have these cuts," or, "The price of this type of meat has increased because it is in short supply." We know, too, that the quality of cattle varies according to the seasons.

Borthwicks know that, once they have this franchise, the way is open for them to supply their own shops. I know that it has been denied many times that once companies such as this are allowed in they will monopolise the supply of meat. As the hon. member for Salisbury pointed out, we have seen what has happened with bread; we have seen what has happened with hotels; we have seen what has happened with service stations. There is no guarantee that, once they are given the right to supply to the Brisbane market, these companies will not be able to squeeze out the man who conducts his own butcher shop or has a small suburban butcher shop. As I said, as the price for processing at the Brisbane Abattoir increases, so the price charged by the private firms will increase, because it is well known that many wholesalers have the capacity to start their own killing establishments if they so desire.

The report of the committee of inquiry lays it down that there is no need for any increase in the killing floor capacity in Queensland and recommends against any overall increase. I believe that is why the Government decided to restrict killing at the Brisbane Abattoir—to allow private firms to come into Brisbane. After all, it is not necessary to rebuild the whole of the Brisbane Abattoir. As I said earlier, the meat hall is in first-class condition, the offices would not have to be touched, nor would the greater part of the chilling rooms and the cold-storage space. Part of the slaughter-house floor would have to be rebuilt—incidentally, there are already two lines there, which it is said will be sufficient for the 1,000 a day kill—and the tank-house urgently requires a great deal of work done on it. If the kill is reduced to 1,000 beasts a day, as one hon. member opposite said, there will be an excess of cold-storage space at the abattoir. From this point of view, the kill could be increased. However, to come into line with the requirements of the report and to give Borthwicks entry to the market, it was necessary to reduce the kill at the Brisbane Abattoir.

It has been said that the proposed change will create more work in the industry. I do not see how it can, because the report lays down clearly that there will not be any increase in the kill. Of course, it could mean that men will change from one employer to another, and I hope that they will be good employers and carry out the terms of the award and be prepared to meet the men's wishes. I agree with the hon. member for Fassifern that on too many occasions over the years the board has not been prepared to meet the union on many matters requiring urgent attention, and I hope that the change of name from the Queensland Meat Industry Board to the Metropolitan Public Abattoir Board will bring about a better understanding of the problems of employees in the meat industry. I have indicated at other times that I have had a rather close association with them and I know some of the

difficulties under which they work. So far as I personally am concerned, the men who work in freezers and on the slaughter-floor, no matter how much they are paid, earn far less than their occupation entitles them to.

Last but not least, at this stage I must refer to the decision that has been made. The Minister can correct me if I am wrong in my interpretation of what he said, namely, that in times of industrial dispute the Government will allow these unregistered killing establishments or abattoirs, whatever it likes to call them, to supply meat to the board area where the industrial dispute is taking place.

Mr. Row: They are not unregistered. We will do the same as your Government did and bring in meat from other areas.

Mr. HOUSTON: They are fully registered abattoirs?

Mr. Row: Yes.

Mr. HOUSTON: Meeting all health requirements and, up to the time of the industrial dispute, supplying their own board area subject to State inspection?

Mr. Row: Yes, the same as we did in the seven weeks' strike last year. We brought in meat from outside.

Mr. HOUSTON: I know the Government brought in meat from outside. However, I do not want to touch any further on the industrial side. The only point I wished to clarify was that the Government will bring in meat during an industrial dispute. I am not necessarily discussing whether it is right or wrong. I simply wanted to make sure that the killing works from which the meat is brought are up to the standard of the works that normally supply the Brisbane area.

Mr. Row: They are all licensed.

Mr. HOUSTON: So long as they are all licensed, that is one feature that we shall have to look at when we get the Bill.

I know that the Government has the numbers and once we have given our reasons we have to make the best of the legislation no matter how poor it may be. However, I urge upon the Minister to ensure that the employees in the industry have a more constant future than they have had over the last few years. The meat industry is a skilled industry. I know people who have said, "He is only a meat-worker", but anyone who knows anything about the industry will realise that it is not everyone who can carry out the various classes of work that have to be done, and one of the main problems causing industrial trouble is that there is no guarantee of continuity of employment. That is why I suggest to the Minister that in the Brisbane Abattoir—a public abattoir controlled by the Government through its representatives—he take action to maintain continuity of employment. Naturally, the private shows operate purely and simply for the

financial return to those associated with their control. I suppose that is business, but from the workers' point of view, from the point of view of the man who is essential to the industry, the position is very unsatisfactory. I urge the Minister at this stage, which perhaps is the only time I can say this and get away with it, to make sure in his administration of this law that that is the purpose in introducing it.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Hodges): Order! I draw the attention of hon. members to the fact that, although the Chair has no desire to stifle discussion, up to the present time there have been 12 speakers on this measure, there are six more speakers to come, and much of what has been put forward can be classified only as tedious repetition. I remind hon. members that if this tedious repetition continues the Chair will be forced to apply Rule 141.

Mr. WHARTON (Burnett) (8.50 p.m.): I rise to support the Bill. I hope, in deference to your ruling, Mr. Hodges, that I will not be guilty of tedious repetition. Unfortunately a certain amount of repetition is unavoidable and, after all, you have given the previous 12 speakers a fair amount of latitude.

I compliment the Minister on his presentation of the Bill. It is a fairly lengthy one with rather wide ramifications. In the past the Act has been used to advantage, and it has been effective enough in days gone by, but today we are considering new legislation, which makes many significant alterations to the Act.

All hon. members will appreciate that in the meat industry there have been many fluctuations not only in supply and demand but in the fortunes of those associated with the industry. The Bill is based on the findings of the committee of inquiry, which was appointed by the Government to weigh the pros and cons of the meat industry. I think I can claim to be a practical man in this field, having had experience in the production of beef and, to some extent, with the processing companies. I think I am in a position to appreciate the problems of both the producer and the processor. I know all hon. members will appreciate that the Burnett area provides much of the State's best-quality beef, veal and pig-meats.

The Bill has two very significant features, one being the setting up of a State authority, the other being the restriction or relieving of the franchise system. With the establishment of a State authority, at long last we will have somewhere to go with our problems. For too long we have not known where to go on a State basis with our problems. We have had the Brisbane Abattoir, various abattoirs in provincial cities, and various types of slaughter-houses, but no single authority other than the Department of Primary Industries to turn to. I feel that the establishment of this authority will do a great deal to solve many of the present problems.

It will be one of its functions to cater for the needs of new abattoirs. I do not want to go into the reasons for the financial difficulties of the abattoirs at Roma or Biloela. Probably they were not sufficiently financed but I will not go into the ramifications of their difficulties.

This new authority will be used to advantage in the allocation of works to cater for the State's slaughtering needs. It may place some restriction on the establishment of abattoirs but, at the same time, the opportunity will be there for those who wish to establish them to make an approach to the authority when the matter will be considered in a businesslike way to ensure that we do not have the establishment of killing works or abattoirs on a willy-nilly basis.

We must realise that there have been times when the franchise areas have been very necessary. It is necessary to have some protection but, having gone through that stage, we now want to trade. The authority can handle the needs in franchise areas. As the hon. member for Condamine said, where there is an area with a shortage of lambs, there will be an authority to say, if there are lambs to spare elsewhere, "There is a market for them." The authority can enter an area, again not willy-nilly but in a businesslike way, to help not only the area that has them available but the area that needs them. I think that is a particular field in which the authority could be used to great advantage. When the authority is established, I hope it will be able to look at some of the marketing problems of the industry.

Much has been said about beef but I wish to refer to the marketing of pigs. More than 500,000 pigs are slaughtered annually. That figure may not seem large compared with the number of cattle sold, but it is significant. There are a number of processing plants for pigs, which have a great influence on the economy of many people in the State, namely dairy farmers and pig producers.

A facet of the work of the authority could be the investigation of the marketing of pork. I do not wish to traverse the ramifications of the bacon industry, because it is not a part of the Bill, but if we are to help the pig producer we must find a larger market for pork. If we expand the market for pork, we expand the market for bacon and bring to the industry a stability that has been lacking because, in recent times, there have been wide fluctuations in prices owing to supply and demand factors influencing the sale of bacon products. If we could sell the bulk of the product as pork, we would do a great deal for the stabilisation of the price for pig products. At present, pork is marketed mainly in butcher shops, and I have no quarrel with that. However, we are living in modern times. The great bulk of food, such as poultry, is sold in delicatessens or the food halls of the chain stores. That is where the customer naturally goes to buy such products as pork and pickled pork.

Many meat products are processed and packaged for the food halls, but with pork the field is restricted. I believe they could handle pork and pickled pork. There is a wide market for pickled pork. If they could handle pork and pickled pork, they would do a great deal for pig producers. In this way, pork and pig products would be marketed more in keeping with the consumer's demands and, if we meet the consumer's demands, we are acting in the interests of the producer as well.

There is no question that the franchise system has been necessary in the past. When one starts something new, one needs some protection but the aid cannot be continued for ever. If it were, we would have ringed, or franchise, areas around Brisbane and the other provincial cities in the State, with a resultant restriction of trade. The bad effect of the franchise system is that it restricts trade. If the system had been continued, it would have restricted trade in the city. It was impossible to market pig products cheaply in Ipswich. The producers had to take them to the Ipswich abattoir for killing, then bring them down to a part of Brisbane for processing before they could be submitted to the customer at Ipswich for sale. It can be seen that in this particular case franchises restrict trade, and anything that restricts trade should not be fostered. It is no good to the consumer, and therefore it is no good to the producer.

In Brisbane it is proposed to establish a meatworks to handle 1,000 head a day. That is a good thought. As the throughput will be constant, it must be handled efficiently and economically, and that will ensure a particular kind of killing facility acceptable to the producers and to the processors who will want the stock treated there. If there is a shortage, beef can be brought in from other areas. The best and most economical way to put beef onto the Brisbane market is on the hook, not on the hoof, and this proposal aims at that.

The Brisbane Abattoir will cater also for the export market, which is rather important to the grazier and to the dairying industry. The export market has assisted dairying more than any other section of the industry. The dairying industry has been faced with many difficulties, including droughts; the one bright spot has been the export market for surplus dairy cattle. The export market has helped the grazing industry generally also. The ability of the processors to cater for the home market and also the export market makes for continuity of production and continuity of employment.

The Bill gives a new atmosphere to freer marketing with a splash of private enterprise, all to the good of the whole community. Stability, competition, and freedom will bring untold benefits to the producers and the housewives, will be of assistance to the economy through returns from the export market, and will ensure continuity of employment.

Mr. BENNETT (South Brisbane) (9.4 p.m.): This Bill is typical of the anti-Queensland legislation that we are regularly receiving from this Government. One would think that as we have set the path for meat production, meat export, and the handling of meat in Australia since 1931, we would not need to go outside the confines of this State to be dictated to or advised by people who do not understand what has developed in Queensland over a number of years with public ownership. It seems strange that the committee of inquiry that the Government and the Minister appointed was originally composed entirely of men with no direct knowledge of the Queensland industry. After some pressure was applied, the Government, with some reluctance, appointed Mr. Charles Lloyd Harris as an additional member.

Mr. Row: What utter rot!

Mr. BENNETT: Mr. Harris is even listed in the report that I have before me as "Additional Member", and no doubt, when he was drawn into discussion with the three other members from outside Queensland, he was well aware of the fact that his appointment was an afterthought. If the Government wanted to be advised on methods applying in other States, one would have expected the appointment of perhaps one man from another State and the consideration of material from other States or, alternatively, the appointment of a Queensland committee, if Government members are loyal Queenslanders, and the calling of evidence by experts from outside the State. This would have been preferable to allowing people from outside Queensland not only to control the committee but to be the committee, with the exception of one man who was appointed under sufferance. I do not think that the Minister and the Government acted very satisfactorily in this matter.

For once I agree with the protest lodged by the United Graziers' Association, and I fail to understand why the Government is thumbing its nose at that organisation in this matter.

Mr. Ramsden: There are a lot of things you fail to understand. That is one of your main failings.

Mr. BENNETT: I do not want any inane interjections from the Queen Street cowboys in the Liberal Party who are dictated to by the pastoral companies.

The arguments advanced by the United Graziers' Association through its cattle committee were supported largely by the Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union. Once again one would have expected that the Government would have taken cognizance of the arguments advanced by the United Graziers' Association. Whilst the Government has scorned union suggestions on many occasions, much to its sorrow in recent times, when a union supports the submissions of an association such as the

United Graziers' Association the Government could well feel fortified in accepting the propositions unanimously put forward by people representing industry interests in Queensland. I have no doubt that the hon. member for Roma will agree with what I have just said. As a Queenslander with Queensland interests at heart, I feel rather disappointed that his arguments were drowned by Liberal Party interests in Caucus when this important legislation was under discussion.

I do not suppose that the hon. member for Roma, or others with interests in the land, would say that the United Graziers' Association makes idle claims or puts before the public falsehoods or misrepresentations. It claims in effect that since 1945 Thomas Borthwick & Sons Ltd. have been trying to break the Brisbane Abattoirs' monopoly of the Brisbane meat trade. When the Government has, since 1931, successfully operated the Brisbane Abattoir, is there any reason why the recommendation made in a report by men who have not lived under the meat trade conditions that have prevailed in this State for a quarter of a century should be accepted?

The chairman of the cattle committee of the United Graziers' Association, Mr. R. S. Wilson, who is well known as the man from Calliope station and who, I am reliably informed, is a good authority on matters of this nature, said that this report, which is being blindly adopted by the Government, appeared to be an unrealistic document that did not look far enough into the future. Mr. Wilson takes the argument one step further than I have done so far. I say that these gentlemen have ignored the results that have been achieved under public ownership of the Brisbane Abattoir over a quarter of a century; Mr. Wilson says that the whole document is unrealistic and does not look far enough into the future. When we are making drastic changes of this nature, which will strike at the very kernel of the meat industry in Queensland, surely there is one essential thing to which we must have regard—how we are going to fare in the future. As I said, Mr. Wilson, a responsible authority, said that the report does not look far enough into the future.

He said—it is a serious claim for him to make, but I believe it is true—that because of recent happenings in the meat industry the report was out of date even before it was handed to the Government. This is the third month of the year 1965, and the report is a 1964 report. We are framing 1965 legislation on recommendations made in 1964. As I said, Mr. Wilson said that the report is already an anachronism because it is out of date.

He went on to say that while the committee had acknowledged that the largest increase in production would come in the Central Queensland brigalow area, it could not recommend any new killing facilities for the area, which already was railing past

existing meatworks upwards of 200,000 head of cattle a year. Incidentally, I am referring to a claim by Mr. Wilson on 4 November 1964. Almost five months ago he said that these recommendations and reports were out of date. Just how much more are they out of date now? In spite of this, the Minister is still prepared to accept the report submitted by people from the South.

Mr. Wilson rejects the report in toto, not piecemeal or in part, as the hon. member for Port Curtis points out to me. Furthermore, there is no real indication in the report as to whether or not the Queensland representative—the afterthought, the sufferance man—agreed with it. It was not much use his disagreeing; he was outnumbered three to one.

On 4 November 1964, Mr. Wilson forecast that soon the need for additional public killing facilities would be more than urgent. The Central Queensland Meat Export Company had stated that its new works at Lake's Creek would kill only 800 head of cattle a day in lieu of the present 1,100 head. He went on to say that as the report recommended that the Queensland Meat Industry Board should kill only 1,000 head of cattle daily, in lieu of the present 2,100 head, it was difficult to see how the committee could say killing facilities were more than adequate for many years to come. He then said that Borthwicks Brisbane branch manager, Mr. W. S. Norton, said that the committee's recommendations now provided the Government with a blueprint for the next 10 years and, if adopted, the recommendations would allow greater freedom in the movement of meat throughout the State and virtually would bring Queensland into line with other States.

Therein lies the crux or the argument and the reason for this report. Men from the other States were trying to harness Queensland to the conditions that prevail in other States.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Campbell): Order! The previous occupant of the chair drew the attention of the Committee to the import of Rule 141 of the Standing Orders. I hope the hon. member for South Brisbane will remember his warning.

Mr. BENNETT: I submit, Mr. Campbell, that the submissions made by me to date have not been made previously.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Campbell): Order! The submissions that the hon. member is now making have been made by other hon. members on my left, and if the hon. member persists with them I will be obliged to enforce Rule 141.

Mr. DUFFICY: I rise to a point of order. With respect, Mr. Campbell, I suggest that no other member of the Committee has made any submissions along the lines of those made by the hon. member for South

Brisbane. If I am wrong, I suggest that you name the member who made those submissions.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Campbell): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr. BENNETT: With respect to you, Mr. Campbell, you were interjecting today, as a back-bench member, in a very nasty fashion—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Campbell): Order! I ask the hon. member to continue his speech and to relate his remarks to the matter introduced by the Minister, otherwise I shall ask him to resume his seat.

Mr. BENNETT: I hope you do not persist with the gag, Mr. Campbell, because—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Campbell): Order! That remark is a reflection on the Chair and I ask the hon. member to resume his seat. I now call on the hon. member for Kurilpa.

Mr. BENNETT: I move—

“That I be further heard.”

Question—That the hon. member for South Brisbane be further heard (Mr. Bennett's motion)—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 23

Mr. Bennett	Mr. Lloyd
„ Bromley	„ Mann
„ Byrne	„ Marsden
„ Davies	„ Newton
„ Dean	„ O'Donnell
„ Donald	„ Sherrington
„ Dufficy	„ Thackeray
„ Graham	„ Tucker
„ Hanlon	
„ Hanson	<i>Tellers:</i>
„ Houston	Mr. Melloy
„ Inch	„ Wallis-Smith
„ Jones, R.	

NOES, 31

Mr. Anderson	Mr. McKechnie
„ Armstrong	„ Munro
„ Bjelke-Petersen	„ Murray
„ Camm	„ Nicklin
„ Carey	„ Pizey
„ Chinchin	„ Ramsden
„ Ewan	„ Richter
„ Herbert	„ Row
„ Hiley	„ Sullivan
„ Hodges	„ Tooth
„ Hughes	„ Wharton
„ Jones, V. E.	„ Windsor
„ Knox	
„ Lee	<i>Tellers:</i>
„ Lickiss	Mr. Cory
„ Lonergan	„ Pilbeam
„ Low	

PAIRS

Mr. Duggan	Mr. Chalk
„ Gunn	„ Dewar
„ Baxter	„ Fletcher

Resolved in the negative.

Mr. HUGHES (Kurilpa) (9.24 p.m.): I join with other hon. members on this side in applauding the Bill.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. HUGHES: If that is tedious repetition, I want to be part of it.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. HUGHES: If Labour members had any regard for the workers they would not have sacked 2,000 men when they controlled the Brisbane City Council.

I believe that this Bill will bring about competition in the supply of meat to Brisbane. That is something else that the Labour Party do not want any part of. It is what has made this country; it is what will keep us in government. It is against the plank of Socialism. Again, that is why we on this side believe that the people of Brisbane are entitled to enjoy, through free enterprise, competition that will provide better quality beef, and there will be a greater chance to reduce prices.

I firmly believe that this measure will bring better quality meat to Brisbane, and I will explain my reasons as I continue.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. HUGHES: The rabble on my right wish to keep up this pretence, this sham debate. On the one hand they say they want to support the worker, yet on the other hand they damn him into insignificance. The hon. member for South Brisbane said that the Brisbane Abattoir, which has operated since 1928—

Mr. Bennett: If we had a good chairman I would have advanced a lot more, too.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Campbell): Order! The Chair takes exception to the remark of the hon. member for South Brisbane. I ask him to apologise.

Mr. Bennett: Yes, I apologise.

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member for South Brisbane said that there was no reason to adopt the recommendations of the committee of inquiry. In my view there are a hundred-and-one reasons. More able people than I, such as my colleagues from the Country Party, have advanced good reasons why we should adopt them. The men who comprised the committee were learned men. First there was the chairman, the director of the Commonwealth Bureau of Agricultural Economics. The second member was the chairman of the New South Wales Meat Industry Board. The third member was the manager of the Goulburn Municipal Abattoir, and the fourth member of the committee was a special administration officer from the Department of Primary Industries. Those are the men who were rubbished by the hon. member for South Brisbane. They are men of undoubted ability and integrity, which we do not question. Why, then, should we question their recommendations and findings? We are entitled to debate their opinions and findings, but I know that members of the Government parties believe that if the recommendations are adopted they will bring in

their wake to the people of Brisbane something which they have not been able to enjoy for many years. The people of Brisbane have had to suffer under a Government sponsoring a socialist enterprise which in fact is a monopoly.

Mr. Hanson: The United Graziers' Association agrees with us.

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member for Salisbury brought this matter up. He spoke about monopolies. We are going to destroy this monopoly of trade of its detrimental effect on trade and commerce, and on the consumers of this city. By this means we will bring in competition, which is the life-blood of our free-enterprise society. Hon. members opposite who support the dissident faction at Mt. Isa, who try to defend their indefensible conduct, who do not want any part of the things which are the privileges of our democracy, should not be espousing their views in this Chamber.

If we assimilate, analyse, and introduce in a workable fashion the recommendations of the members of the committee, I believe we will open up Brisbane to the cattle fields, and to meat from other areas of the State. How often have the people of Brisbane cried out for country-killed meat? The hon. member for Belmont, who has just interjected, knows about it. If we go to Redcliffe, the South Coast, or any other area outside Brisbane we can get meat that we can eat. At Rockhampton meat is about 6d. a lb. cheaper than in Brisbane. In Redcliffe it is 2d. a lb. cheaper. If hon. members opposite want to do something to help the workers, I suggest that they support the Bill. The public wants quality meat at the right price, and the Bill provides for that.

Mr. Hanson: Are you saying that members of the present board have been dishonest?

Mr. HUGHES: Of course not; but free enterprise can administer a business more effectively and more economically. That has been proved on many occasions.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. HUGHES: These facilities are being used to a great extent to treat chillers and crackers, and this meat is mixed with good meat. That is the core of the problem facing the housewife.

Mr. Hanson interjected.

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member for Port Curtis has interjected. If he does not know what the public of Brisbane is faced with—

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member should be annoyed and embarrassed. The public will applaud the Government for introducing this Bill because it has had to pay top prices for poor-quality meat. The butchers have to accept the meat provided by the

wholesalers. The hon. member for Salisbury mentioned one matter worthy of comment, namely, the manner of delivery.

Mr. Sherrington: You are coming in on the grouter now.

Mr. HUGHES: I do not know what that means.

Opposition Members interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Campbell): Order! There is too much irresponsible interjecting by hon. members on my left. I ask them to desist.

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member for Salisbury has charged me with coming in on the grouter, whatever that means.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. HUGHES: I have been out to the West. I have been in the A.W.U.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to return to the principles of the Bill.

Mr. HUGHES: The records will show that I have asked the Minister for Primary Industries many questions about having a proper, hygienic covering placed on meat. I have seen many glaring examples of what is happening. I shall not give up my campaign to improve the manner in which meat is delivered to the shops. Many butchers are stuck with meat which they have to unload. A good deal of cherry-picking goes on in butcher shops. A certain amount of poor-quality meat is mixed with meat of a higher quality. If a sweet young thing of 17 goes into a butcher shop and gives a pleasant smile to the butcher at the right time she is much more likely to walk out with 100 per cent. good-quality meat than is anyone else. The dear old soul who may be on a pension is likely to get more than her share of the 25 per cent. of the meat that is not of the highest quality. That is what goes on in butcher shops. It is not the fault of the proprietor, as he cannot watch every movement of his employees.

The point that I make is that in Brisbane too much meat has been sold that is not up to the desired quality. I believe that the Bill, following recommendations of the committee of inquiry, will, if nothing else, by opening up the market, bring about competition in the meat trade that will have the effect of bringing better meat to Brisbane. Prices will not be fixed, because competition provides the best means of fixing prices. I go so far as to say that in the meat trade in Brisbane there will in the future be the intense competition that one sees in the "wars" between petrol companies that produce all the little extra services that motorists receive. I believe that the Bill will produce fierce competition from which the one person who will receive dividends will be the shopping housewife. It is not before time that she is to be given some assistance.

I believe that the shopping public of Brisbane have not been fairly treated in the quality of meat made available.

Price has to be related to quality. There has been some good-quality meat available, and I do not think that meat prices generally for the guaranteed top-quality meats are too high.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. HUGHES: I said "generally for top quality." I have looked after a family and cooked and shopped for them and bought more meat in the last 12 months than the hon. member for Salisbury has in his lifetime. I know that if one has sufficient time one can make even the toughest meat more tender. Many housewives, however, have not sufficient time to do this. In many cases, the price paid for meat is more than its quality warrants.

Mention has been made of the decrease in the consumption of meat. This has been greatly contributed to by the quality of meat available. To a great extent, buying meat is like a lucky dip; you may be lucky and you may not be. If you have tough luck, you also have tough meat. The main complaint is not so much against price only as the quality that goes with the price. Apart from economic considerations, dozens of housewives are being forced—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Campbell): Order! I have given the hon. member considerable latitude. The measure does not extend to the retailing of meat, and I now ask him to confine his remarks to the principles outlined by the Minister.

Mr. HUGHES: Thank you, Mr. Campbell; I appreciate the point.

The Bill will bring about higher standards not only in meat but in poultry as well, and, by competition, will open the Brisbane market to other killing authorities. This will produce wonderful benefits for the housewife who in the past may have been reduced to buying mince-meat and sausages. Country-killed meat will be available in Brisbane, and the living standards of families will be raised. I believe that the Bill will, in addition to providing competition, bring about a stability of supply. It is well known that there have been interruptions to Brisbane's meat supply in the past.

It has been mentioned that the Queensland Meat Industry Board has lost about £200,000 in the last two years. That is certainly a considerable capital cost. The Government has been pouring money into the abattoir to prop it up, and this expenditure must, of course, be borne by the taxpayers. I believe that reconstruction work at the abattoir will cost hundreds of thousands of pounds, and this, of course, will have an important bearing on the Government's decision in relation to recommendations made in the report of the committee of inquiry.

The Queensland Meat Industry Board will become the Metropolitan Public Abattoir Board, and I believe that its operations will be

confined largely to Greater Brisbane. This is a system similar to that used in Melbourne, where the local authority owns the freehold of the abattoir and killing is conducted not by it but by registered proprietors who buy and kill their own cattle or who have contractors to kill the cattle for them. I believe that that system is preferable to the one suggested for Brisbane.

The question then is: how can one simply write off the tremendous capital asset represented by the Queensland Meat Industry Board's premises at Cannon Hill? To some extent, the continuance of the abattoir is a counter measure to a completely free and open market, but I believe that the public will get better meat as a result of this competition. I believe, too, that the competition may have some effect in restraining unionists from again adopting the irresponsible attitude that they have on occasions displayed in strikes at the abattoir. It might almost be said that at times the city has been held to ransom, because housewives have had supplies of meat withheld from them as a result of unnecessary and unwarranted strikes. One is scheduled to take place on Friday, and if it is not the most abortive thing that has ever happened, I do not know what is. It is wanton industrial lawlessness.

As I said, the proposed Bill will allow meat from other areas to come to Brisbane, and I believe that this will result in competition that will provide the city with cheaper and better meat. I have been striving for a long time to get better and cheaper meat in Brisbane. Some of my colleagues have put a great deal more work and research into this problem than I have—I know that you, Mr. Campbell, have taken a great interest in the matter—and I believe that the Government has made a realistic appraisal of the position and has come to the correct decision in deciding to make competition possible, thus enabling wholesalers and retailers to give a better service to the public.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (9.43 p.m.): This is a very complex problem and requires the careful consideration of all hon. members now, as well as at the second-reading and Committee stages of the Bill. It concerns not only the wholesaling side of the industry—something which the Government has emphasised—but also, and very importantly, those who produce the cattle, the consumers, and people who are employed in the industry.

To give an indication of the importance that cattle producers attach to this matter, I think it is essential that I have included in "Hansard" an extract from a statement made on 9 February this year, about four months after the committee of inquiry established by the Government submitted its report, by the president of the United Graziers' Association, Mr. C. B. Peter Bell. The report has not been referred to by any other hon. member in this debate, but it says—

"Closer liaison between Queensland Government ministers and the United Graziers' Association on matters affecting

the grazing industry, was urged yesterday by the association's president (Mr. C. B. Peter Bell).

"The association's cattle committee met yesterday.

"At the meeting complaints were made that the industry did not have an opportunity of discussing some aspects of the Meat Industry Inquiry Committee's report with the Government before the Government implemented the findings late last year."

That is very important. He definitely stated that this legislation was introduced for the purpose of implementing the recommendations included in the report.

He goes on to say—

"Delegates were told that in an approach to the Primary Industries Minister (Mr. Row) on the inquiry committee's report it was found too late for U.G.A. submissions to be considered."

This is action on the part of a Government which is predominantly Country Party representative.

The article continues—

"Mr. Bell said that because of this, practical experience of men in the industry had been lost."

"It would be of tremendous value to the Government and the grazing industry if some of the industry's problems could be discussed so that a common front could be made from the U.G.A. before action by the Government was implemented."

Apparently it was a bit too late to have this done because the Minister and the Government are now introducing, within a month, legislation which gives full effect to the recommendations of the committee of inquiry.

To continue—

"Mr. Bell said he intended to raise the matter with the Premier (Mr. Nicklin)."
Quite obviously the sympathetic hearing he got was completely non-existent—

"If the Premier was agreeable to some form of better liaison he felt it could be of great value to the Government and to the grazing industry in ironing out some of the industry's difficulties.

"The cattle committee was told that the Meat Inquiry Committee's report was submitted to the Primary Industries Minister last October."

That was the date of the completion of the report.

Mr. Bell continues—

"It was subsequently discussed by Cabinet and made available to the public.

"When the report was released the U.G.A. Cattle Committee chairman (Mr. R. S. Wilson) criticised it as an unrealistic document which did not look far enough into the future."

Quite obviously, from the report, that is correct. It is a report based purely and simply on conjecture of what might or might not possibly happen in some years' time.

The article continues—

"However, the Government adopted the committee's findings on the building of a new and smaller abattoir at Cannon Hill. It accepted the committee's recommendation that abattoirs killing for both export and domestic consumption should have their franchises withdrawn.

"This means that killing in Brisbane will be open for competition, instead of being a monopoly held by the Brisbane Abattoir for most cuts of meat."

I thank the hon. member for South Brisbane for making that item available to me for inclusion in "Hansard".

Mr. Bennett: I was stopped from doing it.

Mr. LLOYD: Sometimes Rule 141 of the Standing Orders is not completely applied either by you, Mr. Campbell, or some other members occupying the position of Chairman of Committees. I think this question should have been made one of privilege and placed before the Speaker of the House. These matters are completely relevant; they are not matters of tedious repetition.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Campbell): Order!

Mr. LLOYD: I am simply pointing out that this is not a matter of tedious repetition. Points have been put forward by the Minister to show that this Bill is very necessary.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Campbell): Order! The hon. member will confine his remarks to the outline of the Bill.

Mr. LLOYD: I want to submit to you, Mr. Campbell, if I may use the phraseology which might be used by the hon. member for South Brisbane, that the Minister did state that the committee of inquiry had made these recommendations and that this legislation was based on those recommendations. I consider that any criticism delivered publicly either by members of the United Graziers' Association or members of consumers' organisations, even members of the Queensland Housewives' Association—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member has drawn a wrong inference from the decision given by the Chair. I ask him to continue with his remarks on the outline of the Bill given by the Minister.

Mr. LLOYD: Certainly. What I am saying at the present time is based on the fact that the Government has obviously completely accepted the recommendations made by the committee of inquiry which were submitted to the Government in October last year after a very short inquiry lasting eight months into the industry by people who are

not engaged in the meat industry in Queensland. The Government now, in our opinion, and in the opinion of many people and associations in the community, has brought this legislation forward without sufficient consideration being given to what can happen as the result of its implementation.

For some time this industry has been a matter of public concern. It started in 1958 with a spate of publicity by the companies about the quality and price of meat. We have very little sympathy for these meat companies, who have very little interest in the welfare and future of the industry in Queensland. By engaging in the purchasing of cattle and its wholesale distribution on the domestic and export market they are the ones who make the large profits from the industry. To give an example of the inconsistency of the Ministers in charge of this department I think it is necessary to go back to 1960 when matters came to a head because of pressure applied to the Government, particularly from Liberal Party sources. Some sections of the Liberal Party were vociferous about the necessity to take away from the Brisbane Abattoir the franchise that had been in existence for many years. The then Minister for Agriculture and Stock, the late Hon. O. O. Madsen, made many terse comments at the time. I remind the Committee that in 1960 notice had been given of a Bill, and notice of motion was placed on the business sheet, but it was not pursued because of pressure upon the Government by the primary producers.

At that time several questions were asked of the then Minister for Agriculture and Stock. I think it is desirable to refer the Committee to one of the replies, and I refer to a question I asked on Thursday, 10 November, 1960, as reported at page 1344 of "Hansard". By way of a question I drew the Minister's attention to what I called a deliberately misleading opinion in the "Telegraph" of Tuesday, 8 November, which had attempted to place the responsibility for the 7d. increase in meat prices in Brisbane on the control over the supply of meat in the metropolitan area by the Brisbane Abattoir. In reply to the latter part of my question about recent increases in the slaughtering charges levied by the Brisbane Abattoir and their effect on Brisbane meat prices the Minister said—

"There has been an increase of six pence per head in cattle at Brisbane Abattoir recently. In addition, certain credits for fats previously allowed and amounting to some 3s. per head have now been discontinued. It must be obvious to all fair-thinking people that the operations of Cannon Hill have had no influence on recent rises in meat prices. This fact is well known to the Telegraph Newspaper Co., and therefore it does the paper no credit in deliberately misrepresenting the position to an uninformed public. Its efforts to masquerade as antagonists of monopolism is just as deceptive; in fact the 'Telegraph's'

proposal could do no other than thrust the Brisbane meat trade into the hands of monopolism."

In other words, in the opinion of the then Minister for Agriculture and Stock, to take the franchise from the Queensland Meat Industry Board and divide it between the board and private industry, such as Borthwicks, which would be controlling prices, would in fact mean handing the whole of the meat trade in Brisbane to monopolism.

On page 1178 of the 1960 "Hansard" appears a question that was asked by me of the then Minister for Agriculture and Forestry. I think it is necessary to read it to give an indication of what the Country Party thought about this matter in 1960, and to show the reasons that Country Party members had for resisting for so long the efforts of the Liberal Party in its attempts to get Borthwicks a share of the Brisbane market. In a few moments I intend to cover a little more of this matter. The question concerned the contradictory Press statement in "The Courier-Mail" by Mr. A. M. Borthwick that Thos. Borthwick & Sons Ltd. had invested £1,500,000 in its Moreton meatworks in 1942. That is the type of propaganda that these people have been advancing and for which the Liberal Party has been falling.

The question continued—

"... Thomas Borthwick and Sons Ltd. had invested £1.5 million in its Moreton Meat Works in 1942 without the knowledge that it was not able to supply the Brisbane market and that this ban was applied in 1931, during which year was the Brisbane Abattoir created the sole supplier of meat to the local market in Brisbane and would it have been possible for Borthwicks not to have knowledge of the ban in 1942?"

At that time the Minister for Agriculture and Stock agreed entirely with the question asked by me and savagely attacked the proposal that Borthwicks should have some share of the Brisbane market. There are a number of features of this matter which are very important. At page 1178, in part (1) of his answer, the Minister said—

"An exclusive franchise was given in 1931 to the Queensland Meat Industry Board to conduct the Brisbane Abattoir at Cannon Hill as the centre for the preparation of meat supplies for the consumers in the Metropolitan Area to replace the unsatisfactory slaughterhouse system that pertained at that time. It also gave an opportunity for the Government to meet the demands of the meat industry generally and for the establishment of Queensland firms to enable them to enter the export trade in competition with the large overseas meat firms."

In other words, one of the intentions of the original legislation in 1931 was to give the right to local firms to enter into competition with the large monopolies controlling

the whole of the export trade in meat from Queensland to the United Kingdom and other countries. The Minister confirmed that when he said in his introduction that there were no longer only three large meat companies operating, but an extra 15. The effect of the existing legislation has not been to stifle the development of the industry in this State. The intention has been proved by the results, which the Minister has confirmed. The original intention must have been good, and the results have been good.

It is now the intention of the Government to cancel something that was good in 1931, something that has had beneficial results in that it has enabled a number of local meat companies to give the cattle producers of Queensland a better share of the profits in the industry in which they are engaged. Competition was created in the industry. There is an unfortunate feature in that, although there will not be the monopoly that existed in 1931, there will be a reversion to the conditions of 1931, which could quite easily mean a reversion to the old type of monopolism mentioned by the Minister for Agriculture and Stock in 1960. The smaller abattoir organisations will be squeezed out of the industry and will be closed down. The abattoirs will have representation on the authority that is to be created. It will have powers that should be possessed only by the Government, not by any organisation within the industry.

The replies given to my questions on that occasion indicated clearly that the Government intended to scrap the legislation of which notice had been given, and in fact it did die. No further mention was made of the notice given by the Minister to introduce a Bill dealing with the Abattoir Act. Nothing was done until five years later when a committee of inquiry was appointed by this Government, no doubt as a result of pressure from the Liberal Party and other interests. The recommendations are really in accordance with what certain people have wanted for a long time.

The Queensland Meat Industry Board has operated to the satisfaction of the Queensland cattle producers. It has also co-operated at all times with the Commonwealth and State Governments in scientific research which resulted in improving the treatment of meat for the frozen and chilled meat markets overseas, particularly in the United Kingdom during the war years and the years immediately prior to the war.

There was not a great deal of movement by any of the meat export companies from 1946 to 1950, and no definite pressure was applied. The first movement occurred in 1952 when, instead of the United Kingdom Government purchasing the whole of the intake of meat production under the United Kingdom meat agreement, which expires in 1967, it allowed private treaty to take over; in other words, private arrangements could be made for the purchase of meat in the United Kingdom.

In 1954 there was a further relaxation which allowed the movement of a good deal of lower-grade meat to the United States of America, a market which was not open to the meat industry until that time. Immediately the lower grades of meat could be exported to the United States, the meat export companies decided to move into this lucrative market because of the better price obtainable.

The competition from the agents on the local market forced up the local price. Immediately that occurred the home-consumption market became more lucrative, and significant pressure was applied by Borthwicks and other meat companies, which had operated on only an export basis until then, to be allowed to come into the home market. The Government is now going to move aside and allow that to happen.

Let us look at the method to be used. In the committee's report, which I have called a report of conjecture, there is no indication of what the demand for meat will be in five or 10 years' time. The report contains figures taken from different sources—apparently a number of meat companies, the department itself, and others. It is absolutely impossible to anticipate what meat the local population will require in five years' time. Who can tell what the United States of America will require from Australia? We know that the United States Government agreed to accept 242,000 tons of meat from Australia in 1964, and 260,000 tons in 1966. Already there has been some movement in this regard. In 1966 there could be a completely new agreement, perhaps resulting from pressure exerted by producers in the United States. The United States Government may declare further quotas on imports of meat. Statements of what the requirements will be in 1970 are based entirely on conjecture of what might happen, and possibly will not. Markets may become available in Europe, and increased markets in the United Kingdom may continue. On the other hand, they may not. Markets in Southern Asia could expand considerably, requiring increased meat production in this country. All of these things are matters for conjecture.

The intention of the Government at present is to set up this authority. Let us look at its composition. It is to have a chairman appointed by the Government, and a representative from the Department of Primary Industries. In other words, the Government could appoint anybody. For instance, Mr. Peter Bell could be appointed to stop his criticism of the Government on these matters. The Government may decide to keep him quiet by moving him upstairs, as it were, and making him chairman of the authority.

I have no doubt that administrative officers of the Department of Primary Industries are very knowledgeable men and would have a greater knowledge of this industry and its needs and future requirements than would the men appointed by the Government

as members of the committee of inquiry. Thus, one man appointed to the authority would be capable of doing an excellent job.

Turning to the other members, we find that the proprietary abattoirs will have one representative, the district abattoirs will have another, and the service abattoirs will have another. The authority will have three representatives of abattoirs of different types in Queensland. There will also be one lonely representative of the producers. He will be there to look after the interests of the growers. There is no representation of consumers or industrial unions.

Mr. Nicklin: The district boards could be represented by producers.

Mr. LLOYD: The Premier is making conjecture similar to that made by the committee of inquiry. The representative of the district abattoir boards will be representing one section of the industry. There will be three such representatives out of six members. They have a vital concern in the matter. The powers of the authority will be directed to deciding how many of the existing service abattoirs will be closed, what slaughterhouses will be closed, what new districts will be created, what new abattoirs will be built in certain areas of the State, and so on. If the man representing the district abattoir boards is from Rockhampton, and in his opinion an abattoir being built at Biloela will be uneconomic, he will use his influence to have it closed.

(Time expired.)

Mr. MELLOY (Nudgee) (10.9 p.m.): Having listened to the hon. member for Kurilpa espousing the cause of free enterprise and competition in the meat industry, and knowing that he is committed to supporting a party that fosters monopolies, I think that one would need to have a very facile or flexible mind to be a member of one of the Government parties because one would at all times have to be prepared to have "two bob each way" on matters coming up for consideration. I do not want to deal at any length with what the hon. member said, because I wish to address my remarks to the action of the Government in seeking permission to introduce the Bill.

I am surprised that the Government proposes to introduce this Bill, because former Governments and former Ministers have resisted pressure that was brought to bear on them to introduce legislation of this type. Basically, it makes possible the introduction of meat from sources other than the public abattoir, and Borthwicks, in my opinion, will benefit greatly from its implementation. For years they have been putting pressure on members of the Government and members of the Opposition—we have all received letters from them urging that meat from independent sources be allowed into the metropolitan area—and it seems to me that the Government has now yielded to that pressure.

Many Government members seem to have lost sight of the principles that we are led to believe are contained in the Bill. We have not heard from them any criticism of the abattoir at Cannon Hill. They have not attempted to justify the Government's action or to convince the Opposition that the introduction of the Bill is desirable.

From what I have heard from the Minister, the proposed Bill will not confer any benefit on consumers of meat in the metropolitan area. It will not mean cheaper meat; it will not mean better meat. In fact, I think that the Government has shown a complete disregard for the consumer. When a Bill that affects the ordinary citizen is brought before this Assembly, some indication should be given that not only the interests of those who are greatly interested in the industry are protected, but also those of the little people who will be greatly affected by the production, distribution and sale of commodities. We should be given an indication that the Government is aware of the needs and rights of those people.

Various measures have been introduced relating to the meat industry. One piece of legislation provided for the use of meat price dockets; another provided for the grading of meat and was designed to ensure that consumers got the best meat that was available and knew what they would pay for it when they went into a butcher shop. All those things have gone by the board; one never sees them in a butcher shop today. In my opinion, that is typical of the disregard in which consumers are held by the Government.

Those who are in the upper echelon of the meat industry are very interested because they are in the industry for what they can get out of it, and one can be sure that when one particular section of an industry supports the introduction of a measure such as this, it will mean a considerable return to it. This proposed legislation will mean a great deal to Borthwicks. You can rest assured, Mr. Hodges, that when the Bill becomes law they will enter the retail meat trade in Brisbane, and very soon competition will not exist because they will have control of all the retail meat shops in the metropolitan area. I think that is part of their general plan in coming into this market. They will control not only the wholesale side but also the retail side of the meat industry, and the meat in the sandwich, of course, will be the ordinary consumer who will pay just what this monopoly—which is what it will be in the retail trade—decides will be the price of its meat. The public will suffer in times of shortage when there is conflict as to whether the best of the meat will be provided for the consumers in this State or whether it will be exported. Basically, the meat industry is for the benefit of the people of this country. It is essential that there be products for the use of the ordinary people. We cannot all be pastoralists, or butchers, or meat wholesalers, and we have to rely on

this section of commerce to provide whatever products are necessary and to ensure that the home market is satisfied first of all and that only what is left is exported. But I fear that in any time of shortage the consumer in this country will suffer and that the best products and the best cuts of beef and mutton will go overseas; they will not be available to consumers here.

There is one other matter to which I should like to refer. It has been mentioned by several other speakers but I have a particular interest in it. It is the failure of the Government to make provision in this Bill for the control or supervision of the delivery of carcasses to butcher shops. At least, I presume it is not in the Bill. As we have no Bill before us at this stage, Mr. Hodges, neither you nor I know what is in it.

Some two years ago I made very extensive inquiries into this aspect of the meat industry. On that occasion, I took it upon myself to follow the various delivery wagons. I picked them up at Kangaroo Point, on the other side of Story Bridge, and followed them to their points of delivery. I made a particular note of the periods of time for which the doors of these wagons remained open. On some occasions they were open for a period of 40 minutes and the meat in them was exposed to dust. At the time I provided the Minister of the day, the late Otto Madsen, not only with written evidence of these circumstances but also with photographic evidence. I was able to secure very good photographs, in the city as well as the suburbs, of the extent to which meat was exposed to dust, flies, and other insects while the doors were open.

In a period of the year such as we are now experiencing when there has been no rain in the city for some time, the dust menace is extensive and I have noticed within the last fortnight the extent to which this meat is subjected to dust stirred up by passing trucks. In the last fortnight I have noticed one basket of "small", I think they are called, which was accidentally knocked over and the contents spilled onto the road, picked up by the delivery man, put back into the basket and taken into the butcher shop. That is a very unsatisfactory state of affairs and I do not know that there is any provision in the Bill to cover such circumstances.

Mr. Hiley: The Health Act covers that.

Mr. MELLOY: That is another argument. On the occasion on which I made this survey, I submitted my findings to the Minister for Health and was informed by him that it did not come under his control, that it came under, I think at that time, the Minister for Agriculture and Stock, Mr. Madsen. The Government should make up its mind as to who is responsible. My experience shows that it is the responsibility of the Department of Primary Industries. When I submitted various suggestions, such as the use

of swinging screen doors on meat-wagons, the Minister for Primary Industries gave an assurance that he would give them consideration. As far as I am concerned it is not a matter that comes under the control of the Department of Health, but I am open to correction. I think some provision must be made to provide greater protection for meat, either by swinging screen doors or some other means of excluding flies, insects, and dust, or some form of protective covering.

We do not know what is in the Bill, so I will reserve any further remarks until the second-reading stage.

Mr. INCH (Burke) (10.21 p.m.): My remarks will be brief. I enter the debate to protest strongly against the purported move to have Mt. Isa and possibly Cloncurry included in the Townsville Abattoirs Board franchise. I understand that Ayr, Home Hill, Ingham and Charters Towers are also to be included in that franchise. However, that is a matter for representatives of those areas to deal with. I voice this protest despite the belief held by the committee of inquiry that existing abattoir facilities should be utilised to provide these areas with hygienically killed meat, and because of the opinion expressed by members of the committee and officers of the department that slaughtering facilities at Mt. Isa are very good. To substantiate this, I propose to quote part IV of the report, paragraph 62. It states—

“Mt. Isa also merits a separate reference because it is fast growing, and in terms of population could, if it continues to grow, warrant a domestic abattoir within the next ten years. This town is serviced by two slaughterhouses, stated by officers of the Department of Primary Industries located in Mt. Isa to be of good standard, which enables an effective inspection of all stock killed for local consumption and provides the town with inspected meat.”

Another reason for my protest is the high price of meat to consumers at Mt. Isa, which would be the result of the ridiculous suggestion that beef cattle should be transported a distance of 605 miles to Townsville for slaughtering and processing and subsequent return to Mt. Isa. Because of the freight charges the cost to the people in the Far West would be much greater. The cost of living out there is already far too high. This additional cost would add to the burden they are already carrying. Besides all this, people could be left without meat supplies because of the hazards which could be created by industrial unrest, and by floods which periodically occur in that area and disrupt road and rail transport. Those are some of the hazards which may be encountered if we are to be serviced by the abattoir in Townsville.

There is another reason for my protesting against this legislation. If it is intended that the slaughtering of cattle in these areas to

supply the local market is to cease, men will be thrown out of employment. At Cloncurry especially, the employment position is very bad, it is necessary to retain as many industries as possible to ensure that the people in the area are kept in employment. The supplying of meat from the Townsville abattoir would definitely sound the death knell to any hopes that the people of Mt. Isa and Cloncurry have held about obtaining abattoirs in the area.

Mr. Row: You need not worry about it.

Mr. INCH: Public-spirited bodies in Mt. Isa and Cloncurry are working very hard to introduce new industries into their respective towns to create employment and prosperity for the residents. The Government could assist them in their efforts by not acceding to the requests of monopoly organisations, and by doing everything possible to establish an abattoir at Cloncurry or Mt. Isa.

I sincerely hope that in his reply the Minister will give me an assurance that any move such as I have outlined by the abattoir board at Townsville will not be countenanced, and that Mt. Isa and Cloncurry will be supplied by their own slaughterhouses.

Mr. MURRAY (Clayfield) (10.27 p.m.): I have listened carefully to most of the debate, and I was amazed at the fact that all hon. members opposite seemed to get away completely from the Minister's speech. Surely it was made perfectly clear that the principal purpose of this Bill is to consolidate legislation relating to meat. Its principal purpose is to consolidate a number of Acts, namely, the Slaughtering Acts, 1951 to 1958, the Abattoir Acts, 1930 to 1958, and the slaughtering provisions of the Poultry Industry Acts, 1946 to 1959.

Mr. Bennett: We are aware of that.

Mr. MURRAY: Hon. members opposite seem to have lost sight of the fact that that is the principal purpose of the Bill. There are some amendments, and one or two new factors have been introduced.

The hon. member for South Brisbane suggested that this was anti-Queensland legislation. He deplored the bringing in of outside advice on the committee of inquiry.

Mr. BENNETT: I rise to a point of order. That is not a true representation of what I said. I did not deplore the bringing in of outside advice. I deplored the fact that the committee was being controlled from outside. I suggested it should get outside advice by way of evidence.

Mr. MURRAY: I took down rather carefully what the hon. member for South Brisbane said. From his remarks I thought that it was quite satisfactory to him for outsiders to come in for some purposes which he advocated very strongly, and perhaps not for others, so I made a note of it. He said this was anti-Queensland legislation. With respect

to my friend from South Brisbane, those are very strong words. No-one can truly suggest that this is anti-Queensland legislation. I think he said he did not want Queen Street, Liberal graziers commenting on this legislation because he thought it would snarl up the works completely.

Therefore, with some temerity I feel that I can pass a few observations on the Bill, because after all, while it may be assumed that some of us in the metropolitan area are not highly qualified, perhaps, to comment on this Bill, one can in all fairness say that many hon. members opposite would not know which end of the beast eats. To say that it is anti-Queensland legislation is to be most unfair to the Minister and to the Government.

The United Graziers' Association point of view was quoted. Again we find that it is convenient to accept a section of that Association's views in this matter, while at other times there is violent opposition to anything that smells of its views. The hairs on the backs of the necks of Opposition members rise the moment anyone mentions the United Graziers' Association to them, yet on this occasion, for the sake of convenience they pounce on a statement alleged to have been made by Mr. Wilson of Calliope, in Central Queensland.

The committee investigating this matter said—

"In the course of evidence on the question of the adequacy of facilities in Central Queensland it appeared that the Central Coastal Graziers' Association were asking that the central coastal area be a closed region, i.e. that all cattle produced in that region should be slaughtered there. The suggestion arose by way of evidence which inclined to the view that there should be a balancing of killing facilities against stock turn-off for the region. After some questioning by the Committee the witnesses for the graziers agreed that they did not desire this balance of killing facilities against turn-off. They wished to remain free to market their cattle wherever they chose. The Committee is firmly of the view that while there should be adequate competition provided in all regions it would be undesirable to attempt to balance killing facilities with turn-off region by region."

These views were put forward strongly by the Central Queensland group. We know that Mr. Wilson has been strong in his views on this subject over the years.

Mr. Bennett: Do you agree with him?

Mr. MURRAY: I admire him for his views, which he puts forward forcibly; I respect anybody for that. As it happens, his views appear to be a little offside with general thought.

Of course, they want it both ways. Graziers everywhere want it both ways; most people do. They want all the protection they can get in a local area, and at the same time

they want to be able to send their cattle anywhere when it suits them. So we should not be misled or put off the track by this picking out of the blue a statement alleged to have been made by Mr. Wilson, who leads and represents the United Graziers' Association in that area very well.

Mr. Bennett: Why wouldn't Mr. Campbell let me read his article in this Chamber?

Mr. MURRAY: I do not think the hon. member for South Brisbane would be keen to pursue that point very far either.

Cannon Hill was set up originally for very good reasons in the days of the major companies, namely, Vestey's, Borthwick's, and Swifts. They were very good reasons and it was a very good facility. But times change. I have no argument, and I am sure that this Committee has no argument against the suggestion that it is the proper role of the Government to set up a facility where it is required. Of course, there is a difference between this side of the Chamber and the other side. We on this side of the Chamber believe that it is the role of Government to set up facilities till private enterprise can take over adequately. Hon. members on the other side worship at the feet of Government monopoly. That is their cry; that is all that they want. We abhor monopolies of any kind. We have no time at all for monopolies in the true sense of the word. Hon. members opposite say quite frankly that they want monopolies, and they shall be Government monopolies. We are dedicated to preventing that from happening. We therefore think it is a proper role of government to set up the facilities covered by the provisions of the Bill where such facilities are required, till we feel that private enterprise can take over adequately and supply the competition that was mentioned by many speakers on this side as being so desirable in the interests of the consumers.

Mr. Houston: What are they going to compete in—the killing charge?

Mr. MURRAY: That is quite irrelevant.

This situation applies in much of the State. I have great sympathy for those in areas in which proper works cannot be set up. In many small towns throughout the country small bush works, one might call them, unhygienic establishments compared with the principal works, are to be found.

Mr. Houston: Name one.

Mr. MURRAY: They are to be found in small towns all along the North Coast. I could name any number of them. I suggest that the hon. member travel and see things for himself. In small towns everywhere small killing facilities can be found. They are policed by dedicated stock inspectors of the Department of Primary Industries who would find it impossible to supply the supervision required to ensure proper hygienic control over the production of meat.

Mr. Houston: In other words, it is good enough for country people to eat unhygienic meat but not good enough for city people.

Mr. MURRAY: That is a spurious argument.

Mr. Houston: That is your argument.

Mr. MURRAY: Many of these small killing works will continue to operate because it would be impossible to set up in those areas the type of works that many of the smaller towns and provincial cities have. During the last few years there has been a decided move to improve standards of hygiene and control in the killing and handling of meat. This has been a very progressive move by the Government, and—let us face it—was envisaged by the previous administration. We have carried on this work and done it well.

A committee was set up to investigate a number of things as a guide to future thinking and planning in the meat industry. This was a very appropriate time for such an inquiry. The committee has found that although there are adequate killing facilities in existence at the moment, basing its findings on single-shift operation and the working of no overtime, the pasture revolution, as one might almost call it, so well and ably encouraged and planned by the Government, will result, I am sure, in a great increase in the number of stock available in the years ahead. Cattle numbers, now approximately 7,500,000, have not increased in 70 years. This is a legacy inherited from the previous administration. In the main, they were not alive to the need for this great drive to effect pasture improvement in this country. But this is taking place now, and we can well envisage that stock numbers will increase tremendously. I believe that the committee has performed a very useful task in guiding the Government for the future, and as a result of its recommendations we will provide killing facilities until private enterprise can provide them and it is no longer necessary for us to do so.

The hon. member for Nudgee said that members on this side of the Chamber had not offered any criticism of the Cannon Hill abattoir or of various other things. I do not think hon. members should indulge in very much criticism of the Cannon Hill abattoir. It has lost large sums of money, but that is history and is known to all of us. The question has been raised as to whether the abattoir at Cannon Hill should be rebuilt. My own firm belief is that it is not necessary to rebuild it, but expert opinion is that it should be rebuilt.

I believe that the limitation of the kill is a wise move, and that the removing of the franchise in the way proposed is a better move still.

The Opposition has given us a great amount of "waffle" in this debate. Hon. members opposite have got away from the Bill and its purposes almost completely.

This is indicative of the amount of time that is spent in making speeches at the introductory stage when no-one has a copy of the Bill in his hands.

Mr. BROMLEY (Norman) (10.42 p.m.): This is a very important piece of legislation, and I believe that everyone who has the interests of the consumers at heart—I am referring to consumers over the length and breadth of Queensland—should have something to say on it. It affects people in many walks of life. It affects each of us and our families; it affects the primary producers, the so-called backbone of the country, who I believe do a wonderful job; it affects the workers at the meatworks, the abattoir, and the cannery. For that reason, I believe that it is one of the most important pieces of legislation, if not the most important, that has been brought down in what so far has been a fairly weak legislative programme. Although the gag has been applied on a number of occasions, it is typical of the Government's legislative efforts.

As I said, the proposed legislation is important to the housewife. The hon. member for Kurilpa—I sometimes think that he is only a poor deluded little boy—said that the provisions of the Bill will result in competition and better quality and cheaper beef for housewives and consumers. In my opinion, it is open to doubt whether it will produce better-quality meat. Certainly the meat that we get today could not be called first class, but I am sure that the hon. member for Kurilpa was talking with his tongue in his cheek—it is probably a sheep's tongue—when he spoke about these things. He would have been better occupied in kissing ladies' hands. Sometimes I think he wants to eat them; he places so much importance upon meat.

Mr. Hughes: You are only jealous.

Mr. BROMLEY: I certainly am not jealous of the hon. member for Kurilpa. He has his fads and fancies, and I suppose we must allow him that right, as we allow it to other people.

The line adopted by the hon. member for Kurilpa is the type of argument that monopolies would advance when trying to ram down our throats, not meat, but that more private enterprise and more competition will stimulate industry—in this case, of course, the meat industry. I have never heard such utter drivel. Everybody knows that whilst the so-called combines pretend to introduce competition there is actually no such thing because a price ring operates. I have no doubt that it will operate in this case. As I said by interjection, perhaps we will have competition under this Bill for a short time until the private operators see what they are going to do. I believe the hon. member for Kurilpa is pushing that line, although he does not mean it, because it is Tory policy and he has to espouse it in this Committee.

I believe that the Bill will affect the economy of Queensland in many ways, just as the disastrous drought we are experiencing is affecting primary industry, including the meat industry and the dairy industry. It will affect employees in all types of primary industry just as the drought has done. After listening to the Minister's introduction of the Bill I feel very sympathetically disposed towards members of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union, who fought such a gallant fight for better conditions and who have had such a tough time. Because of the limitation of killing at the Cannon Hill abattoir I believe they will suffer even more. They have suffered already from the introduction of the "Canpak" system and I believe that the reduced kill will cause them much more suffering and will reflect itself in their take-home pay. As I said before, I think Queensland faces a disastrous drop in beef production, and I also suggest that this will reflect itself in the export sale, which amounted to £60,000,000 in 1963-64. I think the Minister holds the same view. Whether he introduced the Bill as a result of such thinking or because of the report of the committee of inquiry I do not know, but the Bill appears to be based completely on that report. By introducing the Bill the Minister will aggravate the unfortunate drop in beef production that I forecast. He is already doing so by introducing legislation to reduce the kill at the Government-owned abattoir. He is therefore, in my opinion, putting a limit on beef production.

I know the Minister will say later on that the Bill will not affect the number of the kill because it will bring about so-called competition that will emanate from the fact that more firms are operating. This is just a myth. I believe it will eventually cut down the kill to just the extent that will suit these firms, which forced the Liberal Party bloc to push this legislation through Parliament and allow certain firms to control the meat industry throughout Queensland. It is no use the hon. member for Clayfield saying that we will have competition. In fact, there will be no competition. We all know that in all industries certain firms get together and fix prices to suit themselves, not the paying public. We have seen it in other industries where certain firms have decided to get together and fix a definite price for an article. People have had to take it or leave it.

I do not want to get away from the Bill but I think everybody here can imagine the "bull"—I mean that literally—that we will see when these firms take over, as they eventually will. Under the proposed new scheme we will see all the "bull" in the world on television. "King-size loin chops—save 10d." "Economy rib roast special—1s. off, this week only." Just imagine the sort of thing we will see. "Sullivan's sausage shop—5d.

off fillets." "Get 1½lb. of value for every 1 lb. That is what we will see when these firms get control. "Forty-three beans in every pot roast," and all the time the consumers are getting "touched" left, right and centre. I do not want the Minister to beguile himself into thinking that the farmers and producers will benefit. I honestly do not think they will. I am certain that the hon. member for Warwick will agree with me. Although he spoke in favour of the Bill, the hon. member for Condamine does not really think he is going to benefit. He favours the fat-lamb industry but he will not get more money under this Bill. I venture to say that the income of the hon. member for Condamine, and of all those associated with the beef industry and fat-lamb industry, will decline under this legislation. I do not like it at all. We have not seen the Bill and therefore I cannot speak too much against it at this stage. But having listened to what the Minister said and having read the report, which goes into the whole ramifications of the industry, I do not like the setup at all.

Unfortunately, farmers have recently been adversely affected by overseas prices and the prices they have received for their primary produce, particularly cattle. Figures prove that a cost rise in excess of 4 per cent. is particularly harmful to the growers. I do not think anybody can deny that. There will be a greater percentage rise than that to the consumers when this Bill becomes law and the combines take control of the meat industry.

Mr. Cory: What are you going to do about the bruising?

Mr. BROMLEY: I agree that something should be done, but there are other ways of doing it. I concede that the growers have been losing as a result of bruising. Mark my words, once the combines get control they will say, "You will accept this price or else." We have seen it in America and other overseas countries where they have said, "You will take it or leave it." The same remarks apply to oil. The Government will not force the oil combines to develop the oil industry to any great extent so that the consumers will benefit in relation to the charges.

Mr. Chinchin interjected.

Mr. BROMLEY: Being a democratic person, unlike the hon. member for Mt. Gravatt, I would not deny the meat workers the right to strike if they felt that they could better their own and their fellow workmates' conditions. The moment any Government takes the right to strike from the workers is the moment that democratic government falls by the wayside.

The Minister is likable enough in his own way, but in my opinion he has been "conned" into taking this action. I have reliable information that he has been fighting against the introduction of the Bill. However, he has been "conned" into it by the Liberal

cell in the coalition party which has forced the Government to do what the Country Party would not do. I say that with all due respect to the Liberal Party and the Government parties.

Whilst the Bill may eventually affect beef producers throughout Australia, I am referring only to Queensland people. The cavalier attitude of the Government towards the Queensland people, particularly those who are responsible for production—the people on the land who are striving to assist the economy of the country—is very poor, and will have an important bearing on the future state of the balance of payments. I am referring to exports, which must be referred to in the Bill as the Minister referred to killing not only for home consumption but for export as well. This, in turn, will affect the economy of the nation as a whole.

If I remember correctly, this was pointed out by the hon. member for Fassifern who, in my opinion and in the opinion of everyone else in the Chamber has a great knowledge of the subject. He knows it thoroughly. He would not have introduced this Bill, and possibly that is one of the reasons why the Government decided to get him out of the Cabinet. One of the troubles with this Government is that it does what it can with people and it cans the ones it cannot deal with.

Mr. Cory: Do you think the Government is spending the money for research wisely?

Mr. BROMLEY: It is spending the money well, but not too wisely. We cannot expect the country to run along on faith alone. We must have action by the Government. The Opposition has plenty of action and advice to give the Government. It is a matter of conjecture whether money is being spent wisely.

It is clear to me and to the Country Party producers in the State—referring particularly to those who have spent a lifetime in the industry—that the economic policies followed by Australia vitally affect the rural producers. I do not see that any argument can be forthcoming from the Government benches to refute that statement.

A Government Member interjected.

Mr. BROMLEY: For the benefit of the hon. member who is hard of hearing, I shall repeat what I said. It is clear that the economic policies adopted by Australia vitally affect the rural producer, as well as the decisions of the Tariff Board and the Arbitration Court. The Tariff Board must consider costs and many other matters. The same applies to the Arbitration Court. It must consider the cost of production.

I pay tribute to the men connected with the meat industry. They suffer many privations and hard times, and are subject to the ravages of disease in their stock. Particularly am I sympathetic to the workers at the Abattoirs who contract Q-fever, for which it

is hard to get continued compensation. The Government should strive to better the conditions of both the producers and the workers.

In answer to the interjector and in relation to organising, at the moment I am organising a case for better conditions throughout the industry. All of us in Queensland are vitally concerned in this matter. I am also organising some support for the workers in the meat industry. If the Government wants to get in and put its shoulder to the wheel it should support the union organisers, who are fighting so magnificently for the men employed in the meat industry. If the Government introduces a more stable price in the industry, a series of price controls for the benefit and protection of the consumer, and price guarantees for the benefit of the producer, there can be no argument.

After all, everybody is out to get a quid. Anybody with any sense realises that if the producer of any commodity, whether it be primary or secondary, is able to get a quid, in the long run everybody, even the Government, will get a share. The need for increased exportation of rural products is as great as ever, and the obstacles to such expansion are also greater than ever. We should have some action. More money should be given to the producer to assist him in every way. He has a pretty tough life. I have been on the land and realise the long hours he works and the back-breaking work he does. He does a tremendous job.

I do not think that this Bill will do anything to promote better economic growth or control in the meat industry. It should not be allowed to stifle the increased production of beef. The Minister should take note of what Opposition members have said and accept our advice. While competition as it exists in Australia today, particularly in its initial stages, is a great and a wonderful thing, eventually it dies out because of the greed for money that is exhibited by monopolies.

Hon. J. A. ROW (Hinchinbrook—Minister for Primary Industries) (11.5 p.m.), in reply: I do not propose tonight to reply in full to the many speeches made by hon. members on both sides of the Committee. If I analysed carefully many of the contributions, I would be here for at least an hour. I therefore propose to give more consideration to them later and deal more broadly in my second-reading speech with many matters raised tonight.

With few exceptions, most speeches have revolved round the proposal to allow meat from outside the metropolitan area to be introduced under licence to Brisbane. One would think from the many speeches of Opposition members, particularly the Leader of the Opposition, that the Government intends to destroy the Cannon Hill works and throw the consumers in the Brisbane area completely into the hands of private meat

companies. I want to contradict that statement deliberately and completely. I assure the Committee that the Government is acutely conscious of its responsibilities not only to the consumers in Brisbane but also to those in other cities and towns of Queensland, particularly in ensuring continuity of the supply of wholesome, hygienic, and inspected meat.

I am very pleased to be able to report tonight that the Brisbane Abattoir is showing very great improvements in its killings and financial position. There has been an increase of 11,609 in the number of cattle killed for the 35 weeks' operations ended 27 February, 1965, as compared with the corresponding period of the preceding year. The comparable figures for sheep and calves are increases of 194,708 and 13,166 respectively. There has been a decrease of 9,844 in the number of pigs slaughtered.

To deal briefly with the cash position, the bank overdraft on 29 June, 1964, was £105,738, and the credit balance at 23 March, 1965, is £29,741. Allowing for an approximate pay-out of £17,500 on account of payroll for the week ended 20 March, 1965, the actual credit balance will be slightly in excess of £12,000. That is a credit to the board and all concerned with it. The board's financial position from 29 June, 1964, to 23 March, 1965, improved by approximately £118,000, whilst considerable capital expenditure was being incurred. In my opinion, the Brisbane Abattoir will show a profit this year.

I again assure hon. members that the Government realises its responsibilities in regard to the Brisbane Abattoir. It is a public abattoir for the use of operators who have no other killing facilities available to them. Last year approximately 118 operators, some only small, used the works at Cannon Hill. My Government is very conscious of the fact that this establishment must be retained. It must be rebuilt, if necessary, and I give to the Committee an assurance that the Government will always recognise its responsibilities to the Brisbane Abattoir and all associated with it.

The introduction of meat to the Brisbane area by private outside firms will be controlled, as it will be in the case of other district abattoirs killing other than for local consumption. However, having regard to the financial responsibility of the Government, it will be the duty of the Queensland Meat Industry Authority to see that regulated supplies of meat that will not affect the financial standing of the district abattoirs come into these areas. That is a very important responsibility, because, after all, it is Government money.

Mr. Bromley: Will you give that assurance to the unions?

Mr. ROW: I will give that assurance.

Mr. Bromley: To the unions?

Mr. ROW: I will give that assurance, because it is the Government's responsibility.

I was very surprised to hear the comments of some hon. members in relation to the composition of the committee of inquiry into the meat industry and to hear criticism of the fact that the Government, in its wisdom, appointed to that committee three men from outside Queensland. I assure hon. members that Cabinet gave very careful consideration to these appointments, and it decided that the appointment of men with great knowledge of the meat industry outside Queensland would be more effective than the appointment of men within the State who might be charged with possessing some degree of parochialism and prejudice. Therefore, Mr. McKay, the Director of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, was appointed as chairman, and he did a very fine job in that position. He has an extensive knowledge of economics and of the meat industry. The other two members of the committee were Mr. Stanley Hill, who is manager of the Metropolitan Meat Industry Board in New South Wales, and who has had very wide experience in the meat industry, and Mr. Albert Towns, who is manager of the Goulburn Municipal Abattoir and also adviser on meat matters to the New South Wales Government. In my opinion, we could not have got three men better qualified to investigate the meat industry in Queensland without fear or prejudice.

Some comment was made, too, on the appointment of the fourth member—Mr. Lloyd Harris, of my own department. The hon. member for South Brisbane said that he was put on as an addition, or described his appointment in some other derogatory way. Mr. Harris was appointed because Mr. Hill met with an unfortunate accident and was unable to attend some of the inspections of the various areas in Queensland, and he did a splendid job. In those circumstances, I have nothing but praise for the members of the committee, who submitted a very truthful and accurate report.

A great deal has been said about the report, and one would think that the Bill was based only on the recommendations contained in it.

Mr. Bromley: It sounded like it from your introductory speech.

Mr. ROW: No, it only sounded like it from the speeches made by hon. members opposite during the debate. If the hon. member for Norman had listened carefully to my introductory speech, which I read very slowly and distinctly, he would have understood that it is not. It is based largely on experience of operations under the Slaughtering Acts and the Abattoirs Acts, and the hon. member will understand its effects more readily when he gets a copy of it.

I do not propose to deal at length tonight with the comments of hon. members. I will leave them till the second-reading stage. I again commend the Bill to the Committee.

Motion (Mr. Row) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

SOIL CONSERVATION BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. J. A. ROW (Hinchinbrook—Minister for Primary Industries) (11.17 p.m.): I move—

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

When I introduced this Bill I was not unaware of its importance and recognised that in the broad issues it could well command the support of members of this House.

Nevertheless, it has been most gratifying to find that all speakers were prepared to put aside party issues in order to develop the best possible legislation for the purpose of protecting a most important natural resource.

I concur with both the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Barcoo that the earlier legislation presented by the late Mr. Collins was in fact the stepping stone to the Bill that is now before the House.

It can be accepted that many of the provisions of the present Bill would have been premature in 1951, because the general level of interest in rural areas was not sufficiently high nor was there sufficient experience to determine clearly the best operational basis for community soil conservation programmes. However, I believe that the time has arrived when every farmer or group of farmers anywhere in the State should have the statutory facilities to pursue actively soil conservation programmes.

This Bill is intended to deal with those issues which come within my jurisdiction, and consequently I can advise the Leader of the Opposition that provision has not been made for the control of marine erosion because this falls within the province of my colleague the Treasurer.

The control of riverine erosion is the province of the Minister for Local Government and Conservation and, in reply to the hon. members for Townsville South and Bundaberg, I can advise that the River Improvement Trust Acts make adequate provision for dealing with this important issue.

However, it will be clear that the Bill provides the machinery for the integration of the activities of river improvement trusts and

soil conservation trusts. I feel that this co-ordination is most necessary because neither authority alone can effectively discharge its responsibilities without the help of the other.

A river improvement trust cannot provide stable stream flow conditions while silt and excess run-off is reaching the stream from the contributing catchment area. Nor can a soil conservation trust ensure stable conditions of discharge from its works into streams unless the river authority co-operates.

In view of these points, I see merit in the suggestion of the hon. member for Carnarvon concerning the eventual constitution of all-embracing river authorities. However, the setting up of this type of body is a matter for future consideration. The most urgent need now is to stimulate soil conservation work on the eroding agricultural and pastoral lands of the State, and I should like to direct the attention of all hon. members to this aspect of the matter.

The Leader of the Opposition has requested information concerning the approximate cost of implementing soil conservation programmes on the State's eroded lands. The House will appreciate that there is an element of speculation in this, but we place the cost to land-owners at about £4,500,000 to deal with existing erosion on agricultural lands, and a much lesser amount for handling erosion in grazing areas. To this must be added the annual cost of approximately £300,000 to landholders for providing control measures on up to 150,000 acres of additional new cultivation lands each year which are likely to erode. That is about 75 per cent. of the new land being brought into cultivation each year.

When reflecting on these figures it will be realised that material benefits accrue to the land-owner by way of improved productivity and easier working of treated land. It is rare for the investment in soil conservation works to exceed 10 per cent. of the value of the land protected; it is more commonly of the order of 5 per cent.

The earth-moving operations required for soil conservation purposes are substantial. Our estimates indicate that in the year just completed Queensland farmers moved 3,000,000 cubic yards of soil in forming their soil conservation structures on 63,000 acres.

Some extra costs will be incurred by local authorities in providing cross drainage structures on roads to meet the needs of co-ordinated soil conservation schemes. These costs are offset in part by reduced road maintenance requirements, and the rating potential of the lands would be enhanced.

In order to assist in this matter the Government provides a 50 per cent. subsidy towards the cost of special road cross drainage structures required for soil conservation purposes in those instances where a scheme as a whole does not attract subsidy.

Apart from subsidies likely to be involved in respect of general benefit works in approved schemes, the Government is committed to appreciable expenditure for the provision of technical services which, apart from research, involve detailed mapping, planning, surveying and general extension activities.

The expenditure currently runs at about £70,000 a year, and the estimated cost of these services required to deal with existing erosion on agricultural lands alone will total about £2,000,000, or one-third of the overall cost of soil conservation programmes over 30 years. To this must be added a recurring annual cost of up to £100,000 to service immediately the needs of erosion-labile new cultivation lands.

From time to time the Main Roads and Railway Departments are asked to provide special cross-drainage structures for the purpose of co-ordinating their works with soil conservation schemes. The Government meets the cost of these special structures and the later reduced maintenance costs assist to offset the initial capital expenditure.

I have discussed the financial aspects at some length because these are factors which cannot be lightly dismissed by any person or authority engaged in this work. At the same time, it should be recognised that expenditure on soil conservation measures can return real benefits to the landholders and the community. As a comparison, the New South Wales Government spent £484,624 from revenue alone in the year 1962-63. In Victoria the revenue expenditure for 1962-63 was £192,175.

The hon. members for Barcoo and Bundaberg drew attention to a need to interest the Commonwealth from the aspect of finance because of the very substantial national benefits likely to stem from the permanent preservation of the soil. I would point out that this matter is currently being pursued with the Australian Agricultural Council.

The hon. member for Fassifern made a good point when he said he believed that a number of people refused to co-operate because they did not really understand the benefits that would accrue to them and that there were others who through obstinacy were not prepared to do so.

My officers are in intimate contact with the farming community throughout the State and they report that there are now few farmers who oppose the principles of soil conservation, but that there are many who hesitate either because they do not fully understand the implications of an eroding landscape or because they are reluctant to change the habits of a lifetime. I am sure that all members will agree that proper management of the soil, and not exploitation, is the objective to which we must all strive.

There are two possible ways of dealing with people who are thoughtlessly exploiting their land, and both approaches are well covered

in this Bill. The first and preferable approach is to convince the public and all landholders of the dangers of soil erosion and that practical solutions to the problem are available. This is the cornerstone of the trust proposals set out in the Bill.

Local leadership and community participation in soil conservation programmes bring the soil conservation leaders and co-operators into close contact with non-participating farmers and this multiplies the chances of increasing the awareness and understanding of the problem and its solutions.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! There is too much long-range conversation on my right.

Mr. ROW: At present this task falls mainly on the shoulders of departmental soil conservation officers, each of whom may have to service 500 or more farmers.

The main aim of the advisory group committees proposed in the Bill will be to promote discussion groups, and my officers have ample evidence that this line of approach will influence all but the hard-core minority of obstinate farmers.

The rapid rise in soil conservation interest by landholders in recent years encourages me to believe that this hard core will be a very small one. I sense from the comments of the hon. members for Barcoo and Fassifern that they also hold this view.

The hon. member for Tablelands has quoted the progress made in the tobacco areas in his electorate, and this is indeed a good example of the rapid action which may be taken in a district once the seriousness of the problem is appreciated. It is a matter of record that the Mareeba-Dimbulah tobacco farmers have shown the highest percentage increase (10 per cent.) in soil conservation interest in the State during the year just completed, despite the fact that active programmes commenced there less than three years ago.

But despite the rising tide of supporters of soil conservation we recognise that there will be some who will give little or no co-operation, and it is at this point unfortunately that the second approach, involving some direction, becomes necessary. The Bill provides the means to ensure that this minority does not defeat the wish of the majority to implement a soil conservation scheme and the State's urgent need to preserve its soil resources.

The Leader of the Opposition, and the hon. members for Bundaberg, Townsville South and Tablelands have commented on this need, and, as they have now read the Bill, I am sure they will be satisfied with the provisions. The direct punitive provisions have been kept to a minimum, though there is a penalty of up to £100 for any offence against the Act.

The Bill provides for a trust or, as applicable, the authority, to carry out such measures as are required by a direction, correction notice or order in regard to which an owner has defaulted. In addition to such penalty as may be applicable for an offence, the trust or authority can recover the costs incidental to such measures as a debt or by way of complaint under the Justices Acts.

When considering orders or notices, the question of appeals or objections becomes a most important issue. A great deal of thought was given to this point in the drafting of this Bill, and in finally determining the matter two important issues predominated.

Firstly, it is necessary that an appeal be heard by some person or body with sufficient knowledge of the technical and associated issues to determine the propriety of the order or notice. Secondly, a rapid determination is necessary because of the continuance of a malpractice through a storm or monsoon season might seriously endanger the interests of many other land-owners.

There is, of course, not the slightest trace of compulsion in the constitution of soil conservation districts or project areas, nor in the appointment of trusts. To function effectively, these units must command the support of a majority of land-owners and in the case of districts, because of the very substantial responsibilities which might be involved, a two-thirds majority is required.

The hon. member for Townsville South asked whether the Bill provides for the resolution of erosion in watercourses within the boundaries of a city or town, or for dealing with other erosion problems within town or city areas.

As I have indicated earlier, the question of erosion in watercourses is the province of my colleague the Minister for Local Government and Conservation; but this Bill would allow for towns to be included in districts, provided of course that the necessary two-thirds of land-owners are in favour of such a step. I doubt very much whether that would be the case.

The Leader of the Opposition was concerned that trust activity could be affected by giving a preponderance of representation to people who would be affected adversely financially and who may be reluctant to play their part in following sound soil conservation recommendations.

There could be some difficulties in this regard and I agree with the view of the Leader of the Opposition that the central authority should have overall power and authority to see that the decisions and actions of the various trusts are in acceptable terms. It is for this reason that we wish to see a Government-appointed chairman for at least the first three years in order to help guide a trust in the adoption of acceptable and sound administrative procedures.

There are, of course, special powers of control provided in the Bill. In addition, there are a number of points where the authority, Minister or Governor in Council must approve of trust approvals before the trust can proceed to implement them.

I was pleased to hear comments from most speakers concerning the necessity for the adoption of soil conservation land-use practices, and in particular I felt that the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha presented certain issues very clearly. We recognise the need for a change in land-use practices so that cultivated lands are given every chance to continue in a highly productive state.

Most thinking farmers appreciate the desirability of including a pasture phase in their crop rotations but, at present, certain economic disabilities are tending to slow down progress in this direction. However, there is a mounting interest in stubble retention and in the adoption of strip-cropping practices as a substitute for contour banks on the newly cultivated, gently sloping lands. The results now being obtained from these practices are most encouraging and we are hopeful that the solutions to certain problems affecting the valuable Darling Downs plains will follow strip-cropping exploratory work now being pursued.

The brigalow area was referred to by some speakers, and quite correctly they sounded a warning concerning the relatively shallow topsoil on most of this type of country and emphasised the inherent erosion dangers.

My officers are very conscious of these special problems, but a reassuring feature is the high proportion of land holders on new country who lay out their blocks on conservation principles and who invariably adopt soil conservation practices on their new cultivation areas from the outset.

While we would prefer to see much more country remain in pasture, it is accepted that economic considerations often lead a landholder in the direction of cultivation if only to augment the pasture through the introduction of crop fattening.

It is appropriate at this point to indicate that the Government is aware of the need for the close association of soil conservation and development planning because so often land development brings soil erosion problems in its wake. With this in mind, we have recently amalgamated the development, planning, and soil conservation branches to form a Division of Development, Planning, and Soil Conservation, and Mr. Ladewig has been appointed as the new director of this division. I was pleased indeed to hear so many speakers commend Mr. Ladewig on his wonderful work in soil conservation.

Of course, this is not the only reason for placing emphasis on these two aspects of departmental activity, because we have long since recognised the need for the careful forward planning of State development. In essence, we are aiming to collate and co-ordinate through this division information

on soils, cropping, stock industries, costs of production, market availability, land use, and soil conservation needs, with a view to pointing the direction and manner of the development of agricultural production. I feel sure that this action will provide a basis for the development of new lands on a permanent, stable basis.

The hon. member for Barcoo referred to the possibility of including a representative from the Council of Agriculture on the advisory committee. The inclusion of a representative of primary industry interests does have a great deal of merit, and at the appropriate time I will recommend to the Governor in Council that a representative of the Council of Agriculture be appointed to the advisory committee. This will be in accordance with the provisions of the Bill.

The Council of Agriculture, which caters for a wide range of producers' organisations, has consistently taken an active interest in soil conservation, and a representative of the council could materially assist in the deliberations of the committee.

At this stage, it is appropriate for me to express appreciation to the Council of Agriculture, which two years ago set up a special sub-committee to examine the statutory needs for an active soil conservation programme. The submissions made to me some 18 months ago have assisted in shaping the Bill. It should be recorded that a member of this Assembly, namely, the hon. member for Logan, took a leading part in these discussions and served as both member and chairman of the special soil conservation committee.

The hon. members for Barcoo and Mt. Coot-tha have expressed concern regarding certain of the provisions and their possible effect on conditions of leases, or on the position of lessees of terminable leases. With regard to the first point, it will be noted that in the Bill the Minister for Primary Industries is limited to making recommendations concerning lease conditions. Any necessary administrative action rests with the Minister for Lands. This matter could be examined by the advisory committee in the first instance.

It will be noted that the Bill provides for a member of the Land Administration Commission to become a member of that committee. I should think it would be a rare circumstance for a condition to be inserted in an existing lease, but I believe that this provision could be included to cover the situation in, say, a declared area of erosion hazard where every possible step needs to be taken to bring the situation rapidly under control.

If in some cases the authority felt satisfied that the imposition of a condition of lease was justified and in the public interest, and that the imposition of such a condition adversely affected the position of the lessee, there is ample provision under the Land Act for the surrender of the existing lease and the granting of a lease in lieu thereof suitably

conditioned to meet the circumstances of the case, and at a new rental and a renewed term having regard to the facts of the case. No special legislation under the Bill is necessary or desirable here.

The second point raised by the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha has been carefully examined, and it is apparent that the Land Act, which now extends a statutory priority right of renewal of lease in respect of a living area, provides adequate security in respect of terminable leases either by way of ensuring a renewal of lease where subdivision is not involved, or by providing for due recognition of improvements when determining the retention area or compensation in cases where subdivision is involved.

Where the expiry of a lease is close at hand, this could presumably provide a substantial basis for objection to an order or direction issued under the provisions of the Bill. On the other hand, the Land Administration Commission could be expected to take such facts into consideration in dealing with an expired or expiring lease. The presence of soil conservation measures and the willingness of a lessee to undertake and accept his responsibilities in this regard could be major factors in determining whether any subdivision should be initiated.

The hon. member for Tablelands referred to the consequences of unwise clearing of timber and suggested that the indiscriminate clearing of timber should be controlled. Few would deny that the clearing of excessively steep land or of other vulnerable areas is very unwise, but I should be reluctant to support clearing control based on licence in respect of freehold land because this would involve a relatively large staff to examine all proposed clearing for the purpose of detecting, say, 5 per cent. that might require prohibition. I prefer the provisions as presently drafted, which provide for prohibition in those instances in which an erosion risk obviously is likely to be created.

In regard to the destruction of approved works by any farmer, the hon. member for Tablelands can rest assured that the Bill contains adequate safeguards.

The question of trust audits has been examined closely, and in order to bring these provisions into line with the practice now generally applied in local authority audits I shall be moving an amendment to clause 46 of the Bill. This provides for a public accountant, appointed by the Minister on the recommendation of the Auditor-General, to audit the books and accounts of a trust subject to the provisions of the Audit Acts. Since a local authority may be appointed as a trust, it appears desirable for similar audit arrangements to be made for both the local authority and trust activities of this body.

The hon. member for Barcoo said that, as a result of an examination of the statistics, he felt some concern about the capacity of

available departmental staff to provide adequate technical services to cope with the expanding problem. Although common-sense farming practices can assist materially in reducing soil losses, there is no substitute for the trained technician when it comes to the design of earth works that will be co-ordinated from property to property and which must intercept and direct run-off flow. With this in mind, we have set out to increase progressively the number of soil conservation officers in country centres and have made a special study of ways and means of increasing the efficiency of these officers. I should like to record that in five years the soil conservation staff has been doubled and that the efficiency of officers, when measured in terms of protective measures installed, has been doubled, also. This has resulted in a quadrupling of performance, and it is expected that further improvement can be made even without staff expansion.

Because of this, we expect to accomplish as much in the next four years as has been accomplished in the preceding 17 years, but I will not pretend that the 100,000-acres target set for next year is adequate to deal with the situation. It is our considered opinion that a protection rate exceeding 250,000 acres a year is necessary in order to deal with the problem in a reasonable time, and the soil conservation advisory staff will have to be doubled if we are to reach this objective.

It gave me a great deal of pleasure to hear the eulogistic remarks about the work of Mr. Ladewig and his staff because I know that the basic aim of all these officers is to assist every land-owner in the effective execution of soil conservation programmes. I assure the House that there will not be any slackening in the efforts to preserve the soils of this State. The aim of the Bill is to improve the facilities for tackling the problem of erosion.

I am very appreciative of the reception that hon. members have given the introduction of the Bill, and I will welcome any further constructive suggestions for the improvement of its provisions.

Mr. O'DONNELL (Barcoo) (11.44 p.m.): The Opposition is not very often in the position of having to congratulate a Minister and give him virtually 100 per cent. for the Bill that he has before the House. However, on this occasion we must concede that to the Minister.

When this Bill was first mooted I made a very thorough research of all "Hansards" on previous legislation and from them I compiled brief reports on what the A.L.P. Government of the day had done in 1951 and also on every objection raised by the then Opposition. I mentioned in the introductory debate that I knew that the Minister had done likewise, because throughout his introduction there appeared every point of criticism that had been tendered by members of this Government in 1951.

It must be remembered that the first Bill dealing with soil conservation was introduced into this legislature in 1951. The then Opposition seized on the opportunity of producing the New South Wales legislation of 1938 and the amendments thereto of 1947 and 1949 as criticisms of the Bill then before the Assembly.

We are very happy indeed that we are able to give the Minister support in this all-important matter. At the conclusion of the introductory stage the Premier promised that, at the second-reading stage those members who did not have the opportunity to speak would be given the same privilege as they would be entitled to in an introductory debate. No doubt some hon. members will be prepared to take the opportunity so presented, even though the hour is late.

Unfortunately, because of conversation in the Chamber earlier, I did not hear all the figures relating to the financing of this wonderful project. I appreciate that the Minister went to the trouble of presenting those figures and, on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, I wish to thank him for doing so as it was at his special request that they were conveyed to the House. The figures that I heard only served to convince me that the big question facing the farmers of Queensland, and the Government, is the cost of the whole attack on this serious national problem. Part of the cost will naturally come from the individual farmer, but some of it, quite justifiably, has also to be borne by the people generally. We have to concede that this is an important matter for all, because everyone in the community is interested in the production of food. Irrespective of his calling everyone has a material interest in this matter. As a consequence, to preserve the wonderful natural resource of the soil and to gain the greatest benefits from its products, we must have a protection insurance. Unfortunately, this can only be done by a great deal of individual hard and costly work on the part of farmers with the co-operation of various Government departments throughout the State, working in a co-ordinated manner not only in their own activities but with the man on the land to see that soil conservation is propagated and soil erosion mitigated.

The Minister has given very full answers to points raised during the introductory stage. In that way he has been able to remove from our minds many of the doubts that worried us.

I have mentioned finance. The Minister did not go into the details, but perhaps he could tell us now what the Government proposes when these trusts are formed. What period of work will the members be expected to do? On what basis will they be paid? Are they to be full-time salaried people or will the operation be more on the basis of what members of a council might do, sitting at periods throughout the year, perhaps at monthly intervals?

I was interested to see mention in the Bill of advisory committees. The Minister enlarged a little on this subject tonight. If I understood him correctly, these advisory committees will act more or less on a voluntary basis to supplement the work of the trust in fostering ideas throughout their communities. As I understand it, they will help to overcome any hostile feelings towards projected schemes. I should imagine that would be their function. If we are going to have trusts working on the same basis as local authority members, I cannot see why we cannot have the advisory committees, who would be doing a service not only to the community but also to themselves, function in a more or less voluntary manner. There is the suggestion that they be appointed. I should like to have that aspect of the advisory committees enlarged upon. I am talking about the small advisory committees, not the important advisory committee that is to advise the authority. I am talking about the local advisory committees. In my opinion they will carry out very many important phases of the work.

I appreciate the fact that the Minister has conceded the inclusion of a member of the Council of Agriculture on the advisory and co-ordinating committee on soil erosion. I think it is most important to have that representation. I know that under the provisions of the Bill the Minister has power to add. I sincerely thank him for accepting that suggestion. Throughout Queensland there will be an appreciation of the fact that the Council of Agriculture will have a say in the important deliberations of the advisory committee.

I was concerned because it was suggested that while there were eight members on the committee, only four were required for a quorum. I had a conversation with the Minister on this point. He agreed to the Council of Agriculture being represented on the advisory committee and then I requested that the quorum be increased to five. However, I received his assurance that advisory committee meetings were well attended and, as a consequence, there is no great need to worry about the quorum at all. The Minister assured me that the quorum was not of any great moment.

It occurred to me that, in dealing with a matter of an individual trust, there is a membership of five and the Bill provides that a quorum will be a majority of the members. Of course, that is three out of the five. However, there will be vacancies on trusts from time to time when they meet, perhaps on account of a death or an indisposition, sometimes because of the pecuniary interest of a member or members in a scheme in hand, or perhaps because of the pecuniary interest of the spouse of a member, when members of the trust are automatically disqualified for the time being. In my opinion these schemes are so important that we must not have entering into their consideration any idea that they can be bulldozed through

on a minority vote. This is a very difficult point to get around when there is a trust of five and a quorum of three, and an important decision has to be made. There may be only three present and it would need a vote of only two to one to indicate whether or not a scheme should proceed. I thought at the time that these major decisions could be settled by providing that before they are approved by a trust there must be a minimum of three votes. I do not know whether or not that can be achieved, but to my mind this work is so important and so expensive for the individual and the State that a decision made by a trust should be a majority decision. I put that point to the Minister for an expression of opinion. If we can obviate minority decisions it will be to the benefit of all because naturally there will be no local criticism. Consequently, there will be a feeling of confidence in the trust and the work it is doing.

I also noted in the Bill that polls are to be conducted on several matters. They are all important matters and the Minister said in his speech tonight that applications and recommendations for the constitution of districts will require a two-thirds majority. However, in the alteration of district boundaries only a simple majority is required. Later in the Bill, when the modes of constitution of a trust are discussed—there are three, as hon. members know—it is provided that a poll must be held if the Minister so desires. In that case I think it is mandatory. It does not even contain the word "majority". In the constitution of soil conservation project areas, the Bill adheres to the majority rule.

So of the four polls, the one dealing with applications and recommendations for the constitution of districts requires a two-thirds majority. The one dealing with district boundaries does not seem to be of the same rank as the first one I mentioned, and the modes of constituting a trust can also be classified in the same way. When we get down to the constitution of a soil conservation project area. I suggest that it could have been kept on the same level as the constitution of a district, on the two-thirds majority basis.

A project area can include any number of producers between three and 30. The area would have to be large enough and the number would have to exceed 30 before the authority or the Minister would consider that it was big enough to become a district.

I think in the instance of the constitution of a soil conservation project area it would have been more consistent to keep it in line with the district poll requirement of a two-thirds majority.

I have been through the Bill very carefully, and I want to avoid reiteration of what is obvious. The Bill contains something that will benefit Queensland. It is really the second stage—I would say a more progressive step—in the march against soil erosion, which is a constant problem in our community.

As time goes on I hope that we shall reap the benefit of the wise legislation that we are endorsing. To have this position where farmers are given statutory power to pursue soil conservation is a forward step.

Recently I read in "Queensland Country Life" a reference by the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha on soil conservation. It reads—

"Soil Conservation Plea by MLA:
Stop Grain on Brigalow Land

"A plea against the use of brigalow lands for wheat cropping until research had shown the possible long-term dangers, was made in State Parliament by the Liberal member for Mt. Coot-tha, Mr. Lickiss.

"Mr. Lickiss was speaking to the Soil Conservation Bill now before the House.

"Summer fallowing for wheat would cause a complete denudation of the rolling brigalow soils in 10 to 20 years, Mr. Lickiss predicted.

"Mr. Lickiss said the State was opening up great areas of brigalow, gidyea and softwood scrubs in the 15 to 30 in. rainfall areas. Banks and agricultural advisers were advising that these newly-cleared lands should be used for cereal growing.

"Long dry periods—This was laying down the basis for disaster because:

"Brigalow soils generally are on rolling country.

"Heavy storm rains and heavy monsoonal rains are interspersed with prolonged dry periods."

I think the hon. member is a little wrong in what he says about heavy monsoonal rains; they seem to have gone from my area of Queensland, at any rate. Perhaps some people in the North may still experience them. However, I am not criticising him for saying that.

I brought this matter before the attention of the House a year or so ago when soil conservation, as it related to a Bill then being discussed, was being dealt with. I pointed out that it was extremely important, particularly in the Central Highlands where new country was being opened up. Since 1955, or thereabouts, when subdivisions into 5,000-acre living area blocks were made and agricultural conditions were imposed on those who were successful in ballots, people have been coming in. They have farmed, and they have been followed by others who bought land from people settled in adjoining areas before the subdivisions were made. This has gone on from year to year, and this great agricultural expansion has resulted in the area becoming the sorghum bowl of Queensland, at least from the point of view of the export trade.

I said then that that was the right time for the Department of Agriculture and Stock, as it then was, to step in and see if soil conservation practices could be introduced at the beginning so that soil erosion could be mitigated. I have seen country in one or two of the properties on beautiful Peak

Downs where erosion is manifest, which is one of the reasons why I mentioned here that it is vigilance that will pay dividends.

The reference made by the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha is important because he spoke of wheat-cropping in the brigalow area. The brigalow areas are the ones with which I am familiar. Since the subdivision of Peak Downs land and the movement of those successful in ballots to their blocks, there has been an infusion of share farmers into the community, and we are very glad to have them. There has been a splendid increase in the population of the district. Although the season has been against both farmers and share-farmers, there has been progress in the building up of the community, even if perhaps bank balances are not so satisfactory.

I can assure hon. members that as the Minister for Lands opens up new brigalow country, even though under the Brigalow Lands Corporation there does not seem to be any provision for financial assistance for obtaining farming plant, etc., men conscious of the agricultural potential of the area are going to endeavour to obtain plant and begin to cultivate. I am also certain that, just as we have seen an infusion of share-farmers into the Peak Downs area on subdivisional blocks, we will also see share-farmers going onto the so-called cattle-raising properties that are being opened today.

I do not think that pleas by the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha or any other hon. member, or by any member of the community, will stop this agricultural progress. All we can do—I think that the Minister will agree with me on this—is see that the Department of Primary Industries is eternally vigilant, that it seeks the co-operation of land-owners, that it is prepared to extend to them the greatest possible assistance and advice, and that in some cases, perhaps, it coaxes them to follow good land usage practices so that the soil will be preserved.

I am very pleased that I saw this article in "Queensland Country Life" because it confirms what I said here previously, and, of course, we are all vain enough to appreciate that someone else thinks what we have said is correct.

There will be an agricultural revolution in the Fitzroy Basin in the next 30 or 40 years; but as the years go by and more land comes under the plough, the problem will rest squarely on the shoulders of the Department of Primary Industries and its technical officers and the man on the land. It must be brought home to every person in the community that he must make a contribution to this wonderful project. As I stated, the Commonwealth Government must be made cognisant of the value to Australia's defence of building a fine community of Australians who are, in the main, self-sufficient, because in the event of an attack by an enemy from overseas, there would at least be enough food in this wonderful area to maintain the population. I might add, too, that the population of Australia will not increase unless we have the power to produce more food.

The Premier will agree—I have heard him say this—that Australia and Queensland are not particularly noted for good rainfall. Because of deficiencies in rainfall there is much poor country in Australia, and it therefore behoves us to protect the good land that we have and see that its productivity does not diminish.

Finally, I thank the Minister for the kind remarks that he has made about various members of the Opposition. I am very pleased that he has appreciated the contributions that they have made, and I, in turn, indicate to him that we appreciate his courtesy.

Hon. J. A. ROW (Hinchinbrook—Minister for Primary Industries) (12.14 a.m.), in reply: The hon. member for Barcoo raised a number of points that I think should be answered.

First, he asked a question about the functioning of the trusts—whether they will be paid, or whether certain conditions will be taken into consideration. It will depend on the size of the area controlled by a trust. Where the area is relatively small—less than 100,000 acres—a trust could function with a part-time secretary and, say, monthly or two-monthly meetings, possibly with a meeting allowance. A large trust, of course, may require a permanent secretary. When local authorities are appointed as a trust the good old shire clerk may be of very great assistance.

On the matter of advisory group committees referred to in clause 53 of the Bill, these committees will function for the purpose of assisting a trust in understanding the basic needs and views of even the smallest schemes in the trust district. The most important matter raised, I think, would be the possibility of there being no quorum of the trust. A quorum is a majority of members of the trust for the time being. That is, if five is the number for the time being, a majority of three will be required. However, if there was a most unusual set of circumstances—and I should say that in the case mentioned there could be an unusual set of circumstances—where two of the three have pecuniary interests whereby there are two casual vacancies, of those three members constituting the trust, a majority of only two would be required. In a case where pecuniary interests were involved I, as the Minister, may exempt or disqualify a person if I consider the business of the trust will be impeded.

On the other point raised on majority requests, a two-thirds majority would be required to determine the boundaries of a district because of the very substantial responsibilities which could be assumed by a trust. A trust is a big area. A project area is expected to be relatively small. For the most important problems of the area responsibility is accepted by the soil conservation authority rather than by the farmers themselves.

Mr. O'Donnell: I raised that point because I suppose the idea is for a project area subsequently to be developed into a trust. If you have an ordinary vote at the beginning, will you later take another vote and ask for a two-thirds majority?

Mr. ROW: Yes, to get a trust it must be a two-thirds vote. To get a project area, only a simple majority is necessary.

Provisions relative to share-farmers in areas 1 and 2 of the brigalow belt include the proviso that cultivation operations must be carried out in the manner recommended by the Department of Primary Industries.

Motion (Mr. Row) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Hooper, Greenslopes, in the chair)

Clauses 1 to 9, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 10—Functions and duties of the Authority with respect to soil conservation—

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) (12.19 a.m.): I do not desire to delay the Committee, so I will be very brief. In glancing through the functions and duties of the authority with respect to soil conservation I notice that in (f) such functions and duties shall be—

“instruction of and assistance to landholders and others in matters pertaining to soil conservation and the prevention and mitigation of soil erosion;”

My general impressions of the Bill are that there are so many committees to be formed, so many officers to be appointed and so many of these advisory committees all needing their secretaries that I was wondering whether, when moneys are raised by way of loans, the authorities are to be responsible for these officers? That point will come up a little later. I want to emphasise that at the present time there are only 28 soil conservation extension officers in the State. I question the wisdom of the general spirit and nature of the Bill, which seems to breathe so much compulsion. We hear members of the Government complaining about too much authority being exercised over the farmer and the landholder, but here we have a Bill in which every clause seems to breathe authority, compulsion and threats. I am wondering whether it would have been better if the Government had decided to appoint a much larger number of conservation extension officers to advise the landholders.

I must agree that soil conservation is a national problem. We know that the financial losses are tremendous. It is the duty of all those on the land to preserve the good earth. Every man on the land should endeavour to hand over his land richer than when it came into his possession. I agree that the man on the land will generally respond to greater drive, encouragement, assistance and instruction.

From the report we have been given it appears that in the West Darling Downs area there is a 107 per cent. increase in 12 months in the number of landholders who are willing to undertake the responsibility of doing what is required to overcome the problems that result from the neglect of the land. The figure for the Burnett area is 67 per cent. and for North Queensland 185 per cent.

The Minister has failed to deal with overstocking. This is one of the problems that leads to wind and water erosion. By overstocking you remove the vegetation which in turn means an increased flow of water. It is an interesting point that if you increase the flow of water you can increase its carrying capacity some 64 times. That is a staggering fact. Advice and instructions should be given to landholders to endeavour to increase the planting of trees on their holdings, particularly around the headwaters of the various streams and creeks, to help hold back the water. It is generally accepted that with a good foliage coverage about 25 per cent. of the water is held back while the rest of it gets away.

Overstocking is a tremendous problem but I do not see any evidence in the Bill that it is being given any serious attention. I believe that when the man on the land becomes aware of what the Bill contains in the way of so much organisation he will feel that he is being over-organised and running the risk of considerable expense. However I will touch on that point later. At the moment I draw the attention of the Committee to clause 10 (f), which is a good one. I personally saw the value of this straight away. When there was a concentration of people on the land in Kingaroy during the war one or two people said, "I will get all the value out of the soil I can. I don't care how I do it." The peanut industry later suffered as a result of the lack of humus and the fact that minerals had not been returned to the soil. For a number of years there was a reduction in plantings so that the land could be used for dairying and the rotation of other crops. In that way the general fertility of the soil was improved. I think much more could have been achieved by not rushing in with a Bill that reeks of compulsion, threats and authority, and the likelihood of tremendous expense. With the money involved we would have been able to appoint a sufficiently large number of soil conservation extension officers throughout the State.

Mr. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha) (12.25 a.m.): I see a problem in clause 10 in that, in exercising the function of the Authority, there could of necessity be a change in the use to which land can be put. In changing the purposes for which land can be used we can vary the productive pattern of land and hence affect the return expected when compared with the previous use of the land. If we do this we are in fact varying the market value of the subject land. I just point this out because a soil conservation scheme could have far-reaching

repercussions. Of necessity it could change the whole pattern of land use. In a previous debate I was fortified by the hon. member for Barcoo, and I thank him for his support. I believe that there are inherent dangers in the present and projected use of such lands as brigalow lands. However recognition must be given to the matter of soil conservation and the present accepted economic use of land. When we impose conditions on how land shall be used we must be mindful at all times that we are putting a restriction on that land which can affect the market value of the land, at least for a period.

Hon. J. A. ROW (Minister for Primary Industries) (12.27 a.m.): In reply to the hon. member for Maryborough, I was indeed surprised to hear his remarks about the compulsion clauses in the Bill. I think he has the word "authority" confused in his own mind. The Authority is the soil conservation authority who shall be the Director-General of Primary Industries. We have three definite objects. We start off with the project area where groups of people get together on a voluntary basis, under the guidance and advice of departmental officers, and voluntarily contribute towards a mutual scheme. Then, there is the Soil Conservation Trust where the areas can amalgamate and form larger areas, but the Trust cannot be formed unless two-thirds of the people are in favour. Anyone who feels that he is being prejudiced by being included in the scheme can appeal to the Minister. The last resort is the one, where the "authority," in his wisdom, if he believes that an area of land is being so eroded or neglected as to constitute an erosion hazard, and so may be detrimental to an area or a group of farms or a district, he can declare that as an erosion hazard. Following the theme of centralised control the Bill assigns those duties and responsibilities to the Authority, the Director-General of Primary Industries. The additional responsibility assigned is the prevention or mitigation of soil erosion in all areas of the State, and in particular in areas of erosion hazard.

Clause 10, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 11 to 15, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 16—Applications and recommendations for constitution of districts—

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) (12.29 a.m.): Subclause (5), at lines 49 and 50 says—

"If the Minister is of opinion that a proposed district would be unable to bear the cost of administering the Trust . . ."

I must say I believe that many men on the land fail to appreciate to the full the terrific damage that is being done by erosion. I think that the Leader of the Opposition touched on this matter when he mentioned that improved varieties of crops and pastures and improved breeds of livestock caused us to fail to appreciate the declining fertility of

the soil. The bigger returns as a result of what I have mentioned more than balance the decreasing fertility.

If we have a district where there is a necessity for what would be a major scheme, in the minds of the local farmers in that locality, should that not be a problem to be dealt with by the State? There are countless illustrations of that; residents of the State provide, for instance, water reservoirs. The tobacco-growing industry in the Mareeba area would be of little value if the farmers in that area did not have the Tinaroo Dam, which was paid for by the State.

Until the man on the land realises what this Bill means he will wonder if this will amount to a special tax on the farmer. No matter what the Minister states, that is what it will come back to. A minority not in favour of a general scheme may not be in a position to meet the costs. I think this passes on to a section of the community a sectional tax which is unjustified. I think there will be strong feeling against this measure when the contents of the Bill are fully realised by the man on the land.

Clause 16, as read, agreed to.

Clause 17, as read, agreed to.

Clause 18—Soil conservation trusts—

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) (12.32 a.m.): The Minister has not given us any idea of how many trusts he anticipates will be formed in the State. He should be in a position to give us that information. From that we will be able to estimate the total amount of money involved in the payment of the various officials.

I draw the attention of hon. members to the wide powers being put into the hands of the trusts. The clause says that a trust shall be capable of compounding—

“ . . . in any court of competent jurisdiction all debts or sums of money due to it and, subject to this Act, shall have power to take, acquire by grant, purchase, take on lease, hold, sell, exchange, lease, assign, transfer and surrender to the Crown, property.”

Reading through the Bill it is apparent that great powers will be exercised, mostly with a two-thirds majority, over the farming community generally. There is no provision anywhere dealing with the problem of overstocking, which is a grave one in this State. Public attention should be drawn to the guilt of anybody who overstocks.

Clause 18, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 19 to 43, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 44—Form of budget until a form is prescribed—

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) (12.35 a.m.): I cannot deal with the following clauses, but the same criticism applies to them. I do not want to repeat myself. The clause states, “Form of budget until a form is prescribed.”

This will entail considerable staff for each trust, and when the average cost to each is multiplied by what can be reasonably expected will be a large number of trusts, the amount of money involved will be very great. There will be double rating. There will be the rating of the Local Authority, and if the local authority is not handling the matter, there will be a special rate struck. There are then valuations to be considered. Where section of a rateable area is included in a proposed soil erosion area, the Valuer-General has to make a special valuation of the area.

I well appreciate the tremendous damage done by soil erosion. For instance, enough topsoil is washed down the Mississippi in a year to build 1,250 farms of 160 acres each with soil 12 inches deep. In the Burrinjuck Dam in one 8-year period the net volume of silt deposited within the reservoir amounted to 12.05 million cubic feet. Everyone realises that this is a most serious matter.

I feel that in this Bill we are not approaching the problem in the spirit in which it should be approached. The Minister has not faced up to the tremendous costs that will be involved in the scheme. Although he may claim that the results will be worth the expenditure, I feel that they could be achieved in another less costly way. Persuasion is better than compulsion, which is what the Bill reeks of—compulsion, the exercise of authority, and the imposition of penalties.

Clause 44, as read, agreed to.

Clause 45, as read, agreed to.

Clause 46—Accounts of Trust and Audit thereof—

Hon. J. A. ROW (Hinchinbrook—Minister for Primary Industries) (12.38 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

“On page 24, lines 9 to 12, omit subclause (2)—

‘At least once in each year the Auditor-General shall audit the accounts of each Trust and shall have, with respect to such audits and accounts, all the powers and authorities conferred on him by “The Audit Acts, 1874 to 1963,” and shall report thereon.’

and insert in lieu thereof the following new subclause—

‘A Trust shall cause its books and accounts to be audited once at least in each year by—

(a) an officer of the Department of the Auditor-General; or

(b) a person appointed by the Minister on the recommendation of the Auditor-General and who is registered as a public accountant under the provisions of “The Public Accountants Registration Acts, 1946 to 1963.”

The Auditor-General shall in relation to the books and accounts of a Trust and in relation to any audit thereof have all the powers and authorities conferred on him by "The Audit Acts, 1874 to 1963."

A Trust shall pay the cost of the audit as prescribed from its general fund.'

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 46, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 47, as read, agreed to.

Clause 48—Rates—

Mr. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha) (12.41 a.m.): The clause deals with the raising of moneys for the purpose of effecting a soil conservation scheme. The rates are to be levied on the rateable value of the land, and this is based on the unimproved capital value of the land, irrespective of whether it is leasehold land or land held in fee simple. This situation raises the question of terminable interest land. The basis of rating fixed by a local authority requires the owner or occupier of such land to contribute to the amenities of the district, not to the maintenance of the land, and we are using here the rateable value and imposing a rate on the land to effect what might be termed repair and maintenance to the property concerned in this conservation district. If the land is held in fee simple, I cannot see any great difficulty other than that the rate is being levied at so much in the £1 irrespective of the amount of soil-erosion damage present with respect to a particular property might be very badly eroded; the next door property might be eroded only slightly. As both properties are in the same district, each will contribute on the rateable value of the land. This could create a small anomaly, which will be accentuated, in regard to the terminable interest leases. I doubt very much whether the work could be classified as an improvement, and I doubt whether it could be considered as an improvement on the expiration of the lease in relation to a claim for compensation. This could impose a hardship on the owner or occupier of a terminable interest lease.

I ask the Minister to consider this point because hardship could be involved where a person in a conservation district is compelled to provide a share equal to that provided by a person who holds freehold land, in order to effect repairs under a soil conservation scheme.

Hon. J. A. ROW (Hinchinbrook—Minister for Primary Industries) (12.43 a.m.): I will consider this matter. Frankly, I do not think it is very likely to arise, because the conservation trusts as presently envisaged will be mainly on agricultural land. They could eventually cover grazing farm leases or grazing land, but for the time being I think they will cover agricultural land, most of which will be held under fee simple or on perpetual lease, or some other secure tenure. As the

Land Administration Commission is represented on the advisory committee, I will certainly take the matter up with it if the question arises.

Clause 48, as read, agreed to.

Clause 49, as read, agreed to.

Clause 50—Powers of Trusts—

Mr. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha) (12.44 a.m.): I wish to speak on this clause because the introduction of a soil conservation scheme in an area may mean a change in the use of land, and the accepted use of land over a period in effect dictates what its market value will be. If it is necessary to change the use to which the land can be put, which in turn will affect the annual net return from the accepted farming pursuit, will compensation be payable under this clause?

Hon. J. A. ROW (Hinchinbrook—Minister for Primary Industries) (12.45 p.m.): Yes, clause 50 (2) provides for compensation to be paid to the owner where loss or damage results and, where compensation cannot be agreed upon, the matter shall be decided by the Land Court.

Clause 50, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 51 to 101, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

The House adjourned at 12.47 a.m.