Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 1966

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

QUESTIONS

PRISON LAUNDRY SERVICE FOR TOWNSVILLE HOSPITAL

Mr. Aikens, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

(1) On what date did the Townsville Prison begin its laundry service for the Townsville District Hospital?

(2) Since that date and to the latest date for which figures are readily available, how many hospital articles have been laundered?

(3) For that period, what amount has been paid or is to be paid to the prison by the hospital for such laundering services?

(4) What price is charged by the prison for the laundering of (*a*) a sheet, (*b*) a pillowslip and (*c*) a nurse's uniform?

Answers:—

(1) "April 16, 1966."

(2) "Number of articles laundered from April 16, 1966 to September 30, 1966 is 599,444."

(3) "The amount paid to H. M. Prison for the laundering of these 599,444 articles is $8,690.96."

(4) "The price charged by H. M. Prison for the laundering of sheets was 3·3 cents each, pillowslips ·82 cents each and nurses' uniforms 16·5 cents each."

Defence Counsel for Appellants in "Innes Case"

Mr. Aikens, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Justice,—

(1) Have two of the criminals convicted and sentenced to terms of imprisonment in the Innes case given notice of their intention to appeal against their conviction and sentence?

(2) If they have, will their case before the Court of Criminal Appeal be conducted at the public expense as was their defence in the Supreme Court?

(3) If so, will he take whatever precautions are possible to ensure that public money is not grievously and disgracefully wasted by counsel briefed by the Crown to appear in the appeal, as was the case in the action in the Supreme Court?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes."

(2 and 3) "No decision has been made."

Subsidies to Aboriginal Missions

Mr. Wallis-Smith, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

What Government subsidies were paid in the year ended June 30, 1966, to each of the following missions—Edward River, Mitchell River, Aurukun, Mornington Island, Weipa, Doomadgee, Hammond Island, Hope Vale, Bloomfield River, St. Paul's and Lockhart River?

Answer:—

"Government grants and other assistance to Missions inclusive of Loan Funds were made during the year ended June 30, 1966, as follows:—

	$	$	$
Church of England sponsored—			
Edward River	43,803.46		
Mitchell River	49,409.60		
Lockhart River	38,865.34		
St. Paul's	11,114.85		
		143,193.25	
Loan monies expended on Church of England sponsored communities and residents		29,044.00	
Additionally, Church of England authorities receive—			
A special grant of		40,000.00	
A grant for administration of		8,000.00	
TOTAL			220,237.25
I would of course, point out that the foregoing does not reflect or include any of the major rebuilding programme undertaken at Mitchell and Edward River communities as a result of cyclonic damage but accounts for which would have been met during the Financial Year 1965–66. This programme totalled			602,970.00
Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions sponsored—			
Aurukun community	50,204.02		
Mornington Island	41,602.71		
Weipa—to February, 1966	11,511.24		
		103,317.97	
Loan monies expended on Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions sponsored communities and residents		14,184.00	
An Administration grant at Thursday Island		6,400.00	..
TOTAL			123,901.97
United Evangelical Lutheran Church sponsored—			
Hope Vale and Bloomfield	59,162.48		
		59,162.48	
Loan monies expended on the United Evangelical Lutheran Church sponsored communities and residents		23,626.00	
In addition a special grant was provided for road access to Bloomfield		16,000.00	
TOTAL			98,788.48
(Figures are not available separately for Bloomfield)			
Catholic Sacred Heart Mission sponsored—			
Hammond Island	6,577.15		
		6,577.15	
Loan monies expended on the Catholic Sacred Heart Mission sponsored community and residents		610.00	
TOTAL			7,187.15
Brethren sponsored—			
Doomadgee	34,456.13		
		34,456.13	
Loan monies expended on the Brethren sponsored community and residents		10,089.00	
TOTAL			44,545.13
Making a grand total of			$1,097,629.98"

CARE OF AGED AT ABORIGINAL SETTLEMENTS

Mr. Wallis-Smith, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

What special provisions, if any, have been made for the institutional care of aged persons at the Aboriginal settlements at Cherbourg, Palm Island, Woorabinda, Yarrabah and Bamaga?

Answer:—

"Cherbourg, Palm Island and Yarrabah have homes for the care of aged persons on similar lines to 'Eventide' homes. Woorabinda has single unit cottages set aside for use by pensioners only. No special arrangements have been made, or are required, at Bamaga. All aged persons here reside with their families who care for them."

HOUSING OF ABORIGINAL FAMILIES BY O.P.A.L.

Mr. Wallis-Smith, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

(1) How many Aboriginal families have been housed in homes through the scheme administered by the O.P.A.L. organisation?

(2) In what towns are the homes located?

(3) How many of the homes are being purchased by the tenants?

(4) To what extent, if any, does the Government assist the persons who apply for these homes as tenants or purchasers?

(5) If Government assistance is provided, what Departments are involved?

Answers:—

(1 and 2) "O.P.A.L. is a private organisation controlled by its own Board of Directors. The Department does not have details."

(3) "The Department of Aboriginal and Island Affairs has sponsored 39 home purchase arrangements through O.P.A.L."

(4) "Assistance in varying amounts by way of initial deposit to a maximum of $700 has been made available."

(5) "Queensland Housing Commission, Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Island Affairs, and Commonwealth Department of Housing—War Service Homes Branch."

SITING OF STEAM LOCOMOTIVE ON PARK LAND, CAIRNS, FOR HISTORICAL PURPOSES

Mr. R. Jones, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Transport,—

To mark the end of an era and for historical and juvenile recreational purposes, will he consider making available an obsolete steam locomotive of the PB or B15 class, to be suitably located in a prominent position on the park frontage adjacent to the Railway Station in McLeod Street, Cairns?

Answer:—

"The Railway Department would be pleased to make available a suitable PB15 or B15 converted Class Steam Locomotive to any responsible Authority or Society which would undertake that the vehicle would be suitably located, maintained in a presentable condition and protected against vandalism."

PROPOSED RIVERSIDE DRIVE, SOUTH BRISBANE

Mr. Hughes, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Local Government,—

(1) Did he meet a Mr. W. Pitt in company with an M.L.A. on or about July 28, 1966, and were discussions held relating to Brisbane City Council's proposed southside riverside drive and unlawful conditions imposed by Brisbane City Council relating to subdivisions?

(2) Was a plan of the proposed drive, compiled by Brisbane City Council, shown, tabled and discussed?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) "I am not prepared now or at any other time to make myself responsible to the Honourable Member or to disclose to him details of matters which I may have discussed with other Members of this House or any private person."

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table, and ordered to be printed:—

Reports—

Co-ordinator-General of Public Works for the year 1965-66.

Department of Works for the year 1965-66.

Queensland Housing Commission for the year 1965-66.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Regulations under—

The Art Union Regulations Act, 1964 to 1965.

The Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Acts, 1961 to 1964.

The Main Roads Acts, 1920 to 1965.

BRISBANE CITY SQUARE BILL

INITIATION

Hon. A. R. FLETCHER (Cunningham—Minister for Lands): I move—

"That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider introducing a Bill to

provide for the closure of and transfer to Brisbane City Council of that part of Albert Street known as King George Square."

Motion agreed to.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. A. R. FLETCHER (Cunningham—Minister for Lands) (11.17 a.m.): I move—

"That a Bill be introduced to provide for the closure of and transfer to Brisbane City Council of that part of Albert Street known as King George Square."

The main function—perhaps I should say the only function—of the Bill is to permit the Brisbane City Council to implement its plans for the provision of an underground car park beneath the enlarged city square area. The Bill closes as a road that part of Albert Street known as King George Square, the dedication of the square as a road ceases, and the land comprised in the closed-road area is vested in the Council by deed of grant in fee simple.

In its approach to the problem of the provision of car-parking facilities in the inner-city area, and in consideration of the Wilbur Smith plan, the Council decided to broaden its original proposals for an enlarged city square so as to incorporate an underground car park consisting of two levels.

It is interesting to note that the Council's approach is to invite private enterprise to provide this car-parking facility in return for a long-term building lease, which is to be granted under the Local Government Act, on the basis that the roof of the car park will become the surface of the new civic square. I am informed that the Council proposes to invite applications on a wide basis for a building lease along the lines that, whilst it will specify the basic requirements of the Council in so far as the surface layout is concerned, the matter of design and specification of the parking facility will be a matter for submission by each applicant. The Council will prescribe basic requirements in so far as the re-location of P.M.G. and gas services are involved. Other matters such as specifications for the roof and levels will also be laid down. However, each applicant will be required to set out, amongst other things, his proposals for the design and specification of the car park. The applicant who offers a satisfactory scheme considered by the Council to be the most attractive and efficient will be granted a building lease.

The Council proposes that the roof of the new car park will become the city square. This will be laid out in gardens and otherwise beautified according to the Council's plans in this respect.

According to information supplied by the Council, it proposes that the centre-line level of the reconstructed square will be slightly below the level of Ann Street and about 7½ feet above the level of Adelaide Street. In the provision of a larger square area, the Council has already acquired by purchase the freehold properties in Albert Street opposite the City Hall, and the demolition of structures on that area is well in hand. To enable it to implement its car-parking proposition by way of a lease as proposed, the Council must secure freehold title over the balance of the square area, and this, of course, involves the co-operation of the Crown in making the road area available to the Council for leasing.

The transportation study carried out by Wilbur Smith and Associates recommended the scheme in its review of street and parking improvements in the central business area. The Council itself has adopted the scheme and is anxious to implement it by co-opting the ideas and financial resources of private enterprise. In view of the advantages of open space in the inner city, and the need for additional car-parking facilities in the main business areas, the Government is extending its co-operation. This co-operation in no small part recognises that largely the finances of private enterprise rather than the funds of ratepayers will be the instrument that will give these added amenities to the city. The Crown land involved in the scheme will be handed over to the Council without charge.

The Bill provides for the closure of Albert Street between Ann and Adelaide Streets and for the vesting of the closed area in the Brisbane City Council. It is most important to note that the Bill will not operate until proclaimed in force by the Governor-in-Council. This means that Albert Street at this point will not be closed as a road until some future time. Even though the Bill is passed by this Parliament the road will remain open for public use until all matters are finalised.

Mr. Houston: Are there hold-ups at the moment?

Mr. FLETCHER: There are no hold-ups; matters such as P.M.G. cables and so on have to be decided. At that stage the Act will be proclaimed, the road will be closed, and the land will pass from the Crown to the Council on behalf of the citizens of Brisbane.

Not unexpectedly, the King George Square proposition has attracted wide public interest. It is designed to bring about a major improvement in a central position in the city. It involves such matters as city beautification, recreation and traffic, all of which are important functions of local government. In the exercise of its authorities and responsibilities the Brisbane City Council has decided to proceed with this scheme and has sought the co-operation of the Government in order that the plan can be implemented fully and to the best advantage.

In meeting this situation, we are mindful of the Council's statutory charter and its autonomous standing in the discharge of its

functions on behalf of the citizens of Brisbane. Out of respect for the democratic processes of government at local government level, we have decided to extend to the Council a free and unfettered right to the use of the area involved on the basis that the scheme is essentially city development. The responsible authority—namely the Council—is entitled to expect that it be placed in a position where it can exercise that authority and, of course, accept due responsibility for it. The title to be granted to the Council is therefore to be free of any trusts and of any special conditions. The Council's use and development of the land will not be controlled by any special measures other than the normal controls contained in local government law.

I commend the motion to the Committee.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba—Leader of the Opposition) (11.24 a.m.): The Opposition, over quite a long period, has been mindful of the need for a city square in Brisbane. We must keep in mind that the Brisbane City Council is elected on the same franchise as State members of Parliament, in the metropolitan area, and that the Lord Mayor is elected on a majority vote within the city. We must also bear in mind that the idea of a city square is not new. The proposal was well known to the electors at the time of the 1964 Council elections, and I believe that their endorsement with such a magnificent majority for the Lord Mayor and Labour aldermen clearly indicated that the people of Brisbane support the idea of a city square.

Mr. Campbell: That is an unwarranted assumption.

Mr. HOUSTON: I suggest that the hon. member hold his peace.

It is wise for the Government to take notice of a community decision at a properly constituted election. The Government has been wise in bringing down this legislation. Whether we will agree with every clause of the Bill is a matter for determination when we see it. We would not agree to any provisions that were not in the public interest. Generally speaking, however, the introduction of the Bill is welcomed.

I am pleased to see that the Government parties finally showed wisdom in not holding this matter up any further. Only a month ago certain sections of the Government parties, who apparently have a powerful influence, attempted to have this legislation delayed. This would be against the public interest. We all know the complete tie-up between the Liberal Party and the C.M.O. We know how they have stood over the various area committees. I praise the Minister for Lands for keeping this matter outside of politics.

Mr. Ramsden: You are doing your best to bring politics into it.

Mr. HOUSTON: The Government brought politics into it. The hon. member for Barcoo has so many newspaper cuttings to prove that, it would take me four or five hours to deal with them. The hon. member for Merthyr should not talk nonsense. If certain members of the Government parties had been able to hold this proposal up for another few weeks it would have been too late to implement the legislation until well after the forthcoming council election.

We trust that at this stage nothing will be done to allow the back-benchers of the Liberal Party to have the Bill withdrawn. That has happened with legislation in the past, whether we agreed with it or not.

The Minister made it quite clear that it is intended to allow private enterprise to build a car park under the proposed square. We look forward to seeing the designs. We must insist that the approved design is in conformity with the desires of the people of this city. I have great faith in the Council administration. I am confident that the power given to it by this Bill will not be abused but will be used wisely. The final design will be of great interest to us all.

The only thing that worries me is whether some other means may be used to hold up this project. Tenants who claim that they are not receiving right of way or some other means of access to the square might appeal to the Brisbane City Council Subdivision Use and Development of Land Commission presently sitting, and in that way cause further delay. We know the set-up of that Commission. We know what the Liberal Party is trying to do. We know it will cost the City Council an enormous amount of money. We know many things about it and, at the opportune time, we will have more to say about it.

I do ask the Minister to ensure that no matter what his Liberal colleagues have to say, no matter whose name they trump up

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Mr. Ramsden: You want to trample all over the rights of the individual, which is typical of Socialism and Marxism.

Mr. HOUSTON: The hon. member is the last one who should talk about that sort of thing. Time and time again we have seen that the Government does not worry about going over the individual.

Mr. Ramsden: You name the times.

Mr. HOUSTON: I could name plenty of times. We know that the Wilbur Smith Report supported the idea of a town plan, but now the hon. member for Merthyr suggests that the whole idea is wrong.

Mr. Ramsden: No, not at all.

Mr. HOUSTON: It is perfectly true that when we discussed the town planning legislation in this Chamber we did not see the various plans. At that time I said that I wished the plans had been made available at Parliament House, but that is past history. The point is that a plan was introduced and was finally gazetted. One of the matters in

the plan concerned the King George Square project in one form or another. This measure is only allowing the square project to be started. I know that the Brisbane City Council Subdivision Use and Development of Land Commission is not inquiring purely into the Brisbane City Council. It is inquiring into the various authorities set up under legislation passed by this Assembly.

I was interested to read a report of remarks by the Commissioner indicating that, in fact, he was sitting in judgment on decisions made by the City Council, and also sitting in judgment on the laws passed by this Parliament. Whether that was the idea he intended to convey or not is another matter. I am concerned mainly because it is costing the City Council and the people of the State so much money.

Government Members interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! There is too much interjecting in the Chamber.

Mr. HOUSTON: Hon. members opposite are talking about the Council's preventing the people from obtaining justice. The people of Brisbane have nothing at all to fear from the Brisbane City Council. Apparently the hon. member for Merthyr does not believe that the Council is acting completely within the law, as approved by constitutional authorities. In view of what the Minister has said, I am at a loss to understand what is worrying hon. members [illegible] am supporting this measure [illegible] of Brisbane indicated [illegible] municipal election that they wa[illegible]it.

Until I was side-tracked by hon. members opposite, I was pointing out that only just a month ago it seemed as if this measure would not "hit the deck" this session.

Mr. Campbell: That is rubbish.

Mr. HOUSTON: I am only going by the Press reports which appeared at the time. The Press came to me and asked me to make a statement on behalf of the Opposition. Surely no-one can say in truth that Press reporters go out of their way to ask members of the Opposition for statements on matters unless, in fact, there is some semblance of truth in the original assertion. When the Press came to me for a statement on the development of this area, they did so in good faith.

If hon. members opposite believe that there was no intention to delay this matter, if there was no discussion in their Caucus, and if members of the Liberal Party, particularly those from Brisbane, believe that all of the Press statements are not true, they can rise and say so. From my point of view, I believe that there was an attempt to delay this matter, and it is not in the interests of the people to do so.

Mr. Aikens: The Bill would not have come forward but for pressure in the party by the hon. member for Merthyr.

Mr. Ramsden: That is right.

Mr. HOUSTON: I do not know whether the hon. member for Merthyr thinks that.

Mr. Ramsden: I will tell you the facts.

Mr. HOUSTON: It is a fact that it could have been delayed. I urge the Minister, through you, Mr. Hooper, to ensure that nothing is allowed to happen within the Government ranks to further delay this matter.

Unfortunately, in all measures of this type we have to be careful. Even with the passage of this Bill considerable time will pass before plans are prepared and tenders accepted. We know how costs rise and charges increase. The bill will have to be paid by the people of this city. If members of the C.M.O. and the Liberal Party can, they will make a political issue of this matter. Only yesterday the C.M.O. Leader had a good deal to say about it.

Mr. Ramsden: Are you denying him his rights?

Mr. HOUSTON: No, I do not deny anyone the right to exercise his constitutional rights. But in the past we have found that various means have been used to delay matters. One that is used successfully is to persuade a disgruntled person to put up a stone wall. There is at present in existence a Commission which could be the means of introducing delaying tactics. The Opposition is well aware of this. If we find that there is any move by the Commission not to get on with the job—and after all it is costing the ratepayers a tremendous amount of money in addition to what it is costing the State—we will have plenty to say during the second reading of this Bill.

On behalf of the Opposition, I say we are glad that this Bill has been introduced. We will study the various clauses when it is printed to see how they affect the people of this city.

Mr. CAMPBELL (Aspley) (11.37 a.m.): It is greatly regretted that the Opposition has seen fit to create a smoke-screen to cloud the intent of the Bill. I resent the fact that the Leader of the Opposition adopted the course he did. He is doing his political colleague, the Lord Mayor, a great disservice by introducing party politics into what is a simple but generous action on the part of the Government in handing over to the Brisbane City Council free of cost and encumbrance, one of the most valuable pieces of real estate in the city.

The Minister stated in quite plain terms that the Bill provides for the closure of Albert Street, vests this area in the Brisbane City Council, and extends to the Council a free and unfettered right to use this land as it sees fit.

I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to check with his political colleague, the Lord Mayor, and ascertain if any action of Liberal members or, for that matter, any other members of the Government has

obstructed the negotiations which have taken place between the Government and the Brisbane City Council on this matter. Certainly some Government members requested that this Bill be delayed until the Government received from the Brisbane City Council a resolution passed in open council requesting the Government to act.

With that request, the Lord Mayor and the Brisbane City Council were very happy to comply, and it was only last Tuesday that the Brisbane City Council took action to pass such a resolution. I am surprised that it did not do so some time ago, but I am not questioning its right to conduct its own affairs. I venture to say that it would have been most improper for the Government to pass legislation concerning a matter on which the Brisbane City Council had not officially formed an opinion.

I rose to speak in this debate only to make those points. I support the measure because I believe it to be in the best interests of the citizens of Brisbane and, for that matter, the State as a whole, as Brisbane is the capital city. I resent the smoke-screen introduced to the debate by the Leader of the Opposition in an attempt to cloud the issue before the Committee. The Bill is a simple, straightforward proposal by the Government to make a parcel of land available to the Brisbane City Council. As I said earlier, I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to produce evidence to show that action by members of the Liberal Party had any delaying effect on these negotiations.

Mr. MELLOY (Nudgee) (11.42 a.m.): It is pleasing to see the Government's recognition of the merits of the off-street parking facilities to be provided in the proposed civic square. I am also glad to see that the Government is co-operating in the development of the scheme, and I think the Government's preparedness to assist the Brisbane City Council with the construction of the new Albert Square is a smack in the eye for some members of the Government parties.

I wish to say a few words concerning the remarks of the hon. member for Aspley.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I inform hon. members on my left that it is exceedingly difficult to hear the hon. member for Nudgee. I ask them to at least extend to one of their own members the courtesy of listening to him. If they wish to converse, I ask them to do so outside the Chamber.

Mr. MELLOY: They are merely trying to help me, Mr. Hooper.

I do not think that there has been any greater knocker or critic of the Brisbane City Council than the hon. member for Aspley. Although I do not think that he has ever lost any opportunity to criticise the council, he is now accusing the Leader of the Opposition of trying to create a smoke-screen round the actions of the Government in this case.

The Opposition is very pleased to be able to support the Bill because we realise what it means to the Brisbane City Council. I think the remark of the hon. member for Aspley that there has been no opposition to the measure from members of his party is right off the beam, because there has been considerable delay. That can be seen by reference to a Press report of what happened during October. On 14 October last, this report appeared in "The Courier-Mail"—

> "On Wednesday, at the Government joint party meeting a fairly wide section (of the Liberal Party) temporarily blocked a Bill to give the Council future control of Albert Street at King George Square.
>
> "At the joint party meeting, several members are believed to have argued successfully that the Government should wait until after the council elections next year before introducing legislation."

It was claimed in the report that a suggestion had been put forward that the plan could be altered if the City Council election went in favour of the C.M.O.

I think that attitude is typical of one section of the back-bench members of the Government parties. Those hon. members have no civic pride, and they oppose anything that the Australian Labour Party in the Brisbane City Council attempts to do to improve the appearance of the City of Brisbane.

In "The Courier-Mail" yesterday this report appeared—

> "Yesterday's smooth acceptance of the proposal is understood to have been influenced by a Country Party decision to give the council its head on the square project.
>
> "Liberal opposition generally was withdrawn following the vote in the Council on Tuesday to request the Government to vest King George Square in the council for civic square car park development.
>
> "Certain Liberals are believed to have objected to any suggestion of a 'shirt-tail' agreement between the Government and the council which could be turned against the C.M.O. at next year's Brisbane City Council elections."

While the Government is in the mood to co-operate with the Council on parking—apparently it does recognise the very serious problems that exist in inner-city traffic and parking—I think it might go a little further in its co-operation, as has been suggested by the Minister. I think it should make an examination of Crown land in the outer suburbs, and particularly of Crown land adjacent to suburban railway stations.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. MELLOY: The Minister indicated that he is concerned about parking problems, and he introduced the subject of parking in the city area and the congestion that exists.

If the Government made a survey of Crown land adjacent to railway stations, I think it might be able to make an even greater contribution towards solving the problem of parking. If land adjacent to suburban railway stations were used for parking, the travelling public would have more incentive to travel by car to those railway stations and then complete their journey to the city by train. It would be in the Government's own interest to improve such parking facilities because, if it did so, it would receive a greater income from suburban railway services.

I can see that you are doubtful about the line of argument I am following, Mr. Hooper, so I will not pursue it any further. I again suggest to the Government that it should make a survey of suitable land adjacent to suburban railway stations.

I join with the Leader of the Opposition in commending the Government for steadfastly withstanding the onslaughts of some members of the Government parties who attempted to frustrate the Council's efforts to provide a civic square. I compliment the Minister for being conscientious enough to realise the importance of the Bill to the Brisbane City Council and not to defer its introduction till after the Brisbane City Council elections when certain supporters of the C.M.O. thought that perhaps they could get away with the abandonment of the proposal. Other hon. members may have stronger views than I have, and no doubt they will take the opportunity of informing back-bench members of the Government parties just where they stand on the question of improvements in the City of Brisbane.

Mr. RAMSDEN (Merthyr) (11.50 a.m.): I should like to place on record my own feelings and remarks in regard to this piece of legislation, because this morning we have heard a fair amount of balderdash from both the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Nudgee. I feel that it is time somebody told the truth. As a matter of fact, the Labour Party must already be having second thoughts about the wisdom of its choice of Leader. If this is the best he can do I shudder for Labour's future. I am happy about it, because I honestly believe that if the Leader of the Opposition attacks all Government legislation with the same irresponsibility and the same display of lack of knowledge as he has this morning, this Government will be in office for a very long time. As a matter of fact, the Leader of the Opposition will have a beard before he sits on the Treasury benches.

It hurts me to hear the claim that inside the Government parties there has been a split or division between the Country Party and the Liberal Party in respect of this legislation. It is on very rare occasions that I ever say anything at our party meetings but, when I do speak, I speak publicly, and this is one time I am going to do just that.

In the first place, the Leader of the Opposition spoke about the democracy of which we are so proud. Let me tell him that all members on this side of the Chamber, be they County Party or Liberal, are intensely proud of the democratic form of government; it was on this very principle of democratic government that opposition was met inside the party room. I will expound that as I go.

The Leader of the Opposition said he was glad that finally the Government parties had shown wisdom in approving this legislation. I want to place my own view on record. I say publicly that I was one of those people probably described as a "disgruntled Liberal" who objected to the legislation in the first place, and I am prepared to say to the electors of Merthyr that in doing so I was protecting their interests. I was doing so, because until yesterday, or the day before, we had had no representations by resolution of the Council asking us to hand over this land. We had a whole pile of letters.

Mr. Houston: Who are "we"?

Mr. RAMSDEN: I am speaking of the Government in a broad sense.

Mr. Houston: Does the Minister show you all his private letters?

Mr. RAMSDEN: The hon. member can ask the Minister his own questions.

At no time until after the joint party meeting reported in the Press had this Government received a resolution from the Brisbane City Council, passed by the whole Council, asking for this legislation. We, as Liberals, are prepared to say—I am in particular, representing an inner-city electorate with an almost unlimited number of people—that if the Opposition think we are going to stand by and see the Lord Mayor do something in a dictatorial fashion without asking the Council if he can do it, they have made a mistake. We have been accused of wanting to delay this Bill. The Minister knows that had I personally wanted to hold the Bill up I could have again opposed it at the last party meeting.

The resolution that came back from the Council was not the resolution I personally would have sought. Had I had my way the only resolution we would have accepted would have been a resolution from the Brisbane City Council requesting us to transfer this Crown land in Albert Street to the Brisbane City Council for municipal purposes—nothing else. I would not have considered a request for a car-park or a city square, but merely a request for the transfer of the land for municipal purposes. I would have recognised the autonomy of the Brisbane City Council by saying, "There is your land. You have it. The onus is on you. You are an elected body. You do

what you like. We give it to you for municipal purposes." That is my answer to the Opposition. All this tripe and rubbish about holding the Bill up is the most insolent nonsense I have ever listened to.

Let me deal with some of the other comments that have been made from the other side. The hon. member for Nudgee said he is pleased to accept the Bill. Of course they are pleased over there.

Mr. Melloy: You are sore because we accept it and you don't.

Mr. RAMSDEN: Not at all. Hon members opposite could not do anything else but accept it. They have an A.L.P. Lord Mayor who sits on the Q.C.E. Would they have the intestinal fortitude——

Opposition Members interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. RAMSDEN: I want to make it quite clear, speaking for myself as a Liberal—as one of the Liberals in the group——

Opposition Members: Which group?

Mr. RAMSDEN: The newspaper group they referred to.

Opposition Members interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. RAMSDEN: The Brisbane City Council is a constitutional authority properly elected by the people—the same electors as those who elect metropolitan members of Parliament. There are 28 councillors, and they must accept the responsibility for the running of this city. I was not prepared, and still would not be prepared, merely to accept a letter from the Town Clerk or the Lord Mayor saying, "Will you please hand this over so that we can build a car-park in the city square?" We needed a resolution from the Brisbane City Council. Thus we have fulfilled the function of democracy and have done our job. It is not our job to interfere in what the Brisbane City Council wants to do.

I have made my position clear. I hope the public will take cognisance of what I have said. As joint Government parties we have protected the interests of the people of Brisbane by having this discussion brought out into the open in the Council, when five C.M.O. members voted against the proposal.

Opposition Members interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Hon. members on my left are continually and persistently interjecting. I ask them to refrain. They will have an opportunity to speak and put forward their own point of view.

Mr. RAMSDEN: By interjection I was accused of being opposed to the square.

Opposition Members: Of course you are.

Mr. RAMSDEN: As a member of this Legislative Assembly, I have no views on the square. As a citizen, yes, or course I have. As a member of this Assembly I have no views on the square because the square is clearly and absolutely within the province of the local authority. For that reason I say that the resolution of the Council having been passed we, as a Government, can say, "You have passed a resolution. We will give you the land for the purpose for which you desire it." As a member of this Assembly I am not here to debate whether or not the square should be built. All I am here to debate is whether or not the council has a legal right to ask this Government to transfer Crown land to it for certain municipal purposes. Now that the Council has established its legal right by the resolution in open council, I accept it.

Mr. Mann: Do you think they should have waited until after the Council election to make this decision?

Mr. RAMSDEN: No. I am glad the hon. member for Brisbane asked that question, because that was another innuendo that was cast.

We did not do this, because at no time was it suggested that we should hold this matter up for political purposes. You would know that, Mr. Hooper, because you were there, and so would the Premier and every other hon. member on this side. The only objection was that it had not gone through by resolution in the Council. Surely that was a reasonable objection.

Mr. Davies: You cannot speak for the Government.

Mr. RAMSDEN: I am sorry that the hon. member is not a member of a party such as the Liberal Party.

The only other point concerns the reference to subdivision, which I think is entirely irrelevant. There is no proposal that the Lord Mayor will subdivide the city square. I would not put it past him, but there is no such proposal. I hope I have made my personal views quite clear to the Committee.

Mr. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha) (12.2 p.m.): I suppose from what has transpired one should be a little prudent in what one has to say. In view of the time element, and as I wish to inform the Assembly fully, with the use of technical terms, I propose to quote from copious notes.

In the interests of all concerned, and with the indulgence of the Committee, I wish to make my position abundantly clear and positive in this matter. Certain matters raised, no doubt, will ring a bell when reflections are made on a recent debate and the apparent reluctance of that Minister to comment. If hon. members are prepared to do this, I challenge any of them in the Chamber to state whether he would disagree with the

proposition I am about to put to the Committee. This is one time when I appreciate the opportunity afforded to members to discuss the motion for the introduction of a Bill—and it will be on this particular matter that I shall launch my attack, that is, the wisdom of introducing this Bill (which in fact is special legislation) to effect the application of the Brisbane City Council and not particularly on the simple proposition of legally closing a road and transferring that land to the Brisbane City Council in title of fee simple.

The intention of the proposed legislation appears to provide in simple terms—

(a) For the closure of that part of Albert Street which is to be incorporated in the area for the city square, and

(b) to vest the land involved in the closed road in the Brisbane City Council with unrestricted freehold title.

I have mentioned previously that the rights of the citizens are generally more particularly protected in general legislation. I also mentioned that it is sound administration to deal with recurring administrative matters under general legislation and that if the general legislative provisions are not adequate then that general legislation should be amended.

In this instance provision exists under the Land Act for the closing of roads. In relation to the granting of suitable title, provision also exists under the Land Act to vest the land, either by way of deed of grant in fee simple or as a deed of grant in trust. If there appears to be a deficiency in either aspect of the present legislation then obviously the appropriate action would be to amend the general legislation because the action that will be effected by the proposed special legislation will be a recurring administrative requirement either in total or in part, not only in this city but throughout the State. I believe that in terms of accepted land administration this proposed action is unprecedented. I trust that it will be unique, that it will never happen again. Indeed it is unfortunate that it has happened now.

Let us again have a look at what this simple piece of legislation sets out on the surface to achieve. It will—

1. close a portion of a road; and

2. vest the area of closed road in the Council in a title in fee simple—that is, unrestricted freehold.

I shall endeavour to set out my preliminary views on matters which I consider should be the basis of consideration in handling this matter.

1. Status of land in question. The legal status of that part of Albert Street proposed to be closed at present is public road.

2. The status of that part of Albert Street which I mentioned in relation to the Town Plan of Brisbane in terms of land use or projected use is public road.

3. The status of the land subsequent to a road closure would be Crown land within the City of Brisbane and not subject to any zoning as to use unless action is taken pursuant to the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act of 1964 to amend the plan—that is, the land is unzoned, or Crown land still shown as, but not, road. The Government, the Council, and the individual in this State are bound by the provisions of the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act of 1964 for which we as a Government, and the Opposition as part of the Legislature, are responsible.

4. In relation to the proposal to close the road pursuant to this legislation, the public will not be entitled to the normal accepted rights of objection or ministerial inquiry.

5. The Crown will be enacting legislation which could deny legal access to a Council tenant in Albert House; a tenant to which the Brisbane City Council has contractual obligations. This tenant, it would appear, will not have rights of appeal against this proposed legislation when enacted and proclaimed, there being no claim against the action taken by the Parliament. I am raising this last matter purely as a matter of principle by me and not as a matter of complaint by the tenant, because with due respect to the Brisbane City Council, I believe that negotiations are taking place. But there is a principle involved.

Mr. Houston: Is there a tenant involved?

Mr. LICKISS: There is a tenant involved.

Therefore, to this stage, the normal democratic rights of the citizen are being denied without any valid reason for such action by the Crown. Is the Minister in fact concerned with objections and his ability to deal adequately and justly with them? Does the Minister wish to shrink from ministerial responsibility to administer the matter generally in collaboration with his Cabinet colleagues and with final action taken by the Governor in Council? The Minister might argue that the final action will still be taken by the Governor in Council. This is true. But in this case it will be placing the responsibility of simple administration on the political level of the Legislature, which I deplore as being completely unnecessary and unwise. In fact the Governor in Council, in making his decision, will not have access to or means of consideration of the objections of citizens. Will we have a repetition of this with the Anzac Square project and on the many other occasions when road closures will be necessary? At what stage do we grasp the nettle?

It is normal for land to be vested in a local authority in a deed of grant in trust. It is obvious that the Government is departing from this arrangement to provide the Council with unrestricted freehold title—I have no objection to that—to permit consolidation of title with that land purchased by

the Council adjacent to the existing Albert Street opposite the City Hall and, if necessary, the land on which the City Hall now stands. If that is the proposal it will be necessary for comparable title to be obtained because, as the hon. member for Townsville South would realise, consolidation can only be carried out when there is like title.

The Council has, by resolution of the Council, requested the Government to take the action envisaged by the Bill. It is known that the land is required for the purposes of the city square, or the roof of an underground structure is required for the city square. The two underground levels of the structure, the roof thereof being the city square, are to constitute the underground car-parking station. The Council will have to deal with the land under section 49F of the Local Government Act. If it is the intention of the Council to proceed by lease with the underground parking station, and if it is the intention to grant a lease in excess of 30 years and up to 75 years, this section of the Act will have to be amended. I doubt the ability of the Council to execute a registrable lease or, for that matter, a suitable lease to alienate rights to a sub-surface strata lease and to dedicate the roof for a public square under existing provisions.

Consideration will have to be given sooner or later to providing for title dealing in strata without the necessity to interfere with, or resume, all the landed interests in land. Sub-surface strata title consideration should be examined and provision made for this requirement in the expected uniform resumption Act for Queensland, and Acts dealing with the registration of titles.

I know that it is easy to be critical. However, to give the Minister and his advisers a clear indication of what I consider would have been a more sensible approach to the problem, I submit the following in what I believe to be as near as possible to a concise and chronological sequence:—

1. Amend the Town Plan. This should be initiated by the Brisbane City Council under the provisions of section 6 of the Brisbane Town Planning Act of 1964 so far as the amendment concerns the change of purpose of the land presently used as a road to that of land capable of being used for the purpose specified.

2. Upon receipt of application from the Brisbane City Council, which is the duly-elected body responsible for certain administrative arrangements in Greater Brisbane, together with a copy of a resolution of the Council and proof of the amendment of the Town Plan, the Minister should initiate action pursuant to the Land Act to close the road. I think that section 368 of the Land Act appears to be the appropriate section to be used, but under this Act nevertheless. I shall on a later occasion make further suggestions concerning the opening and closing of roads.

3. The closed road now reverts to Crown land capable of being dealt with under the Land Act, and the desired title vesting the land in the Brisbane City Council in unrestricted freehold by way of deed of grant can flow from that Act.

4. The Local Government Act, section 49F, should be amended forthwith.

5. Urgent consideration should be given to strata title, particularly in matters of sub-surface requirement. This appears necessary in relation to the more sophisticated requirements of land administration. This consideration is applicable when contemplating the new Act to deal with resumptions.

6. Where it is found that the general provisions of the Land Act fall short of requirements, that Act should be amended forthwith.

Let me say most emphatically that the proposition as presented by the Minister, simple though it might appear, is most unattractive to those who are experienced in matters appertaining to land administration. It is the easy way out for the Minister. It disregards the rights of the citizens that the Government provided in the Brisbane Town Planning Act of 1964 and in normal road-closure matters. It might be suggested that it is a clean, quick method of dealing with the situation. But, let me remind the Minister, so was the atomic bomb dropped on Japan. It was certainly a quick method of dealing with a situation; it achieved results, but has never been forgotten.

I can have no real objection to acceding to a proper request by the Brisbane City Council for such land to be vested in that body after all the legal requirements have been complied with. I do question whether this is a proper request when all matters are considered.

I deplore the method proposed by the Crown to achieve this result in that special legislation, void of any normal rights of protection of the citizen, is to be employed. This is, in my opinion, completely unnecessary and unwise.

I say that this proposed method now being debated treats with contempt the provisions of general legislation enacted by this Parliament, particularly provisions under which individuals have the right to object or protest. In effect, they are silenced.

Mr. TUCKER (Townsville North) (12.15 p.m.): Hon. members have just listened to a speech by one of the great "knockers" of progress in this Chamber. This morning the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha, shedding crocodile tears, was very solicitous of the rights of the citizens of Brisbane. Has he been equally solicitous when hon. members on this side of the Chamber have raised their voices on many other occasions against price increases, and so on? Some hon. members opposite are not concerned about progress of that sort, and I suggest it shows that the submissions put to the Committee a

short time ago by the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha were not genuine. In my opinion he has adopted a hypocritical attitude.

Has the hon. member no confidence in the Minister? That is the way I interpreted his remarks. Quite obviously he is critical of the way in which the Minister for Lands has handled the proposed legislation. Surely the Minister would have been briefed correctly.

Mr. Lickiss: You are dead right.

Mr. TUCKER: I accept the interjection by the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha that I am "dead right", that he is critical of the Minister. On the one hand, the hon. member for Merthyr said, "We were unanimous on this. We were one big happy family."

Mr. Ramsden: No, I didn't.

Mr. TUCKER: But another section of the Liberal Party comes into this Chamber and puts forward suggestions critical of the Minister. I regard the contribution of the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha as a vote of no confidence in the Minister; in fact, it is tantamount to a vote of no confidence in the Government. Would not the Minister have considered every facet of the question before bringing legislation into the Chamber? Knowing the Minister, I think he would.

The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha said that the proposed legislation is unprecedented. I cast my thoughts back to a year or two ago when legislation somewhat similar to that now proposed was brought down relative to the Townsville City Council. It did not deal with a road, but it provided for the handing over of certain deeds of grant to the Townsville City Council.

Mr. Lickiss: It did not deal with a road. You are off the beam there.

Mr. TUCKER: I do not see that there is any real difference between one and the other. The Minister has not been briefed incorrectly. He understands that this is an important matter requiring special legislation in this Chamber, and the Opposition does not see anything wrong with the action he has taken.

The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha virtually impeaches the integrity of the Minister for Lands when he speaks against him in the Chamber as he did, and it is peculiar that such a thing should happen in the ranks of the Government parties. I deplore the way in which the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha has attempted to use—I use the word "use" advisedly—a tenant in one particular part in an endeavour to block the passage of the proposed Bill.

Mr. LICKISS: I rise to a point of order. I proffered this as a matter of principle. That is a slanderous remark; it reflects on the tenant. The remarks are offensive to me—I should much prefer to be quoted correctly—and I ask for their withdrawal.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha indicates that the remarks of the hon. member for Townsville North are offensive to him and asks for a withdrawal.

Mr. TUCKER: I cannot see how they are offensive, but I understand that under the Standing Orders I have to comply with the request and I withdraw. But let me say it is peculiar that on this occasion the tenant has been brought into the matter.

Let me tell the true story in regard to this tenant and let me here bring in the hon. member for Aspley who, if I remember rightly, issued a challenge this morning that we check with the Lord Mayor as to whether there were any obstructions by Liberal Party members, whoever they may be. I do not know all the Liberal Party members in this State—there are probably thousands of them—but I do know something about obstructions to this legislation, and if it is all right for hon. members opposite to issue challenges and to bring in this particular tenant, I will tell them what really happened in regard to him.

This tenant's lease expires in April 1967. Possibly some hon. members know his name; others may not. He is a very decent fellow and I do not mention his name today in any way derogatory to him. He is Mr. Brockhurst. The Brisbane City Council realised that although the lease was not to expire until April 1967, it had only a relatively short time to run. If the Council had liked to "diddle" around a bit as the Liberal Party does, it could have waited until the lease expired. But when this tenant put forward the idea that some of his access might be blocked—which in fact it would not be for months because it will be a considerable time before anything is done in the square—and said that he felt he should be compensated to the tune of £2,000, or $4,000, the Brisbane City Council, in a very reasonable way, told him they regarded his approach as reasonable. Does anybody here today say that was not a reasonable action on the part of the Brisbane City Council? But what happened? Before anything further could be done, a peculiar man named Stubbs stuck his nose into the matter, as he did into the inquiry that has been set up into the Brisbane City Council's handling of subdivisions. Stubbs is his name, and he bobs up everywhere.

Mr. Hughes interjected.

Mr. TUCKER: I see the hon. member knows him. Suddenly he comes forward in a peculiar way; he goes to Mr. Brockhurst and says, "Don't take this amount," and suddenly it is increased to £5,000.

Mr. Chinchen: The tenant didn't go to him?

Mr. TUCKER: I am not sure enough to say; I do not know. But if the hon. member wants to widen the debate I will tell him

what Stubbs has done. I will tell him how he is tied up with the present inquiry, with Olsen, and with many other firms. He immediately came in and threw a spanner into the works, increasing the request from £2,000, which was an equitable amount, to £5,000. Does the hon. member think it is right for the Brisbane City Council to stand by and allow this man to jump this claim up to such an exorbitant figure?

Mr. Chinchen: Where did you get your information—from the Council?

Mr. TUCKER: Mr. Hooper!

Mr. Chinchen: I am just asking.

Mr. TUCKER: We endeavour to put forward our views here in a responsible way. We knew there would be certain hon. members opposite who would act irresponsibly this morning. If they act in that way we have to reply to them.

The Council will ensure that this man is treated fairly. Probably the Lord Mayor has already told the Minister that he will ensure that all tenants, whoever they might be, are treated fairly. It is very wrong for the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha to try to convey such information here this morning in an effort to make us alter our thinking.

Mr. Chinchen: You had already been to the Council about it before it was raised here.

Mr. TUCKER: I have listened to the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha put forward very many representations and submissions, but it is only lately that I have realised that many of them are put forward personally for himself, and for nobody else.

Mr. LICKISS: I rise to a point of order. Again the hon. member's remarks are offensive to me, and I ask that they be withdrawn. They are unscrupulous——

The CHAIRMAN: Order! It is very difficult to hear the hon. member. Did he say that the remarks were offensive to him?

Mr. LICKISS: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha has indicated that the remarks of the hon. member for Townsville North are offensive to him, and has asked that they be withdrawn.

Mr. TUCKER: I will withdraw them, Mr. Hooper, but will the hon. member deny that he is making $100,000 at the present time on some surveyed land?

Mr. LICKISS: I again rise to a point of order. Those remarks are offensive to me, and are untrue. I ask that all this rotten insinuation should stop.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha has indicated that the remarks are offensive to him.

Mr. TUCKER: I am forced to withdraw, Mr. Hooper, but I am telling the truth.

Government Members interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. TUCKER: He was the one who brought it forward.

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

Mr. Aikens: You are not forced to withdraw. You can take a walk.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. LICKISS: The hon. member has implied that I am telling an untruth. This again is offensive to me and I ask that it be withdrawn.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I understood the hon. member for Townsville North to withdraw his remark, but if he repeated it I ask him to withdraw it.

Mr. TUCKER: I withdraw the remark, but I understand that he sold six of these allotments for $43,000 not very long ago.

How can we be sure that the Brisbane City Council Subdivision Use and Development of Land Commission will not be asked to inquire into the proposal for King George Square? The Government set up the inquiry and Government members have put forward this argument about tenants. How do we know that after the Bill goes through we will not suddenly find these tenants down at the inquiry asking whether this legislation is right? After all, that commission is inquiring into other legislation that deals with King George Square.

There are the matters that are worrying us when we hear the submissions being made today. We have no argument with the legislation—we think the Minister has been right, fair and responsible in what he has put forward—but we deplore the tactics being used in the Chamber concerning it. We are making these observations in so far as the effect of using the tenants is concerned. I am sure that the square proposal will go before the Commission. All the matters that the Commissioner is presently inquiring into were approved of, and in some cases actually included, in the Brisbane Town Plan passed by the Government, yet he is inquiring into them, and we are worried that this may be his attitude in regard to this legislation.

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) (12.31 p.m.): It appears that once again I am to be the only member to make a temperate and responsible speech on legislation passing through the Committee. I congratulate the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha not on what he said but on the fact that he had the courage to stand up here and publicly decry the action taken by one of the Government's Ministers—one of its leaders. Knowing the putridity of party politics, I was not a bit surprised when the Deputy Leader of the Opposition stood up and recoiled with horror

at the very thought of a back-bencher even mildly criticising a head of his party. I am waiting to see—although I feel sure there is little hope of this—before this Parliament is ended, a back-bencher of the Labour Party exhibit as much courage and as much guts (if I may use the vernacular) as the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha, and stand up and criticise one of the leaders of the Labour Party, either in this Chamber or out of it.

I have been interested in this proposal from the sideline. It is true that there has been some delay in its introduction, but it is equally true that the delay cannot be placed on the shoulders of any member, or any group, within the Government. The delay was occasioned by the Brisbane City Council because its members did not reach agreement amongst themselves, and did not pass a Council resolution asking the Government to take the action. The reason was—and again I am speaking the plain and incontestable truth—that the Brisbane City Council—and, knowing the ramifications of party politics, I understand these things—had first to get the approval of its controlling body at the Trades Hall.

It was not until Clem Jones returned—he had been away—and went to his rulers outside the political Labour Party and submitted the proposition to them and told them what they had in mind, that Mr. Egerton and his boys at the Trades Hall, as the elected leaders of the Labour Party said, "Yes, Clem, you can go ahead with that." Then, and only then, did the Brisbane City Council pass the resolution and bring it to the Government, when the Government decided to act.

My objection to the Bill is on general principles. I object to it because it once again demonstrates the tender solicitude of this Government for Brisbane—not only for the Brisbane City Council, but for the people of Brisbane. We have known for many years that as far as the Government is concerned there are two types of citizens in Queensland. This was apparent even when the Labour Party was in power. It was responsible for the passage of the two original Acts, namely the City of Brisbane Act, and the Local Government Act, which have been perpetuated by this Government, so it cannot dodge its share of the responsibility.

In local government matters, because of these Acts there are the first-class citizens, who live in Brisbane, and the second-class citizens who live outside Brisbane.

I very clearly remember when it was vitally necessary in the interests of the people of Townsville and the extension of the Townsville General Hospital, to effect the closure of a small portion of Oxley Street in Townsville—which nobody used in any case—but this Government refused to act. It would not do what the people of Townsville wanted it to do because it was running in double-political harness with the aldermen of the Townsville City Council.

We see it, demonstrated again—and I use this purely and simply as an analogy—in that the Government only recently established an appeal court for the benefit of the citizens of Brisbane. The citizens of Brisbane can go before it, represented by legal men, and appeal to an independent judge against any decision of the Brisbane City Council relative to the Town Plan. Such a court of appeal has not been set up, and will not be set up, for the second-class citizens who live outside Brisbane, unless of course ——

Mr. R. JONES: I rise to a point of order. I live in Cairns, which is outside Brisbane. My constituents are certainly not second-class citizens; they are first-class citizens.

Mr. AIKENS: The hon. member for Cairns, in his abysmal political ignorance, probably has never studied the difference between the Local Government Act, which applies to all citizens outside Brisbane, and the City of Brisbane Act, which gives favoured treatment to the people who live inside Brisbane. Both of those Acts were passed by a Labour Government and have been perpetuated by this Government.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. AIKENS: I know I am probably stretching your tolerance a little, Mr. Hooper, and I do not intend to transgress. But we know also that a commission of inquiry has been set up in Brisbane to deal with the matter of discrimination by the Brisbane City Council.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. AIKENS: I say in passing that any discrimination taking place here is chicken-feed compared with the discrimination that is taking place in Townsville and other cities where there is no court of appeal. The people in those cities cannot go to a judicial tribunal with an appeal.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member for Townsville South is getting right away from the city square. I ask him to confine his remarks to the contents of the Bill.

Mr. AIKENS: It is sometimes very difficult to understand what is in a Bill, particularly when it is introduced by such an eminent old gentleman as the present Minister for Lands. I do not know whether it is a contagious disease but, as I pointed out by interjection this morning when Mr. Speaker was in the chair, once a member of this Chamber gets in the ministerial benches, or the front bench of the Opposition, he seems to think it is incumbent upon him to speak no longer in a natural voice, so he develops what I have termed a dignified mumble. So it is that we heard a series of dignified mumbles this morning from the Minister for for Lands.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member for Townsville South did, I understand, have in his possession this morning a copy of the Business Paper for today, and it indicates clearly the measures to come before the Chamber. I ask him to keep strictly within those limits.

Mr. AIKENS: I draw your attention to the fact, Mr. Hooper, that you were very close to the Minister when he made his opening speech. I am a fair distance from him. I had to try to hear him over the uncontrolled roaring on many occasions by members of the Opposition which you, quite ineffectively at times, tried to silence. Consequently, I can only guess at what is in the Bill. I heard only little snatches. It is like the song of the wandering minstrel in "The Mikado", who says he is a "thing of threads and patches".

The Minister mentioned the next Council election, and the possibility that the aldermen who will be elected thereat may decide to adopt a different course from the one now proposed. The Minister is shaking his head, so evidently he did not say that. He says some amazing things from time to time. He even saw rabbits at Dajarra, near the pink elephants.

The Bill may become redundant if a fresh crop of aldermen is elected on 29 April next to control the Brisbane City Council. They may decide not to go on with the city square and the closure of Albert Street. They may say to the Government, "You passed a piece of legislation at the request of a Council that was controlled by the Labour Party. We do not want to go on with that proposal. We have different ideas about what should be done with the city square and Albert Street."

There again—this is something that the hon. member for Cairns might consider—we have an example of first-class citizenship and second-class citizenship, because those who vote for the candidates for election to the Brisbane City Council on 29 April next can get their names on the Brisbane electoral rolls up to about 1 April. Those who live in the second-class areas have to be on the roll by 31 December of this year. If this is not an example of first-class and second-class citizenship, I do not know what is.

With regard to the Brisbane City Council, the plans for this proposal are embodied in the Bill. At least I hope they are, because from what I could hear I do not know what is in it. At least there are in the Brisbane City Council some opposition aldermen, and the Press attends Council meetings and reports, sometimes in detail, what happens there. Anybody who cares to read the Brisbane Press has at least some knowledge of what goes on in the Brisbane City Council.

We in Townsville have not that opportunity. We have no opposition members, and I do not know whether pressmen attend council meetings or, if they do, whether they are game to report the proceedings. Not long ago a Bill was passed by this Parliament concerning what are known in Townsville as the City Buildings. The citizens of Townsville found out only the other day that the Hooker organisation was negotiating to buy those buildings. We were not told that by the council or the Press; we had to wait till the Hooker group exposed the whole thing in the Press because they had had an argument with the council over the sale. But for that fact, it is more than likely that all the City Buildings in Townsville would have been sold even without the people of Townsville being told that negotiations were in train. I know we cannot blame the Government or the Minister for Lands for that. Perhaps we can blame the people of Townsville, who have put up with this state of affairs for so long.

In conclusion, although I do not agree with much of what was said by the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha, a lot of it was technically quite correct. No-one can take that from him. As the representative of the people of Townsville South, I do not give two hoots in hell whether the Bill is passed or not. So far as we are concerned, we know very well that anything the people of Brisbane want they can get from the Government, just as they got it from the previous Government. I am living in the hope that before I die two things will happen. The first is that those who live outside Brisbane will get the same consideration from the Government, irrespective of its political complexion, as the people of Brisbane do.

Mr. R. Jones: There's no need to call us second-class citizens, though.

Mr. AIKENS: But you are. The Acts are there to be seen, and they grant certain privileges to the people of Brisbane.

Mr. R. Jones: But that does not make us second-class citizens.

Mr. AIKENS: We are being treated as second-class citizens. That was done by a Government of the hon. member's party, and it has been perpetuated by this one. The hon. member for Cairns is, I know, a man of average intelligence, which is unusual for a member of the Labour Party, and if he cares to come to my office I shall show him the City of Brisbane Act and the Local Government Act and point out in stark and hideous detail the difference between a citizen under the City of Brisbane Act and a citizen under the Local Government Act.

Some opposition to the Bill has been voiced by members on the Government side of the Chamber. I could not hear the hon. member for Merthyr because of the vociferous interjections and interruptions that came from the Labour Party and, goodness knows, the hon. member has a rasping voice that is normally loud enough for anyone to hear. The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha expressed opposition to the Bill. I do not oppose it as such.

Mr. Ramsden: I did not oppose the Bill.

Mr. AIKENS: It is hard to know what the hon. member for Merthyr did, because I do not think even he knew what he was doing. I interjected once when he was speaking, "Look out, Sam! You will fall off the fence." It appeared to me that he had one foot on each side, straddling the fence—so much so that the iron must have entered his soul.

I think it might be a good idea—I might do it if no-one else does—to call for a division on this motion. If someone calls for a division, I will certainly vote against the Bill as a matter of general principle, because it indicates once again how tenderly solicitous the Government is for the beloved people of Brisbane. One used to hear the term, "Queen Street Government"; now, of course, it has become the "George Street Government", but it means exactly the same thing.

Having made those few responsible remarks——

Mr. Mann: The people of Brisbane are very honourable people. I can assure you of that.

Mr. AIKENS: If all the people of Brisbane had the same standards of honesty and integrity as the hon. member for Brisbane has, they would indeed be decent people; but I am afraid they do not all reach the high standard that the hon. member has set.

Mr. PORTER (Toowong) (12.46 p.m.): I am not able to favour the Committee with as lucid and as able an exposition as the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha was able to give it, but I hope I will get a little closer to the civic square than the speaker who preceded me. For most of the time he did not seem to be even lurking round the fringes of it.

I wish to express a little perturbation about this proposal. I think that, in an issue as momentous as this that will affect the city for a long time to come, it is not desirable that the Government should give a blank cheque to a city council which is the sole municipality in a capital city area. I take a somewhat different view on this from most of my colleagues, so I make it clear that I speak for myself. Perhaps my view will sound rather odd in this Chamber; I can only hope that it does not seem as odd outside the Chamber. I am one of those people who believe that a proposal for a city square of this type should not come to a practical stage without being submitted to the will of the people, either by referendum or at the next Council election. I do not give a toss for the A.L.P., the C.M.O., or the D.L.P., but I do care about the people, and I think they should be given an opportunity to speak on the question.

I am not convinced that the theory that this is entirely a responsibility of the Brisbane City Council is correct—that is, that hon. members make a decision here to turn Albert Street into freehold land, give it to the Council, and then, like Pontius Pilate, wash their hands of it and say that whatever happens to it from then on is the Council's affair, not theirs. In my opinion, Governments do not evade responsibility in that way—certainly not in the public mind. I think that, in this regard, the Government, and the Parliament has to remember that it is dealing with the capital city of this State, and that the capital city of this State, more than the capital city of any other State, is the very heart of its industrial, commercial and economic being. So I believe that the Government must be concerned. The fact that it is concerned is shown, of course, by its participation in the Wilbur Smith proposals. I believe that the Government has a greater responsibility in Brisbane than perhaps any other State Government has in a State capital, because, as I said, there is only the one municipality here.

Everyone knows my views on Greater Brisbane. I regard it as a monstrous incubus that does us no good at all. It is interesting to note that in December, 1963, the present Ministers for Health and Transport expressed in this Chamber, when they were back-bench members, precisely the same views as I have expressed, and the Minister for Industrial Development expressed similar views, perhaps in even more vivid terms than I have used, not very long ago. To that extent, therefore, I am reinforced in my belief that a State Government cannot afford to stand aside from a decision as momentous as the proposal to provide a civic square of this type.

We cannot just say, "Oh, well, the City Council is a sovereign authority. It is the Council's responsibility, not ours. We just hand it over to the Council and that's all right." Greater Brisbane is nothing more than just another local authority. It was created by an Act of this Parliament and we cannot hope to escape a residual responsibility for what it does, any more than we can escape responsibility for what any other local government body does.

Mr. Aikens: And it was created by a special Act.

Mr. PORTER: No other capital city, of course, has, because of this special Act, such an agglomeration of responsibility as Brisbane has. Certainly no other administration was ever conceived in such a crazy welter of socialist planning as Brisbane's was. If we go back to the early days, hon. members will recall that when Greater Brisbane was conceived it was believed that not only should it do all the things it is currently doing but that it should also run its own abattoirs, do its own meat-selling, have its own milk supply, and even control its own sale and distribution of bread. That is the background of it, and a local authority that

is born out of that sort of socialistic megolomania now wants to be considered as something quite beyond a normal local authority, as a sort of city-State able to treat as an equal with the Government, and apparently, from some of the information provided by hon. members opposite today, to deal directly with Ministers. For that Council not to believe that the Government and the Parliament has an overriding and final responsibility is not a very sensible attitude.

I think that we, as a Parliament, have to take very special care that we never, at any time, because of this Greater Brisbane, do anything that will reduce the capacity of people to object—those people who have to live in this swollen and bloated city.

The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha made the point that in a democracy people have the right to object, to protest, to be heard. Of course they have, and I should hate to see this Parliament, or my Government, involved in whittling down these rights. It seems quite obvious from what the hon. member said this morning—and nobody has yet tried to reduce his technical and legal argument—that this Bill will not cut the Gordian knot at all. It simply ensures that one set of problems that are solved impinge upon another set of problems that have to be solved. It is like peeling an onion; as each layer is taken off, another layer is revealed underneath.

I do not think that this special Bill will in any sense take away from this Government and this Parliament responsibility for creating a city square in the form in which it is proposed. "The Courier-Mail" cover on this matter yesterday morning made it abundantly clear that the authority and responsibility rest with this Parliament; but this Bill, in a large sense, is a blank cheque. Although I was somewhat staggered to hear the Minister say today that this was designed for the specific purpose of providing an underground carpark, it is still a blank cheque in many respects because nobody knows—unless it is the Lord Mayor—just what this city square will be.

I can recall that the Lord Mayor sent out a Christmas card in 1963 which showed one version of the square; a few weeks later he produced a model which showed another version, and version No. 3, another model, appeared in May last. This version was supposed to have met many of the objections received from a number of different bodies and responsible citizens. But the past president of the Brisbane Development Association, Mr. Tom Cross, who is also past president of the Queensland Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, said of the design, "It is stark and barren; it has too much paving, too few trees, too little grass."

Mr. Tucker: That is only his opinion.

Mr. PORTER: That is so. Many people have opinions on this subject and they are entitled to be heard on it. After all, none of us knows what the proposition is. Is it going to be version No. 1, version No. 2, version No. 3, something not remotely like any of them, or a mishmash of all three? Nobody knows yet.

Will the square in fact be closed to traffic? We all think it will. On 27 April last the Lord Mayor was reported as saying, "Traffic could go under the square." He said "could", not "would". I rather think that is the sort of statement that should have been made on the 1st of April, not the 27th of April.

The first problem is to ascertain something definite before this Parliament takes the step of saying to the Lord Mayor, "Here it is. It is all yours. Do what you like with it", because nobody yet knows what is proposed.

What are we doing when we grant this land? No plan has been adopted by the Council that I know of. We have heard lots of words from the Lord Mayor; they flow in a ceaseless stream. If he knows what the square will be, to this day nobody else does.

So we have a strange situation. This is a city with a population approaching 750,000, yet this Parliament is asked to go along with the concept that a decision of such major moment about a square that will divide the city into two is to be left to the whims of one man—the Lord Mayor. That is what it amounts to at this stage. It would not matter to me whether it was a C.M.O. council, an A.L.P. council or anything else; I would be opposed to it in any event.

This Parliament has a responsibility to the electors of Brisbane. It is not only the Brisbane City Council that has this responsibility; we have it, too, because they are our people as much as the City Council's. We must ask ourselves, "Is the square, as far as we are able to ascertain—whatever it may be—in the best interests of Brisbane?" I am not against the square, but there are squares and squares. I am probably one of the worst squares.

Mr. Houston: You are the biggest.

Mr. PORTER: Perhaps I am. If I am, it is nice to be alone as long as you think you are right.

There are many questions that need asking and answering about these proposals as we know them. We need to ask ourselves: "Why, in our type of city, do we need something of the dimensions proposed? Why do we have to slavishly copy the squares of the cities of the old world?" Those cities had entirely different histories and traditions. Their squares and piazzas grew out of ancient rituals, celebrations and religious festivals. Their squares and piazzas are focal points for these functions. We do not need anything like that here. We have no mediaeval traditions. We have no pattern of annual religious festivals that require these huge open spaces. We do not need a big, empty square. It would be as out of place in this city as the chalet-type of house with a steep-pitched gable roof that throws off the snow in wintertime would be in North Queensland.

No other capital city contemplates a square of these dimensions, yet here, at this stage of our growth, in a city only a third the size of Sydney, we are deliberately permitting the local authority to carry on a proposal that will truncate our city. That is what will happen. Anyone who imagines that this type of raised square, with a huge mass of concrete steps, and above it a great concrete jungle——

Mr. Houston: You have just said that you did not know what it was going to be like.

Mr. PORTER: As far as I know. If anybody can tell me otherwise I will be happy at the second-reading stage to say something different from what I am saying now.

As far as we can see it, this is the picture confronting the people. If this does not separate the city into two parts, I will be extremely surprised. I do not think it is too fanciful to believe that in the years ahead, just as there is now a North Brisbane and a South Brisbane, in the inner city we will have a major and a minor Brisbane with an Above-the-Square and a Below-the-Square.

Just why are we having this proposal forced on the city at this stage? For one reason only: to provide a roof for an underground car park.

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

Mr. PORTER: The necessity to use the underground car park undoubtedly sharply limits whatever purpose can be made of this square. It defines everything that it will be. In other words, it definitely establishes that this square must sunder the city rather than join it. It means that there can be no gracious, spreading trees. It means that we will have as an inner city a concrete desert which for many months of the year will swelter under our sub-tropical sun. We are making this sort of a square, predicated on the necessity for an underground car park, at the very time when technology is moving so fast that it is impossible for anybody to say what the future requirements of cities will be. I accept that a great deal must be done to meet traffic requirements over the next 10, 20 or 30 years. But we are contemplating something that will not be done for now, not done for the next 50 years, but done for the next century, and for time after that. All this is being done in an age when, for all we know, the motor-car, as an individual way of getting people around may be moving towards its way out. In another generation or so we may be moving along in hermetically sealed capsules, pulled along in a tube with a hydraulic type of drive. We may be on elevated moving pavements; we may be using elevated monorails; we may be using anything at all that now is only in science fiction. Hon. members can name it. Science is moving so rapidly that what is remarkable today is commonplace tomorrow. I regret that as a Parliament and a Government we must confer upon the Lord Mayor the imprimatur to produce this type of city square at this stage. I believe it is completely unnecessary, to say the least.

As I said earlier, I want a city square. I want anything that will beautify Brisbane. Brisbane is my city and I am very proud of it, but I want to see something worth while done for it. In saying that I want a square, I point out that I am totally opposed to anything that tends to divide the city, that saddles it with some monstrosity that is entirely foreign to our traditions, to our patterns of behaviour and to our concepts of the way in which the community should live, something that is quite alien to our Australian, and particularly our Queensland, needs.

We need a city square that provides a heart and a soul for the city, not a concrete desert. We want a space inside the city where people can get together, where they can enjoy one another's company, and where they can laugh and be gregarious. We want something that will express the gaiety and the enthusiasm of the city, which has to regard itself now, and indeed in all the years to come, as the gateway to a great, tourist, sunshine State. We want something we can be proud of, not for the next decade or two but for the next 100 or 200 years.

We want a living heart in a city square, not something that is dead, barren and stark. We want something with lots of big trees, plenty of gardens, plenty of lawns, not just skimpy little bits as decorations. We want plenty of water features in it; we want an art centre; we want lots of open-air cafes, speciality shops, boutiques; we want courtyards; we want lots of nooks, angles, and crannies—a place of infinite variety that everyone can take pleasure in visiting and in being there.

As I said before, I will take a good deal of convincing, that in the type of city square we are getting we will find many people at mid-day in the heat of the subtropical sun. We do not see many dogs in the city, and if we find too many in that sort of square in the future I will be surprised. We want something that lives and breathes as part of the city. The proposal, as far as we have been able to gather from what has been given to use from time to time by the Lord Mayor, will not provide that. I say that the people should have an opportunity to express themselves on this matter, and they most certainly have not had it yet.

In its editorial before the last Council election in 1964 "The Courier-Mail" said—

> "Brisbane electors are waiting for a clearer picture of what is to be done with this land. The proposal of the Lord Mayor (Alderman Clem Jones) for a wider square, covering an underground car park, has yet to become a definite plan."

Here we are three years later and exactly the same could be said today. Nobody knows what the definite plan is.

As there is no machinery for a referendum on vital matters affecting the city, such as a city square, I believe this should be held over until after the next City Council elections.

Mr. Sherrington: It was supported last year.

Mr. PORTER: I do not care who supports it.

I also believe that this Government should use its capacity not to proclaim the Act until after the election, and that it should require, before the election, the production of a definite detailed plan which has been approved by the Council, a plan which covers the strata problems that the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha outlined, which also indicates the solution of the traffic difficulties that so many experts foresee, how it will be financed in real detail, not in the fond hope that a car-parking station will still be revenue producing in 20 or 30 years' time and above all, whether either in the near future or in the long-term future traffic can flow under the square, or whether it is to be hermetically sealed off from traffic for ever and ever.

In concluding, I regret that we should be participating in anything that reduces the opportunity of people to protest or to object. What we are doing here today to a large degree tends to encourage the extraordinary despotism that has become part and parcel of the office of Lord Mayor. I do not refer only to the present incumbent; this has been occurring for some time. It is a matter of regret to me that the Government and the Parliament should tend to encourage it.

I would have hoped that we would bear in mind something of the technique of other countries. Not many months ago Mr. V. Marciel, the First Comptroller of the State of Hawaii visited our State. He said, when referring to the problems of development that Honolulu has been through that they had two bodies there, one a policy committee of the Hawaiian State Complex, as it was called, and the other the Citizens' Advisory Committee. Those two bodies worked together to ensure that the community as a whole was brought into consultation on any major plans for change and variation. Everything was done to inform them and get them on side. That is a practice, too, of long standing in the United Kingdom and in the Scandinavian countries. No major new town-planning project is undertaken without making sure that the people understand why and that they have their chance either to propose things or to oppose them, or to criticise or object.

After all, the sole purpose of planning a city is so that the people who live in it can do so successfully. I do not for a moment believe that we as a Government or as a Parliament should assist any course which says in effect, "To hell with the people! We have experts who know better than the people." That encourages the concept that any man with power, such as the Lord Mayor, a Minister, or anybody else, knows better what is best for the people than the people themselves.

Mr. Houston: The Council did this.

Mr. PORTER: I have not seen any decision of the Council as yet. It has not yet approved a plan for a town square. That is what I have been talking about for 25 minutes. I do not know whether the Leader of the Opposition has been listening. Perhaps he does not need to. That is precisely what I have been talking about—this proposal, and why it is not desirable for Brisbane at this stage. I certainly do not think that this Parliament, or any Government, should do anything to assist the concept that any man has the automatic right to impose his will, or just his whim, on the people of a State, city, or community.

Mr. PILBEAM (Rockhampton South) (2.25 p.m.): I take the opportunity to enter this very interesting debate and, if possible, give a pretty fair assessment of the rights and wrongs of this matter looked at from the point of view of a local authority and the Government.

Let me say now that I support the measure to give the Government the opportunity to make land available to a local authority. I cannot see anything in the Bill limiting the usage of the land for any particular purpose. I understand that it is simply to give the Brisbane City Council unrestricted title to the land.

I am not in a very strong position to gainsay the measure, because the city of Rockhampton has taken advantage of a similar act of generosity by the Government, and so have the city of Townsville and the city of Brisbane. It is true that the cases to which I refer are not exact comparisons, because on those occasions the action taken was to remove a protective trust from a deed of grant. In the present case, the action being taken is to close a road that is in public use to make the land available for some other purpose. It is fair enough to concede that in 50 or 100 years the usage of land in cities changes. I see nothing wrong with the Brisbane City Council's deciding on a specific usage for the piece of land under discussion. Whether that decision is good or bad is a matter to be decided between the Council and the ratepayers.

Mr. Houston: You accept the Council as the governing body, don't you?

Mr. PILBEAM: Yes. I wholly support the Government in waiting for clear evidence that it was a Council decision and not the decision of one man. Once that evidence was obtained, I withdrew my objection. I am satisfied that the Council wants this action taken.

I was very much impressed by the contribution of the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha, whom I congratulate on his knowledge of local government law and, in particular, the

closing of roads. My council has closed quite a few roads in Rockhampton, and we had to follow the procedure outlined by the hon. member. We had to give notice of closure, advertise for objections, and follow the general conditions described by the Local Government Act. I must be fair enough to say that the roads that my council has closed were not roads in public use. Local authorities often have to deal with the cases of dedicated roadways that were never formed and are no longer required. In those cases, the council advertises for objections. One or two may be received, and they are referred to the Minister.

I understand that if a road is still required for public use, an amendment is required to the Land Act to give the Governor in Council the right to close any road. I question whether the Governor in Council should have that right, and whether, under the general conditions of the City of Brisbane Act or the Local Government Act, he should have the right to close any road under the general conditions.

In the case of a road that is in general public use, it is not a bad thing to require special legislation to close it, and to give Parliament the right to decide whether it should be done. From a practical point of view, how could a road that was in public use be closed under the general legislation? If I wanted to close a section of East Street, Rockhampton, Mr. Campbell, how many objections do you think I would get if I advertised for objections? In this case, if the closure of Albert Street was advertised for objections, how many objections would be received? I think there would be thousands and thousands. I do not see how they could be ignored by the Minister or the Government, and I do not see how the Government could give the benefit of this land to the Brisbane City Council if it went through the usual channels. I am fair enough to admit those things.

I was very curious about the difference in treatment. However, after looking at the proposal carefully, I cannot see anything really wrong with the proposed legislation, and I support it strongly.

Mr. Mann: What would you know about traffic problems in Brisbane?

Mr. PILBEAM: I do not know much about traffic problems in Brisbane; but I am arguing on general principles, and I do know something about local government affairs.

Mr. Mann: Have you had any advice on Brisbane's traffic problems?

Mr. PILBEAM: Is the hon. member against it?

Mr. Mann: Yes.

Mr. PILBEAM: I thought he was for it.

Mr. Houghton: You are off-side with Mr. Jones.

Mr. Mann: I am the member for the district.

Mr. PILBEAM: I cannot see anything wrong with the principle behind the legislation, and I cannot see anything wrong with the manner in which it will be implemented. I support the introduction of the Bill.

Mr. CHINCHEN (Mt. Gravatt) (2.32 p.m.): I would have thought that the main purpose of the Bill was to enable the Crown to give land in fee simple to the Brisbane City Council for the purposes of a city square. In my opinion, that is right; I think it should be done. However, I think that, by an unfortunate use of words, the Minister may have engendered another consideration in the minds of members of the public, and I think that question should be cleared up.

In his introductory speech, the Minister said—

> "The main function of the Bill is to permit the Brisbane City Council to implement its plans for the provision of an underground car park beneath the enlarged city square area."

I think that many citizens will come to the conclusion that the Government is expressing its approval of the City Council's idea of having a car park beneath the city square. I do not agree with that proposal; I do not think that the majority of the people of Brisbane agree with it. What Parliament is doing—I emphasise this, and I should like the Minister to confirm it—is granting the Brisbane City Council use of a piece of land for a city square, and no more.

I do not agree with the hon. member for Toowong. My attitude is that Parliament grants the land to the City Council, which is an elected body that has certain functions to perform. If for some reason or other the Government finds it necessary to impose its will on the Council, it should change the form of the Council. Why should it take certain action in Brisbane rather than in Townsville or in Rockhampton? City councils are elected by the people. The hon. member for Toowong has not any confidence in the construction of the Council, and, because of that, he believes that an endeavour should be made to see that the decision is left to the people. But I do not see that as the solution. If the Greater Brisbane system is not the correct system for the people of Brisbane, it should be altered. The Government should not enter the field and say, "We are interested in Council matters. We want this of you, and we do not want that of you."

I should like the Minister to correct the impression that may be engendered in the minds of members of the public that what the Government is doing, in effect, is giving approval to an underground car park. What it is doing in fact is giving land to the city of Brisbane, free, for use as a city square. What the Brisbane City Council does with the land after that is its own affair, and it has to live with its decision. I am sure that if the people of Brisbane were asked whether or

not they wanted a car park in the city square, they would say they did not; but they will not have the opportunity of answering that question. Many people have expressed their opinions already.

I agree with the hon. member for Toowong that what is required in the centre of the city of Brisbane is an area for reflection, a shady place where people can walk and talk. The City Council, in its wisdom must look at this question of parking and decide whether parking facilities should be provided in the centre of the city or whether that part of the city should be reserved to pedestrian traffic, with parking to the north, south, east and west of the centre of the city. If it makes the wrong decision, it is its decision and the only redress I, for instance, have is that available to me as a citizen. I do not think that, as a member of Parliament, I should enter into consideration of that matter because it is purely a Council decision.

There is one very important aspect relating to traffic. The Minister indicated that Wilbur Smith & Associates recommended the square but I cannot find such a recommendation in the Wilbur Smith Report. All I can find is at page 196, 1053 Para. 3, where they say—

> "Close Albert Street between Adelaide and Ann Streets to facilitate development of the King George Square project. Albert Street will then revert to two-way operation."

All I can take from that is that the City Council wanted a square there and this request was placed before Wilbur Smith who had to make allowance for it. They did not recommend a square but they had to handle the traffic the way they did because a square was required. As I say, I cannot see where the Wilbur Smith people recommended a square in their report. Maybe I am wrong; it is a big report but I have looked at most of it and cannot find that. All they said was that Albert Street would have to be closed between Adelaide and Ann Streets to facilitate the development of the square. In other words, they knew we were going to have a square there and they had to take care of the traffic from that point of view.

Undoubtedly, this will cause problems. If one looks at and studies the new roads in the Wilbur Smith plan one will see that there is a double road going up to the square. All the traffic will have to go on two roads this way or two roads that way to get where they want to go. This will cause confusion but the biggest confusion will be caused by cars leaving the car park, and I cannot see any way to overcome it.

It is the Minister's intention and the Government's intention to grant this land to the Brisbane City Council to do with it as it wishes but the words used by the Minister this morning might cause people to think it is for an entirely different purpose. I hope the Minister will express his views clearly on this.

One interesting point, of course, is that this land is being given to the City Council free of cost whereas this Government had to pay $790,000 to the Council for land at Mt. Gravatt to be used for university purposes. This land, too, is for public use. I feel that we are doing the right thing in giving this land to the city for the use of the city's people—and the people of the State when they come to Brisbane. I feel equally that it is wrong for the Brisbane City Council to charge the Government for land for university purposes. The land in Albert Street is the most valuable piece of land in the city. It is being granted to the Council to be used at its discretion and I think we are wise in our action. But, it hurts when we have to pay $790,000 for land for university purposes, land that is also for the use of the people of Brisbane in particular and, of course,of people coming from other parts of the State.

I agree with the major points made by the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha. We are the custodians of the rights of the people. No other body can assume this responsibility and, if we are taking away from citizens the right to have their say on any matter, whether major or minor, I view the matter very seriously. I see no reason why the position should not be the same, whether the land is valuable, or big, or important. The same principles should apply and the same methods should be used to allow people to object to or accept the proposition. In other States they use normal methods of legislation, which are available to us, to do the job we are doing now, and I think one of the most important things hon. members on both sides must consider is the right of the individual. This is always important to me. To see that rights are safeguarded is one of the reasons I am in this Parliament. It is true to say that we would be attaining the same ends. I am not happy with the method that is being used. Maybe it is quicker, maybe it will serve another purpose—I do not know—but we are steamrolling this thing through, and the people are getting no opportunity to express their will. To me that is of vital importance.

I hope that the Minister will indicate to the people in general that what we are doing is granting land in fee simple to the Brisbane City Council, for the Council to use at its own discretion. It is the Council's job, not ours. We are not giving it to the Council for the purpose of an underground car park. If it cares to use it for that purpose, and knows how to do it, that is the Council's decision, not ours. I think that is of vital importance.

I hope that we are not establishing a precedent by using legislation to do what we are now doing. There will be many occasions in the future when roads will have to be closed so that important pieces of land can

be made available for Brisbane City Council or State use. On those occasions let us use the normal procedural methods laid down in general legislation.

Mr. O'DONNELL (Barcoo) (2.42 p.m.): There are certain questions that have to be answered by members on the Government side who are opposed to the Minister on this occasion. One important matter raised concerns objections. Obviously when the Lord Mayor went to the poll in 1964 he made his intentions about a city square very clear. Since that time the subject of the city square has been prominent in many discussions. I know of nothing that prevents people from objecting—submitting petitions and so on—but apparently nobody has gone to the trouble of organising a petition on this matter.

The hon. member for Toowong has an accomplished way of expressing himself. When he referred to the living heart or the pulsating centre of the city—or, if I might call it, the core of our urban area—he brought before the Committee something that I think should have been discussed when this proposal was first raised. It is not much good bringing up these matters when the legislation is before Parliament. If we study all the Press articles on the subject since the project was first mooted we find that it is all a matter of opinion about why the square should be there or why it should not be there. There has never been any constructive report about what the people want there. To a certain extent the citizens of Brisbane have let this important question down. The city of Brisbane is faced with a very difficult situation.

I should like to bring the following before the notice of the Committee:—

> "I am of opinion that if, instead of one, we had 12 great cities, so many centres of men, riches and power would be more advantageous than one, for this vast city is like the head of a rickety child."

That was said by Fletcher of Saltour in 1703, referring to London, which then had a population of 500,000. The quotation is equally applicable to Brisbane.

I am not well acquainted with the Lord Mayor of Brisbane. In this project he is attempting to do something that could be of value, for he is attempting to rejuvenate the city in some way. However, he is responsible to the Council. I know, as all hon. members know, that in all forms of Government we have developed the habit of associating the Government with the Leader's name. So the Council is referred to as the "Jones Administration", as this Government is called the "Nicklin Administration". That is the fault of the history books. When we go to school we do not learn much about politics in history; we learn about Baldwin, Churchill, and so on. Consequently the whole of the responsibility is dropped onto this man who is leading the Council.

Mr. Lee: Do you say he is a dictator?

Mr. O'DONNELL: When hon. members on the other side refer to him as a dictator they are using that line of attack because he is the head of the administration. I would not know whether he is a dictator or not. The hon. member would know from his own experience, but I would not condemn him on what the hon. member says. However, the Council is doing something to rejuvenate the city, and the Opposition agrees with the Minister in that the Bill before us illustrates the reasonableness of the Council's request.

It is unfortunate that the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha should come to this Assembly at such a late stage with the speech he read to us. It was very difficult to hear him. I am not saying that his speech was not logical in his eyes, but I do say that we cannot hope at this stage to take in matters that probably should have been raised 12 or 18 months ago. We came here with our ideas pretty well fixed because we had examined the matter. I should say that the hon. member for Rockhampton South disposed of his argument very quickly because of his experience in local authority affairs.

We have had similar legislation before us concerning Rockhampton, Townsville and Brisbane. The legislation affecting the Brisbane Cricket Ground was the first example of anything similar being done in Brisbane to what we are doing today. If we were to decide today that this land must not be given to the Council because the conditions that prevail today may be completely out of date next year or the year after, or perhaps because the incoming administration may not approve of it—although they do approve of one plan; they say they approve of the square—how could we have progress anywhere in a city like this where we are looking for open spaces, for some place to bring people together where they may share a multitude of interests, with some attractions to draw them there to communicate, not only in the commercial sense, but also in the cultural sense, by building a living heart in the city.

Hon. members know very well that the problem facing the city of Brisbane today also confronts many other cities in the world. Books have been written by quite a number of people indicating that we have to change our whole pattern of city construction. We have to adopt the cluster system, and so on. People are thinking along these lines, but I do not know what we can do with an established city like Brisbane to change it into one of the modern projects that have been used as examples in the various books on this subject in the Library. It would be impossible. So the attempt is therefore to rejuvenate the centre of the city. It may not be satisfactory to the hon. member for Toowong, and when it is completed it may be unsatisfactory to me. But an attempt is being made and we sincerely hope that it will be successful.

Mr. Pilbeam: If ratepayers object they can vote against the administration at the next election.

Mr. O'DONNELL: That is right.

Mr. Lickiss: Would you agree that there is a way by which the town plan of Brisbane can be altered at all levels by virtue of legislation passed in this House?

Mr. O'DONNELL: I cannot agree with that. The point the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha fails to realise is that the Minister who is responsible for implementing this legislation does not enter the Chamber unbriefed. He knows very well the responsibility of his task and would not bring anything here without first getting the necessary legal advice as to the validity of what he is doing. This is an important matter, and I trust the Minister. I am one of the most unreasonable people on this side of the Chamber, but I admit that the Minister has never failed to meet me half way and has never tried using any political subterfuges with me.

When we consider Brisbane and its future, decisions have to be made. I feel that more importance attaches to this matter than has been given to it today. The Government came here with a plan for dedicating this land to the Brisbane City Council. Why was the matter raised as a controversial issue by hon. members on the Government side? We know that Caucus meetings are held. The information coming through the Press indicated that there was a good deal of discord over this question. We cannot be blamed for thinking that its passage has been obstructed; it has now been held up for a month because of the tactics of certain people in the coalition. We do not want that kind of thing going on.

The responsibility for the implementation of the town-square plan rests entirely on the Lord Mayor and his Council. If the people of Brisbane think that his action is detrimental to their interests, they can do something about it next year at the election. We know what the people did to the preceding Council when it acted to their dissatisfaction. First they removed the Council quite gently, and three years later they gave a more definite answer.

In Australia, and particularly in Brisbane, we are somewhat unfortunate that we have not a long historical tradition. The idea of having open sections in a city, in the days of long ago, was part and parcel of the whole military and political set-up. Fortresses in the form of walled cities were not built for the public to look at; they were built for military purposes. The wide boulevardes of Paris were not built for public use alone; again they were built for military purposes. In a city that has grown like Topsy these problems present themselves, and we know very well that something has to be done about the heart of the city.

I feel that I must support the Leader of the Opposition in his qualified acceptance of the Bill. The principle contained in it is satisfactory, and, after examining it, we will give our full answer at the second-reading stage.

Mr. HUGHES (Kurilpa) (2.56 p.m.): Having heard some of the arguments advanced by Opposition members I am wondering why they are carrying out such a tub-thumping exercise, because there seems to be a hollow ring in many of their assertions. They base their attack mainly on the Government's notice of introduction of the measure, and the fact that there has been, they say, some dilatoriness in bringing it forward. What they have said has been presented in a weak, half-hearted way, and scarcely warrants refutation by us.

That was the pattern followed by the hon. member for Barcoo, who claimed that obstruction tactics had held this matter up for weeks. That is not so. The Government has been responsible in its obligations in matters such as this, and who can say that there has been any undue delay when a matter of such great importance to the city is under consideration? When Bills are introduced with extreme haste, there is always the possibility that they may contain errors of judgment. I believe that a Bill as important as this one should not be the subject of undue haste. How could we possibly be castigated for adopting that attitude? In actual fact, of course, it was only on Tuesday of this week that the Brisbane City Council formally passed a resolution transmitting the matter to the Government. There is therefore very little in the contention that the Government has been tardy in the matter when it was transmitted officially from the Council only this week. I understand that negotiations had taken place between the Council and the Government, from which it was reasonably expected that the action now being taken would result.

I believe it is our duty to analyse this matter objectively, purposefully, and on the basis of what is best for the development of the city. We have to consider the rights of the people and decide on the best way to produce a worth-while result. To my mind, it is the end result that counts. It is not so much who is right but what is right. In looking at the matter along those lines, I believe that the Government has, on a more personal basis of negotiation, been committed for some time, having indicated that it would permit the closure of this road for the carrying out of civic works and services for the benefit of the citizens of Brisbane. That is the real point.

I cannot entirely share the views expressed by my colleague the hon member for Toowong. Under the City of Brisbane Act, the Government allows the Brisbane City Council, as an autonomous local-authority body, to administer the affairs of the city in many ways. I do not think it proper

that the Government should in any way fetter, gag, or interfere with, the administration of the Council, provided that at all times it carries out its administrative functions in a fit and proper manner.

The last occasion on which a Government interfered with the Brisbane City Council was, I think, in 1942, when the Lord Mayor was also named Jones. At that time a commission was set up to inquire into charges of maladministration and malpractices. One must bear in mind that the Brisbane City Council is elected by the citizens of Brisbane and that it has certain responsibilities and obligations. The Government must view the question in its proper context and recognise that the Council is an autonomous body and has certain rights.

Mr. Lloyd: It is also answerable to the Government.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes, but answerable to the Government only in serious cases of maladministration or malpractices.

Mr. Lloyd: And in building leases.

Mr. HUGHES: Surely the hon. member does not agree that the Council should be answerable to the Government for every policy it implements and for almost every action it takes. I have often said that the relationship between the Government and the Council is a relationship of parent and daughter, the Government, of course, being the parent. The Government should not interfere with the Council and demand that it take action in almost every field of its activities. The Government would not be performing the function of a properly elected body if it did that. If the Council does not discharge its obligations in a way that is acceptable to the majority of the people of Brisbane, their answer lies in the ballot box.

The Government has the authority to formally close a road, and that is the only way a road closure can be made effective. As I said earlier, since the relevant Act was proclaimed in 1923, the Council has been responsible to the people, and we should allow it almost unfettered rights. However, the Government is the only body that can formally close a road, so the Council must make an approach to the Government. In this instance, the decision is made by the Council, which must accept responsibility for it. Therefore, I believe that the necessary action should be taken in the simplest possible way.

There may be a difference of opinion on the point to which I have referred, that is, the method employed. After all, barristers have differences of opinion on questions of law, and professional and technical men have varying opinions on problems that they face. It may be said that the road closure should have been proceded with in the formal way in which such closures are usually made. However, I believe that the Government has every justification for taking the action now proposed. Under the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act, the citizens of Brisbane, the Brisbane City Council and the Government are subject to the requirements of the Town Plan, and under its provisions people can have the zoning or use of land changed. Perhaps it would have been preferable to achieve the purpose of the proposed Bill under that Act.

I come now to the right of objection. The proposed Bill will alienate completely the right of the citizens of Brisbane to object or protest. However, the Minister said that the Act will not be proclaimed until a later date, and that will give time for its provisions to be fully and clearly understood. In fact, the provisions may not be implemented until after the Council election next year, and I do not think any construction work could possibly be done on the city square for some time to come.

I believe that, being the instrument by which the road closure will be effected, the Government is in an invidious position. We do not want to stop progress; we do not want to interfere with an autonomous administration; we do not want to sit in judgment of the wisdom or otherwise of having a city square. If the Government were to deal by normal methods with an application for road closure it would be in receipt of objections and would have to deal with them. By this method of legislation road closure is to be effected without dealing with objections. I feel that the citizens of Brisbane should have an opportunity to express their views on the Brisbane City Council's stated objectives.

Mr. Lloyd: The people of Queensland do not get many opportunities of expressing their views on some of the legislation your Government brings down.

Mr. HUGHES: The people of Queensland on many occasions have shown not only their intelligence but also their farsightedness, sound judgment and wisdom. That has shown up at the ballot box, and that is why we are here today and why the hon. member and his colleagues will remain in the political wilderness. We look at these things objectively and in the interests of the people as a whole, not on a political basis, as the Labour Party does, tied to the views of the Trades Hall faction, and the mouthpiece for the Q.C.E. The people know that, and on many occasions they have shown how they view it.

I believe this is a matter of opinion and rests on whether the advisers to the Minister are correct. I have a great respect for the submissions made by the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha. I believe he has right on his side when he claims that there are ways of effecting this road closure under the Town Plan.

The point I am getting at is that since this is the way we have seen fit to go about it, the citizens should be given the right to register their views because a great amount of public money will be involved and the public should be entitled, at some specific opportunity, to record just how they feel about it.

They should be able to decide whether they desire the Council to proceed with a car park, or with some other type of development, when the road is finally closed. Of course, until the Act is proclaimed the road will not be closed and I think a referendum should be taken on the matter in the meantime. The most opportune time for this would be at the next City Council election. Along with the election of a Lord Mayor and aldermen the question should be put to the people, "Are you in favour of the road closure and the proposals for a city square and car park?"

Mr. Newton: They will decide, without a referendum, whether they want it or not when the ballot comes around.

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member cannot tell me that the Council election will be fought on one specific issue. Other issues will be involved. For instance, there will be the controversy of trams versus buses. The Council increased tram fares 38 per cent. Does the hon. member think the people will not record their views on that and on many other aspects of Council maladministration? If I went to the Commission of Inquiry I could raise their eyebrows.

Mr. Newton: Why don't you go?

Mr. HUGHES: I will state a case now of land at Wynnum that was held up for 18 months——

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Campbell): Order! I ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the matter before the Committee.

Mr. HUGHES: The Council must give the people an opportunity to record their views on whether they require this type of development as a square, which will mean the closure of this road, or whether they think the road should be kept in use and the rest of the land that the Council will take over in fee simple used for the purpose of a square. I know that a square project of some kind must go ahead, because buildings have already been pulled down. Let us give the people an opportunity to object. I mentioned the case in Wynnum. There are many ways one can bring facts before this Chamber.

An Opposition Member interjected.

Mr. HUGHES: It is not for me to give evidence for the person concerned. It is not my right to do that. There are many ways in which the Council should recognise its obligations to the people. This is a matter with ramifications the like of which have never before been presented to the people of this city. They are so great, and they affect so many citizens and the use of so much public money that the people should be given an opportunity to answer a question on a separate piece of paper at election-time to indicate whether they desire the Council to proceed with a project that will result in a road closure and the provision of a car park and civic square. If the people agree with the proposal, then the Act can be proclaimed.

We should not have any subterfuge about such matters. Too many of these things are shrouded in secrecy. Citizens do not know about them until it is too late. This is not the only square or the only type of beautification scheme the Lord Mayor has embarked on. We have read about Anzac Square going through to Queen Street. We wonder whether that would call for special legislation or whether the normal method of road closure would be applied under those circumstances. Even though the Minister for Local Government might say he knows nothing about it, I have heard about the proposed riverside drive through certain south-side suburbs, including West End and Yeronga.

The people have a right to know about these things. They have a right to know whether the Council intends to apply for road closures in south-side suburbs and to alienate some private land. They are entitled to know whether they are likely to have a speedway next to their living rooms.

I know of at least three schemes which are envisaged by the Council. But again it is a matter of the Council's financial capacity and ability to implement them. It would probably be better to do one job at a time properly so that the Council would have a greater spread of its money over necessary works and services. This is not a matter for us. We subsidise local authorities more than does any other Government in Australia. Because of the passage of this legislation, and following a later proposal that may be put forward, I wonder to what extent we might be called upon to meet some of these costs. Although I am in full agreement with subsidies for local authorities —after all, it is public money that is being spent for public benefit—I think it is fair to say that we are the only Government in Australia that does it to the extent that we are almost like a fairy godmother to local authorities.

The Brisbane City Council has parking-meter revenue available to it. With this money it is under an obligation to provide certain road works and overcome existing traffic hazards. The Council should continually watch that it is spending its available money to the best advantage. A five-year or 10-year programme for other than water, sewerage and road works would mean that too much of the available money was not being spent in any one year on any one beautification, square or riverside drive project.

I believe that the people should have a right to say whether they want this, as the hon. member for Belmont interjected a few minutes ago. However, at election-time they will not have an adequate opportunity to express themselves, as they will be voting

on whether the trams should be removed, on sewerage matters, and on water and road matters. This would be but one of many matters concerning the community.

Mr. Lloyd: Are you practising on us for the Council election?

Mr. HUGHES: No. I had sufficent experience as an alderman for six years.

The Brisbane City Council is committed financially, and probably morally to a great extent. It is impossible for it to withdraw. It has able engineers and administrators. I regard the Town Clerk, Mr. Slaughter, very highly as an administrator. He is a tough negotiator and a fearless administrator. He is a person for whom I have a lot of respect as one who has done a lot for this city. The Council has good administrative officers apart from the Lord Mayor, who is consistent in his inconsistencies and in many other ways. While the Council has capable officers, I believe it can move forward objectively in this matter. We as a Government can take the step advised by the Minister. Perhaps, behind the scenes, the Government is already committed to this scheme. However, it depends not on who is right, but what is right.

I have a great respect for the views expressed by the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha, but who is to say that the views expressed by the Minister are not just as valid? It does not matter so long as the scheme works out properly in the end. If it is to be done it must be handled objectively and purposefully so that we may develop and open up the city. If it is handled in this way I will support it; I think it will be a wonderful thing. However, it must run with planned development and financial capacity, in its proper priority. The people should have the right to voice their objection if they so desire.

So that we may ensure that we do not alienate people's rights, the Minister should exercise his discretion to withhold proclamation of the Bill until a referendum is held on the question. If it were to be held at the next Council election—it could be held prior to that—it would cost virtually nothing. I strongly urge that this matter should be put to the citizens so that we will not alienate their rights. In this way, instead of the Government sitting in judgment, it will be putting the matter to the people at a general election. We will demonstrate to the electors that we are doing the right thing and they will be able to ensure that the Council is responsible and that it does the right thing. We will not have been obstructionists; we will have approached the matter objectively by saying to the Council, "This is your affair; this is your responsibility and your obligation. You, and you alone, are responsible to the people for what you do."

Mr. SHERRINGTON (Salisbury) (3.19 p.m.): The Chamber has today been entertained by one of the most extraordinary debates I have witnessed in my seven years in Parliament. I can recall other debates in which many Government members have risen to support what the Minister has said when he has been attacked by the Opposition. Today, except for the hon. member for Rockhampton South, not one member on the Government side has completely supported the Minister.

Mr. Campbell: You should have been here and listened to what I said.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: At the best, the hon. member had a "couple of bob" each way.

At least the hon. member for Rockhampton South supported the measure and made no bones about it. If the other Government members are not really opposed to the legislation, why have they been flapping their wings in the Chamber for four or five hours? There has been no semblance of solidarity behind the Minister. When the Leader of the Opposition indicated that we supported the measure, one would have thought that the matter would not have gone beyond that stage. How often do we find a willingness by the Opposition to support a measure? Unquestionably when that happens the Bill goes through without further debate.

The whole of this debate has been brought about mainly because Government speakers have not been behind the Minister in this matter. The Opposition has been the only responsible body in the Chamber supporting the integrity and probity of the Minister for Lands. To say the least, it is a most extraordinary situation. The Leader of the Opposition said we were prepared to accept the principle of the Bill. With the hon. member for Townsville North, I think the attitude of Government members has thrown doubt on the integrity of the Minister for Lands; more than that, they have also cast aspersions on the Minister for Local Government.

I do not think, while I have been a member, that I have built up any reputation for handing compliments to Government members. My attitude has always been that when a person is in Opposition, to be effective he must oppose, and oppose strongly. But I must say that the Minister for Lands has been completely responsible in this matter. He realises that the people of Brisbane have accepted the programme of the Brisbane City Council. In this acceptance of responsibility he believes he should not do anything to retard the programme laid down by that duly elected body. I have no doubt that in this respect the Minister is being completely responsible. In addition, he would not have introduced this measure without first consulting the Minister for Local Government. I am sure that both Ministers have accepted their responsibility as Ministers, not only to the citizens of Brisbane and Queensland, but also to the Brisbane City Council. What we

have witnessed today is shocking in that Government back-benchers are not supporting the responsible attitude of those Ministers.

Let us examine what has been said. The hon. member for Toowong said that the question of the use of this land, the title to which is to be transferred to the Brisbane City Council, should have been submitted to the will of the people. As long as the Labour Party has held office in the Council there has never been any doubt that when the time was appropriate a civic square would be included in its programme of works. While this Council has controlled the city's administration it has taken the people of the city into its confidence. Models and maps which were made available to the public, and the panoramic view of the work to be carried out along Roma Street following the demolition of the old municipal markets proved very conclusively that this has always been a feature of the Council's administration. It showed the people what it had in mind to give them an opportunity of expressing their opinions.

If the argument that this project should have been submitted to the will of the people is taken to its logical conclusion, a classical case presents itself in the Australian Capital Territory. Did Prime Minister Menzies submit the construction of Lake Burley Griffin to the will of the people? Did anybody quibble over that expenditure on the beautification of Canberra? If this argument is a good one to use in the controversy over the civic square, surely the Prime Minister should have submitted to the will of the people the spending of £5,000,000 on Lake Burley Griffin. That was not even put to the people of the Australian Capital Territory, let alone the people of the Commonwealth. That line of argument is completely ridiculous.

The civic square in Brisbane, whether it be right or wrong, has been an issue at two Council elections, and the people of the city, whether they agree or do not agree with the square project, have shown that they accept the programme of works laid down in the election policy speech of the Australian Labour Party. Saying that this matter should be submitted to the will of the people comes about six years too late. The people of Brisbane accepted this project to such a degree that 3,000 votes cast in the right places would have seen the complete annihilation of the Citizens' Municipal Organisation.

The hon. member for Toowong went on to say that he was concerned not with the A.L.P., the D.L.P., or any other political party, but with the rights of the people. That is the sort of flapdoodle that has been going on on this question of safeguarding the rights of the people.

Mr. Lickiss: Aren't you interested in that?

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I shall show the Committee how much hon. members opposite are interested in the rights of the people. Not long ago the Minister for Labour and Tourism introduced a Bill to safeguard the rights of the people by protecting them from false packaging and phoney advertising. The attitude of hon. members opposite was then the same as it is today. They did not give two hoots for the rights of the people; they were more concerned about the rights of the manufacturer. The hon. member for Toowong himself said that that legislation was an intrusion into the rights of the individual. He was more concerned for the manufacturers, who were to be prevented by the Bill from using deceptive packaging. He is in no position to talk about his concern for the welfare of the people.

Mr. LICKISS: I rise to a point of order. I remind the hon. member that I did not even speak during that debate.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I do not think I have any point of order to answer; I was not referring to the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha. I was referring specifically to the hon. members for Mt. Gravatt and Kurilpa and the hon. member for Toowong, who is the recognised leader of the back-bench rebels of the Liberal Party, having superseded the hon. member for Clayfield.

I feel that this attitude of Government members is a reflection on the Minister for Lands and also, as I said earlier, the Minister for Local Government. I also believe that the commission of inquiry into subdivisional conditions imposed by the Brisbane City Council, which is a waste of public money, is a reflection on the Minister for Local Government.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I do not want to cross swords with you, Mr. Hooper, but I think that many irrelevancies have already been introduced into the debate.

If the Government indicates that it has no confidence that the Minister will carry out his obligations to the people, surely that is a reflection on him. In this instance, the inference seems to be open that the Minister has superimposed on the proposed legislation power to control any city council or any local authority in Queensland. If it is open, it is a reflection on the Minister. The Government is virtually adopting the attitude that the Minister for Local Government has been allowing various local authorities to exceed their authority and has not done anything to prevent them from doing so.

Mr. Chinchen: You are not impressing us, of course.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: Nobody could impress the hon. member. He did not even speak for 25 minutes. He had "two bob each way". He was not sure which side he was on; he was not sure which side the people of Brisbane will take. In walking the political tightrope, the hon. member outdid even the great Blondin, just as he has done on a number of other occasions since he came into this Chamber three or four years ago.

Mr. Chinchen: What I said will be in "Hansard". You can read it and find out what I said.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I would not waste my time in that way. In many instances hon. members opposite would not be able to make a speech if it was not for the hon. member for Salisbury. They sit there waiting to pick up my words, and then they write a speech. The only material they have comes from my contribution.

Government Members interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. SHERRINGTON: As a matter of fact, it has become obvious that I have hon. members opposite worried. They would not be in the Chamber interjecting if they were not worried. Of course, they are in the Chamber today only because the hon. member for Chatsworth wanted to tip the can on them yesterday and was running round checking on attendances.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. SHERRINGTON: As I said, a reflection is cast on the Minister for Local Government, because he has the right at any time to veto any of the actions of the Lord Mayor. To me, the whole proposal seems remarkable.

The suggestion was made that citizens will be denied the right to protest. I have never seen any evidence that the Government wanted to give anyone the right to protest. We had a classic example of the Government's attitude when Gabrielle came in on behalf of the housewives and blew her horn about the high cost of living. The Premier patted her on the shoulder and told her to go away and conduct an inquiry of her own. The Government has introduced legislation to take away the right of the Industrial Commission to increase bonuses; through legislation removing quarterly cost of living adjustments, it has taken away the right of trade unionists to voice before the Commission their protests against increases in the cost of living. I have not seen any evidence that the Government wants to give people the right to protest. People who wanted to protest recently had to pay $1 a placard. If hon. members opposite want to give people the right to protest, they should take the necessary action.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I think the hon. member has made his point.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I have made a very good point, Mr. Hooper. If hon. members opposite want to match themselves with me, I am prepared to stay here as long as they like. Half a dozen Liberals would not even come up to my waist.

I turn now to the suggestion by hon. members opposite, "We don't know what is going to happen to the square," and their expressions of alarm on that point. They do not want to indicate that they are right against it. They want to retain some semblance of unity in the eyes of their electors. They want to go back and say, "We were not opposed to it but we want to know what type of square will be erected on this land." Would not anything be better than the shabby appearance of Albert Street after 18 years of C.M.O. administration in the City Hall? They did nothing about it themselves but, through the years of Labour administration, they have continually opposed this by saying, "We are not sure how you are going about it."

Mr. Chinchen: We are happy about a square.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: The hon. member could have fooled me. I have never seen anybody weeping so much and saying he is so happy. The hon. member reminds me of a hypochondriac who is never happy unless he is sick, and I say he is politically sick.

Now let us get on to the square itself. The people who now cry out in terms of fountains and trees are the very people who voiced strong protest when the first plan was mooted to provide a vista of trees along Roma Street. They all supported the Bligh plan, which proposes to replace the trees with buildings. Now they come here and talk about fountains and trees, and the hon. member for Toowong carried himself away and projected himself 2,000 years into the future in a jet-propelled, hermetically sealed capsule. Surely he does not want us to wait 2,000 years for that. That would be ridiculous. He might as well say that we should delay building the new Victoria Bridge because in 50 years' time we will be flying over the river and will not want the bridge. I have never heard anything so stupid in all my life. Are we to set the city back because of some fanciful development that the hon. member for Toowong visualises from watching Superman?

Now let us get on to the favourite subject of hon. members opposite—the alleged despotism of the Lord Mayor. Here again, I wish to completely reject this attitude. In the 1964 election we saw the C.M.O. fall flat on their faces because of this attitude. Surely they are not so stupid as not to learn from their mistakes at that time. It does not matter whether they call themselves C.M.O. or Liberal in the City Council. The Liberal Party has now taken over openly. That was the rock on which the previous C.M.O. opposition perished. They flooded this city with pamphlets lampooning the Lord Mayor as a despot, a sawdust Caesar, and what did the people of the city do on that occasion? They showed clearly that that type of stupid propaganda cut no ice with them. They showed very clealy that the fact that a picture of the City Hall was used on political pamphlets to try to gain a political advantage displeased them at that time. Surely hon. members opposite are not going to be so stupid as to get up here and again disseminate that stupid propaganda.

Mr. Chinchen: What are you doing now?

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I am refuting the stupid arguments that the hon. member and his friends put up.

Mr. Chinchen: We have not mentioned the C.M.O. Whose notes are you reading?

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I don't read anybody's notes. As a matter of fact, I was so sure this debate would end quickly that I have here my notes on the packaging Bill, which was listed for debate today.

A Government Member: Then why don't you sit down.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: The hon. member would like me to join the band and to put me in the same class as himself. Hon. members opposite get 25 minutes in which to speak; they get up and make a point and then run out of steam. If somebody comes along and makes a reasonable contribution they get green eyed with envy and jealousy because of their own limitations.

Whether the design of the city square is right or wrong does not come into it. In any event the people of Brisbane have accepted the principle of having a city square. However, because of the political propaganda of the C.M.O., aided and abetted by members of the Liberal Party, the people of this city are confused about who will bear the cost. People are saying, "If we do not have a city square we can have so much more sewerage work done," yet all the time both the Government and the C.M.O. know that the square is being financed by the use of parking-meter money and profits from the sale of land, and that this money would not have been available for sewerage or anything else. The money would not have been available if the square had not been proceeded with. That is the sort of disservice the C.M.O. and the Liberals have done. By their stupid propaganda they have completely confused the people.

The Council has adopted a responsible attitude. It delayed any move towards constructing the city square until the completion of the transportation study. One hon. member opposite suggested that it was foolish to have this square, but the transportation study found nothing wrong with the proposal.

A Government Member: They did not recommend it.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: Of course they did not, but in their deliberations on traffic flow they were cognisant of the fact that there might be a city square. They found that it would not cause any serious interference with traffic flow.

In my book, both the C.M.O. and the Liberals have been completely irresponsible. They have certainly set a bad example to the irresponsible members who have spoken today.

Hon. members opposite have been reminding the Committee that nobody wants to interfere with the democratic rights of a duly elected City Council. They all trod that tight rope during the debate. After having assured the Committee that that was their attitude, what did the hon. member for Merthyr say? He said that he was not going to stand by and see the Lord Mayor doing this if he thought he was making a mistake.

Mr. RAMSDEN: I rise to a point of order. I hate to argue the point with such an errant hon. member, but all I said was that had I decided to be an obstructionist I could have continued to obstruct along the lines he is now pursuing. I did accept the fact that the resolution had been passed by a duly constituted Council.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I will tell the hon. member what he said. I wrote it down, although I may not have it word for word. He said he was not going to stand by and see a dictatorial Lord Mayor——

Mr. Ramsden: I said that.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: What was the hon. member's point of order?

Mr. Ramsden: You read "Hansard". I don't want to waste your valuable time.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: It was painful enough having to listen to the hon. member's speech, let alone read it.

(Time expired.)

Mr. DEAN (Sandgate) (3.45 p.m.): When I read the notice on the Business Paper this morning of what appeared to be a simple little Bill I did not think the debate on it would develop into such a red-hot political argument. Indeed, this matter has been made a political football by a group of Liberal members, who, no doubt, have been waiting for days for this opportunity. They have certainly taken full advantage of it today.

I align myself with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition and express my sympathy for the Minister, even though we undoubtedly have different political views. I respect his ministerial rank and I respect him as a gentleman. He has been belittled in no small measure. It is shocking and disgraceful. The hon. member responsible for it should be ashamed.

An Opposition Member: He should be embarrassed.

Mr. DEAN: Yes, he should be very embarrassed. I assure the Minister that he has my sympathy. I am not speaking politically. I respect every Minister for not one of them would be a Minister if he was not in his intentions honest.

Mr. Lickiss: Mr. Lloyd was honest and look what happened to him.

Mr. DEAN: I ask the hon. member not to worry about Mr. Lloyd. He and I can look after ourselves quite capably.

This scheme has been turned into a political football, and not for the good of the city of Brisbane. The people of Brisbane gave a mandate to the Brisbane City Council in 1964. This matter, and what was intended to be done, was referred to by the Lord Mayor in his policy speech. The people recorded their confidence in the A.L.P., expecting it to proceed with the development of the city square.

Many years ago, when I was in the City Council—as were quite a few hon. members —we heard much about the widening of the square. There was a scheme under which the square was to be extended to Queen Street, with the removal of the Commonwealth Bank. That was in J. B. Chandler's day. That scheme was dropped, and nothing was done. When the Council is given a mandate, the Lord Mayor and the councillors have to do something about it, and this scheme is the result.

The Minister for Local Government is the administrator of the Local Government Act. If hon. members opposite have been trying to convince us that something was wrong in the City Council, that the Council of the day was not carrying out the provisions of the Act, and that the Minister was not doing his job, I do not believe it. I know the Minister for Local Government, and I know that he would act very quickly in his office to implement the Local Government Act. I deplore the reflection upon him. A most peculiar attitude has been displayed by hon. members opposite. They are directly opposed to the square one minute, yet the next minute they are all for it. If they are against it, and have the courage of their convictions, they should vote against it and they should call for a division.

Mr. Lickiss: You could not do that.

Mr. DEAN: Whether I could or not, I am sure the hon member could not.

Firstly, I do not think the hon. member put forward his own case. I do not know who supplied him with his brief but it was beyond my understanding, and I think it was beyond his. I think it came from a higher source. I think it came from outside this Chamber and I could be pardoned for thinking it came from some organisation outside this Chamber. It is the living voice of somebody else. I am very disturbed at the surprising allegations that have been made, because Ministers, whether they be in the Liberal Party, the Country Party, or the Labour Party, must be beyond suspicion in their respect for the laws of the land. We often hear loose talk about people running with certain people and being branded as fellow-travellers. I assure hon. members that I should not like to mention some of the things I have heard about certain people, and they were not in the A.L.P.

The hon. member for Toowong this afternoon used a word that I heard used many years ago to describe the City Hall, namely, "monstrosity". That was just after it was built. It cost £1,000,000. There was a lot of screaming and yelling about it. It was claimed to be before its time, that it was too big, and that it cost too much. Thank goodness some of our forebears and pioneers possessed a little foresight, because we have a building today which is a fitting monument to them. Shortly it will face a beautiful square when it is finished. And we do need a square.

Only recently the need for a square was brought forcibly to our attention, namely, when President Johnson visited us. What a shocking scene there was in front of Lennon's Hotel. Would it not have been a far more fitting reception if he could have appeared on the balcony overlooking the city square? It should have been built years ago. But instead of that the President of America had to fight his way through a brawling mob in front of Lennon's Hotel.

It is interesting to hear hon. members talk about the privileges and rights of the people outside. How many hon. members in this Chamber would be prepared to give citizens the right to appear at the Bar of the House to defend themselves against utterances made about them from time to time? We have the privilege of Parliament. But the citizen outside has no right to defend himself against such statements as those made by an hon. member who is not here at the moment. He tore a man's character to smithereens. This person wanted to come here of his own accord to refute some of the wild, irresponsible, untruthful statements that were made about him. Many members are not worried about the rights of individuals. Through you, Mr. Hooper, I say to the hon. members for Mt. Coot-tha and Toowong: why don't they bring before their Government the desirability of allowing a citizen, of his own accord, to make application to appear at the Bar of the House to defend his character? They should not talk about the rights of citizens. They have no rights, none at all. I do not know how they can come here and talk glibly about the Brisbane City Council taking away the rights of the citizens.

The situation on the other side of the Chamber has been developing for some time. At the moment we have a Country-Liberal coalition government, but if hon. members opposite continue to act as they have been acting the Premier will be leading a coalition of Independents. They will all be Independents, all with different ideas.

Mr. Houghton: What, in 50 years' time?

Mr. DEAN: I can assure the hon. member that once they become Independents they will not last 50 minutes, let alone 50 years. Too many of them want to be Premier. There are about five over there who want the Premiership. I have never known any Government with five leaders.

I am in accord with the measure. As the Leader of the Opposition said we will wait until we see the Bill and examine the clauses carefully. We can see nothing wrong with the principle. We may change our views later about certain particulars in the Bill and we may have certain suggestions to make. But as far as I can see there is no obstacle to the over-all plan of a city square, so there should be no opposition to the Bill. This square has been spoken of for 20 years, and this is the opportunity to make a start. I stress again that the Minister must have obtained advice before he introduced the measure.

This city is no less important than any other capital city in Australia. We have all visited the other capitals. The people of Brisbane are the only ones who cannot take pride in having a city square in which they can receive important visitors. It could also be used for entertainment purposes. We could have band concerts and cultural activities in the open air once we get a civic square.

In other and older countries entertainment, public demonstrations and other functions can be held in comfort and convenience in civic centres that are suitable for those purposes. At present, it is impossible to travel through the narrow streets in front of the Brisbane City Hall in any degree of comfort and safety. It must be remembered that the Brisbane City Hall is recognised throughout the world as the finest in the southern hemisphere. The facade is worthy of admiration, but it cannot be propertly appreciated unless one is able to view it from a distance. It contains a wonderful piece of sculpture carried out by a famous Queenslander, Daphne Mayo. Anyone who has an understanding of sculpture sees it as a work of real art, but at present it cannot be viewed to the best advantage.

It has been said that people have not had an opportunity to see what is proposed. A copy of the design has been in the vestibule of the City Hall for months. It has been in the main entrance for all to see, and citizens have been invited to make written suggestions or call in to see the town planners or city architects to discuss them. I have had discussions on the plan, as there are certain things about it with which I am not happy.

I am satisfied with the over-all design, and one of my regrets is that buildings will be erected on the other corner. I should like to see a completely clear area, without any buildings, as I think they will have a somewhat restricting effect. I hope that the ordinances of the City Council will ensure that the bottom floor of the building to be erected is retained for trading and other commercial purposes. In most bank buildings the bottom floor is used exclusively for banking purposes.

Doubtless there is a need for parking facilities near the City Hall. I feel that it should have its own parking area for those who have business to transact in the building. At present it is impossible to park on the front ramp, as that is where Council engineers leave their vehicles. The inclusion of a parking lot in the over-all scheme would be of very great benefit.

There are certain other aspects that I personally do not like, but I am merely a layman and not an architect or town planner. What I say is merely my opinion, and perhaps I am wrong. Indeed, I hope I am. I hope that whatever is done will be for the good of the people generally and the betterment of the City of Brisbane. Perhaps it will help the City Hall to fill the role for which it was originally planned. It was meant to be not solely an administrative building, but a cultural centre. At present it is used for City Council administrative purposes, and it is quite inadequate even for that. I believe that the civic square project will enable it to become the centrally-situated place for cultural activities that it was originally meant to be.

Finally, I direct a remark to the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha, through you, Mr. Hooper. One can see the hon. member's lack of experience of local authority affairs almost every time he speaks in this Chamber. He can be pardoned to a certain extent, because, as I think the hon. member for Redcliffe will agree, local authority experience does give one a far different impression of city or town administration. In my opinion, most of the hon. member's difficulties stem from his lack of local authority experience. He receives briefs from someone and is unable to fit them into the local authority scene.

I look forward to examining the Bill in detail, and I sincerely hope that, after that examination, the Opposition will still be fully in accord with the proposal to build a civic square for Brisbane.

Mr. MANN (Brisbane) (4.1 p.m.): It is unfortunate that the Government parties are not unanimous in their support of the proposed Bill. There are two parties to the coalition—the Liberal Party and the Country Party—and one would have thought that this very important measure would be considered by a Caucus meeting of both parties and a decision arrived at. Apparently that was not done. Surely a decision should be arrived at in Caucus before a proposed Bill is brought down in this Chamber by a Minister.

You will appreciate, Mr. Hooper, that the information available to the Minister for Lands and the Government is not readily available to members of the Opposition, and when a proposal is put forward by the Government upon which the Government parties are not unanimously agreed, I, as a member of the Opposition, view it with great suspicion. As there is an obvious and distinct division of opinion amongst Government members, I think there must be something wrong with

the proposed Bill. Therefore, with due deference to the Minister, I suggest that the Bill should not be introduced until the Government parties have examined it further. When unanimity of opinion has been achieved amongst Government members, the Opposition will be quite happy to have the Bill reintroduced.

I listened carefully to the Minister outlining the provision of the Bill; I listened to members of the Government parties criticising the Bill in detail. If the Bill was discussed in its entirety in Caucus, the Minister should have given Government members all the information he had available to him. I know that the proposed legislation has received the full consideration of the Minister and his officers. Surely the Minister took it to Cabinet and Cabinet took it to the meeting of the Government parties before it was introduced in this Chamber. Even the rebels on the Government back-benches must have had an opportunity of discussing the matter. As I said, several hon. members opposite have criticised the proposed Bill and found fault with it, and that makes me suspicious. I again suggest to the Minister that he should withdraw the Bill, take it back to the Government parties and give them all the information that has been conveyed to him by the Town Clerk and the Lord Mayor.

I should like the Minister to tell me whether he has been advised by the Police or any traffic authority on the advisability of closing Albert Street and whether he has any information in regard to the confusion that such a closure may or may not cause in the city. I put that point to the Minister, and if he has any information I should be glad to hear him on it. If he has, he should tell his party about it. He comes in here, puts the Bill down before us and says, "Here it is; I want you to agree to closing the road in Albert Street." As the member for the district, I have no information at all about it. I do not know whether it is good or bad. I do not know whether traffic problems will arise following the closing of Albert Street or whether there will be no traffic problems. But surely one is entitled to know something about it. Surely the Minister is not suggesting that the Lord Mayor is a traffic authority. We should have some knowledge of who says it is right or wrong. The Town Clerk is surely a good administrator, but does he know anything about traffic matters?

I am not an architect or a traffic authority, but I have my doubts about whether it is good for the city. The traffic that uses Albert Street every day is dense. The Minister could not care two hoots what is going to happen in Albert Street because it does not concern him; but it concerns me because I represent these people in this Parliament, and I want to know something about it. The Bill should be withdrawn and we should be given full details on the whole matter.

Mr. Richter: There is disagreement on that side also.

Mr. MANN: The hon. member for Barcoo is chairman of our Lands Committee and I do not know whether or not any information has been conveyed to him; but, as a member of this party, I have not heard of it, and I make no bones about saying so.

I am not arguing that the square should not be built, but I am against closing Albert Street. That is the point I want to raise. I want to hear some authoritative opinion on whether it will be good or bad, and whether or not it is in the best interests of the city. I suggest that the Minister should tell, not only his own members but the Opposition as well, all the information he has received not only from the Lord Mayor but from some authority on traffic so that we will be fully informed on the matter.

I do not want to take up the time of the Committee, but I have read of plenty of differences of opinion on whether this is good or bad. I have heard varied opinions on whether or not the square should be a car park. I am not at the moment concerned about a car park. All that this Bill contains is provision for the Government to pass the land over to the City Council. The car park is a subsequent matter, and so is the city square.

I am asking the Minister in charge of the Department of Lands to say whether he has had either police advice or other expert advice on whether or not this project is in the best interests of the city. Until the Minister gets advice from such authorities he should recall the Bill, discuss it with members of his party, get a unanimous decision, and then bring it down.

Mr. MURRAY (Clayfield) (4.9 p.m.): I think the most useful contribution that has been made this afternoon has just come from the hon. member for Brisbane. We have heard varied views put forward, both academic and non-academic. The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha was probably quite right, although some of his propositions I was not able to follow fully because he dealt with them with knowledge of a subject in which he has specialised; but I have no doubt whatever of the intelligence of the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha in bringing these matters forward because he believes it is wrong to legislate in this way. This being a subject in which he is interested he has, as usual, done a tremendous amount of work on the matter and we should not subject him to ridicule. It does not become us to do so. I think it ill-behoves us to do that. He may well be right. No-one has suggested he was wrong.

Although we do not necessarily feel any satisfaction running around later saying, "I told you so"—that sort of thing is childish nonsense—if the hon. member has a serious proposition to put forward based on study and research and his own particular knowledge of administration of this nature, we should treat his submissions with respect and consideration. I am sure the Minister's departmental officers will study the submissions of the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha

very carefully indeed. If there is a grain of truth in them—which I am sure there is—I know the Minister will be the first to recognise it.

The hon. member for Brisbane has touched on the crux of the matter as far as I am concerned. I would say that he has no objection to the square, as I have no objection to the square, no objection to the beautification of the area, or to the enlargement of it—none whatever. But, like the hon. member, I have very serious fears that it will create a traffic problem. We do not know what will happen, because we have not the information, as the hon. member for Brisbane pointed out. What will happen when 800 cars disgorge themselves into the already overcrowded trafficways? It will be like an ants' nest that has been stirred up. It will be as if one scraped a bull-ants' nest with a stick. I cannot imagine that conditions will be anything other than chaotic unless there are plans that I do not know of. We just have not the information. One of the very grave problems in dealing with legislation of this nature is that we do not have available to us the information on which the Minister's decision is based.

I should like to have expert opinion on this subject—the best information we can get. We should not accept it too hastily; we should look at it conscientiously and carefully. I think the hon. member for Brisbane has been extremely responsible today in standing up as he did, regardless of the political aspects, and pointing out what he did. His was probably one of the most sensible contributions that have been made. What does the Police Traffic Branch think about it? Does the Leader of the Opposition know?

Mr. Houston: You heard me.

Mr. MURRAY: What problems will be created by the disgorging of 800 vehicles?

Mr. Houston: You don't even know your own Bill. Your Minister clearly told you what was in it.

Mr. MURRAY: The Minister clearly outlined the fact that this Bill will allow the Council to build a car park underneath the square. That is something we should know a great deal more about. It is the car park and the traffic flowing from it that worries me greatly, and I am sure it will worry many other hon. members and ultimately the public. We should be told clearly what the situation is. For some extraordinary reason we must assume now that the Council must be right. Here we are taking the full responsibility upon ourselves.

The hon. member for Toowong said that we are accepting the full responsibility for this particular decision. Whether we intend it or not it will come back to us. If we say, "Go ahead; we believe this to be right; you should have your city square whatever the plan may be with a car park underneath", we are responsible. We have a great responsibility in this matter. I for one, cannot accept that we can agree with an open cheque as it were, to the decisions of the City Council when we feel that there are doubts concerning a particular proposition.

Mr. Sherrington: Don't you think they have some autonomy?

Mr. MURRAY: Half of the population of the State is in the Brisbane area and it will not be long before more than half the population is here. As has been said time and time again, we have here a State within a State. Who is to take the final responsibility for our way of life?

I agree completely with everything the hon. member for Toowong said. This is a serious problem that we have on our hands. I ask hon. members opposite to reverse the position and assume that they are in this Chamber on the Treasury benches, with an anti-socialist Council in power at the City Hall. Would they adopt the easy attitude that this Government is prepared to take, that is, the very gentlemanly attitude of saying, "This is the elected Council; we must conform to what it wants."? I submit that we can no longer allow this great monster—for want of a better word—to control the way of life of so many of our people.

Mr. Sherrington: Even though the people of Brisbane vote for them.

Mr. MURRAY: Brisbane contains half the population of the State.

Mr. Sherrington: And they support this idea.

Mr. MURRAY: They have not had an opportunity to support anything else.

Mr. Sherrington: They could have petitioned your Government if they wanted to change it.

Mr. MURRAY: They have had no opportunity. I feel quite sure that it will not be too long before the people want to break down this tremendous monster.

Mr. Sherrington interjected.

Mr. MURRAY: I do not say that for political purposes. I believe it is a serious threat to any Government, no matter what party is in power. It is a serious threat to any Government in this State; it wields power out of all proportion to what was originally intended.

An Opposition Member: Even the Minister is starting to yawn.

Mr. MURRAY: Well, let the Minister yawn. He has a right to do that. I am glad there are some rights left to us.

A great deal of irrelevant matter has been introduced into this debate, but I repeat that the responsibility we are shouldering is dangerous and wrong. We are the representatives of the people, and if we are to allow half of the people in the State—and there will be more as time

goes on—to be controlled by a City Council that is swollen beyond all proportions, we will regret it very much indeed.

I also agree there should be a tidying up of general legislation, as was put forward by the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha. It seems clear to me that these situations will arise again in the not too distant future, and we should tidy up our general legislation—it is a simple thing to do—so that we need not have special Bills such as this.

The hon. member for Salisbury claimed that there was no opposition to this proposal. Does he realise that the whole City of Canberra was planned and based on Lake Burley Griffin and that before Canberra was ever built the whole plan——

Mr. Sherrington: You did not stay there long enough to see Lake Burley Griffin.

Mr. MURRAY: I saw it only two weeks ago. There has been a national acceptance and a national relief that at long last we have completed the plan upon which Canberra was based.

Mr. Sherrington: Do you suggest there should have been a referendum on that?

Mr. MURRAY: Of course not.

Mr. Sherrington: Isn't that parallel with this case?

Mr. MURRAY: Not at all. It was always accepted that Canberra was based on Lake Burley Griffin.

Support for this measure came freely from the Opposition, except for the responsible questions put forward by the hon. member for Brisbane. I for one certainly will not vote against this Bill. I question it—and it is proper to question it to the extent I have done. I think it is a sad thing for democracy that members of the Opposition do not understand and cannot comprehend that Government members can question matters. We shall continue to question—and disagree, I hope—because we are not just put into a heap with the string pulled tight. Our mouths are not closed to matters apart from the Caucus line, as applies to the other side of the Chamber.

I hope that during the second reading of the Bill—I should like it even before then—the Minister will give us more of the information, as the hon. member for Brisbane suggested, on which the decisions are based. We have not got it, and I think we should have it. Cabinet could not have sat around the table and made its decision without a great deal of deliberation. We have had some information from the Minister in the normal course of events, which Opposition members will understand. But this matter affects so many people, such a large percentage of the population, and it affects the future of Brisbane to such a great extent, that we should be cautious and tread warily. Each one of us should be given the information on which the Government made its decision.

Mr. Houston: What would you like to happen to the Bill at this point of time?

Mr. MURRAY: I should like to accept the suggestion of the hon. member for Brisbane that it be deferred until we know the full reasoning behind it and some of his questions are answered. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition will agree that they were very good questions that the hon. member for Brisbane asked. The Leader of the Opposition should be pleased to know that he has such a responsible person behind him. I therefore would like to see the Bill deferred until these questions are answered so that the matter can proceed at the second-reading stage with proper information fully available.

Mr. NEWTON (Belmont) (4.25 p.m.): We have seen in the Chamber today on the Government side, with the exception of the Minister for Lands and those who have not taken part in the debate, the greatest "knockers" ever.

Mr. Murray: Does that include the hon. member for Brisbane?

Mr. NEWTON: His rights are the same as those of all other members on this side of the Chamber. We have not yet seen the Bill and have not yet met to decide our attitude to it and what we will do at the second-reading stage. That is how the Opposition always is placed. The hon. member for Brisbane has the right, just as all other hon. members have, to express his opinion even though it may not necessarily be the opinion of the Opposition generally.

The Minister for Lands, who is in charge of the Bill, and the Minister for Local Government, who has the responsibility of administering local authorities, including the Brisbane City Council, have been in the Chamber throughout the entire debate. When Cabinet makes a decision in a matter such as the one now before the Committee, Cabinet members are the ones who have to answer for it. Irrespective of the party in power I have never known Ministers to bring before Parliament matters that have not been fully analysed from A to Z by themselves and their colleagues.

What we have witnessed today is something that the Opposition has frequently been accused of by Ministers when winding up a debate. Excluding those whom I mentioned in my opening remarks, all Government members who have spoken have endeavoured to create a sense of fear in relation to what is intended by the Bill. It is quite evident that what they are trying to do is create this sense of fear by stating openly that the Australian Labour Party cannot be trusted in the Brisbane City Council sphere. On two occasions the present Australian Labour Party administration has faced the people at a municipal election and has been returned, on the last occasion with the largest majority that any council has ever had, or at least as long as I can remember and probably longer.

The Bill could not have been introduced at a more appropriate time. The electors have been told what is intended, and a model of the proposed civic square has been displayed in the foyer of the City Hall for all to see. Even though that was done, members of the Government parties representing metropolitan electorates have not inspected the model.

Mr. Chinchen: We have seen it.

Mr. NEWTON: If the hon. member has seen it, why does he get up in this Chamber and say he has doubts about the proposal? I am convinced that the Minister for Lands, the Minister for Local Government and other Government members have no doubt that the Brisbane City Council will fulfil its obligation when the proposed Bill becomes law There is no question that the A.L.P., as the majority party in the Brisbane City Council, has a responsibility to the people of the Brisbane metropolitan area. It has to show them not only that the Council has the complete confidence of the Government in the proposed Bill but also that the Council will carry out its obligations relative to the city square.

I was amazed to hear the criticism offered by hon. members opposite. One has only to go to southern States to see in the capital cities car-parking facilities similar to those that the Brisbane City Council intends to provide. In Sydney, for example, there is a central car park in the heart of the city. It has five or six levels, not just one or two, and the park above it is very well laid out.

The hon. member for Merthyr said he was not opposed to the construction of the square but that he doubted the sincerity of the Lord Mayor because he was a delegate on the Queensland Central Executive of the Australian Labour Party. Let me ask hon. members opposite who have endeavoured to wave the flag for the C.M.O. this question: where is the C.M.O. Lord Mayoral candidate at the moment? Why did he decide hurriedly to take a trip overseas?

Mr. Dean: He ran away.

Mr. NEWTON: He ran away because he did not want to be called as a witness before the committee of inquiry set up by the Government.

Mr. Chinchen: That is unfair.

Mr. NEWTON: Like the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha, he is a director of and shareholder in companies that have had many disputes with the Brisbane City Council. The C.M.O. Lord Mayoral candidate is a shareholder in Estoband, Estrold, and Auto Raceway.

Mr. Murray: So, too, is the Lord Mayor.

Mr. NEWTON: I am dealing with this from the point of view of the C.M.O. Lord Mayoral candidate. The companies to which I have referred own large parcels of industrial land. They put certain suggestions to the Brisbane City Council, and because the Council did not agree with them they pressed for the setting up of a committee of inquiry. What happened when the Government set up that committee? The C.M.O. Lord Mayoral candidate went overseas so that he would not be called as a witness. Today the same thing happened with the hon. member for Clayfield, who said he supported the views of the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha.

A Government Member: The hon. member for Brisbane did, too.

Mr. NEWTON: I have already dealt with the position of the hon. member for Brisbane.

The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha said the motives behind the move were questionable. Let us look at the motives of the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha. Let us look at his dealings with a land shark in the metropolitan area. Glenrobe Pty. Ltd. owns 30 acres 3 roods of land at The Gap.

Mr. LICKISS: I rise to a point of order. That statement is incorrect. If the hon. member wishes to see me afterwards I will give him the correct information.

Mr. NEWTON: If the hon. member had nothing to hide, why would he not come straight out before the Committee and explain why he adopted the attitude he has adopted today, supported by his colleagues on the back-benches? Hon. members opposite have criticised their own Minister and Cabinet on the grounds that the Brisbane City Council has been given a blank cheque in this matter. What utter rubbish! Never has any local authority been given a blank cheque by any responsible Government in office in this State. The Minister for Local Government has power at all times to step into local authority affairs if he thinks it is in the interests of the people in the area to do so, and to take whatever action he deems fit to overcome any particular problem.

Mr. Richter: It is not as easy as that.

Mr. NEWTON: That may be so, but it can be done.

It was also claimed here today that the Brisbane City Council is endeavouring to override the Government of this State. That statement was made by a number of hon. members, and how ridiculous it is! Every local authority in this State, including the Brisbane City Council, knows quite well that in whatever it wishes to do it must endeavour to carry out the desires of the Government of the day.

Mr. Pizzey: You are saying that there should not be any politics in local authorities?

Mr. NEWTON: To a certain degree, it has always been our policy to try to keep politics out of it, but while there are political parties I suppose there will always be party politics in local government. One has only to reflect on the number of men in this Parliament and in both Houses of the Federal Parliament who began their political careers in local government. There is no question in my mind that those parties that claim to be non-political in local government are controlled under cover by political parties. I do not know why they do not come out into the open, as the Labour Party does.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Hodges): Order!

Mr. NEWTON: I am sorry, Mr. Hodges. I am only answering a question.

In my opinion the Minister clearly outlined this morning all the queries raised by Liberal members, who say that they are suspicious about this and that. They can shake their heads, but that is what they have been saying all day. The Minister clearly outlined what was proposed. He told us that as a result of the passage of the Bill there will be a city square. He told us about the central car park—how it will be financed and operated—and he dealt with the closure of the road.

It was this Government that set up the Traffic Engineers' Department which, without any ado, declared one-way streets in the metropolitan area. No referendums were taken; nobody was asked whether he agreed that certain streets should be made one-way streets.

The Minister pointed out that what was being done was being done in conjunction with the Wilbur Smith Report. If this Bill is passed, and if a car park is built in the square, Ann Street will cater for vehicles from the car park proceeding in the direction of the Valley. Possibly Adelaide Street will become a one-way street to cater for traffic moving in the other direction. What will happen is linked up with a lot of things. It could be linked up with what is contained in the Wilbur Smith Report relative to bridge-building.

It was said this morning that everything possible has been done to ensure that the costs involved in this project will not fall onto the shoulders of the ratepayers. Hon. members on this side have indicated how the project will be financed.

The Government is endeavouring to assist the Brisbane City Council in the interests of this great city. Over the years Government members have talked about how we are now attracting more tourists to this city. Would not a city square, which would make the city more attractive, tend to attract more tourists?

The Bill is a move in the right direction. Unfortunately, what has happened in recent weeks, and what has been said today by hon. members opposite, does not assist the Brisbane City Council. On the 14th of this month it will be floating a public loan to raise moneys for the carrying out of necessary works. It is not very encouraging to people who subscribe to Brisbane City Council loans to hear members of the Liberal Party continually knocking everything that the Brisbane City Council does in the interests of the people of this city and this State and, indeed, of visitors from other States. We want Brisbane to keep pace with the southern cities.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (4.45 p.m.): It is not my intention to increase the confusion created by some of the speeches today, nor do I intend to speak at great length on this matter. Some of the objections raised contain valid arguments, particularly in the case of the hon. member for Brisbane, who referred to the free flow of traffic through the city and the necessity to ensure that there is no interruption to it. That is a valid objection. Many other objections have been raised but they are not substantially correct unless they are taken as objections to the Bill itself.

On the surface the Bill seems to be quite simple. It enables the closure of Albert Street so far as it relates to the King George Square scheme. No doubt everyone in Parliament, and the majority of the people in Brisbane, favour a city square. If we are to have a city square Albert Street must be closed, otherwise the square cannot exist. If the closure of Albert Street creates chaos in Brisbane's traffic we must look at the proposal again and try to find a remedy. It seems that so far there has not been a complete survey of future plans as they concern Albert Street and the traffic flow in that part of the city.

I do not think any Parliament should be asked to follow blindly proposals such as this unless an explanation is given. This matter is important to the people of Brisbane and to this Parliament, but we must know exactly what the proposal is. As I see it, the Government intends to close Albert Street in the King George Square section for the apparent purpose of allowing the Brisbane City Council to call tenders for the construction of an underground parking station. If that is the case, is it necessary to first close Albert Street and to transfer it to the Brisbane City Council in fee simple before tenders are called for the construction of the off-street parking station? Or is it possible for the road to be preserved, with traffic flowing on it, underneath the city square, inside the parking station, and still have the off-street parking station? To my mind, those are important questions.

The hon. members on my left who have apparently formed themselves into the Queensland Conservative Party have raised a number of objections, some of them valid, but most of them invalid. The hon. member for Mt. Gravatt spoke about the transfer of this land to the Brisbane City Council in fee simple. I point out that Albert Street is purely and simply part of the tenure of

the Brisbane City Council because it is a dedicated road under the control of the Brisbane City Council, and always will be. By closing it we merely allow that land to be held in fee simple by the City Council. The objections do not carry much weight with me. However, one objection I can put forward—if this is to be discussed on a non-political basis—is that I should like to know the full details of the proposal as it will be outlined in the future.

Is it necessary for the road to be closed before the Brisbane City Council can call tenders for an off-street parking station? If it is essential to close the road, we must then look at other legislation as it applies to this legislation. Will chaotic traffic conditions occur as a result of the permanent closure of Albert Street so that traffic will not be able to flow from Queen Street through Albert Park? Is it the intention of the Brisbane City Council, the Government, or the constructing authority to give sufficient access to allow traffic to flow freely in and out of the city with the development of Little Roma Street and Albert Street? We have heard nothing about this, and I think we are entitled to know something about it before we give complete agreement to the proposal.

Mr. Hanlon: The closure of the road is Parliament's responsibility.

Mr. LLOYD: That is absolutely right. If by closing the road we will create chaotic traffic conditions in the inner city we should examine the proposal, and to do so carefully we must have full details of it. We must know whether it is the intention of the Government or the Council to develop Roma Street or Albert Street, and whether it is the intention of the Council or the constructing auhority to enable traffic to flow from one side of the square to the other. These are important matters.

Mr. Walsh: Do you suggest that if one means of access is closed there should be an alternative?

Mr. LLOYD: I suggest that there should be a free flow of traffic to and from the inner-city area. If we will interfere with egress from and ingress to the inner city, the Council or the Government should accept the responsibility of providing alternative access.

It is rather strange that in 1965, when the Local Government Act was amended, Government members did not object to the extension of the term of building leases from 30 to 75 years. That was done because it was the intention of the Brisbane City Council to call tenders for the construction of off-street parking stations in the Greater Brisbane area, and, to make this proposition attractive to potential tenderers, it was essential that building leases be extended from 30 to 75 years. That could be the key to what will happen after this legislation is passed.

At that time, as reported on page 1553 of "Hansard" on 12 November, 1965, the Minister for Local Government, dealing with the granting of building leases by local authorities, said that if local authorities, particularly the Brisbane City Council had the opportunity of granting longer leases, to the extent of 75 years, they would have the opportunity of allowing private enterprise to build such things as off-street parking stations which, in the normal course of events, would take away from the local authority capital that was needed badly for water, electricity, and sewerage. That was a responsible argument and we agreed to it.

It is important also to remember that the Minister for Local Government said last year that while building leases to provide for off-street parking stations were being extended to 75 years, there was some protection for the Government in that any such leases, and the terms and conditions thereof, would be subject to the prior approval of the Governor in Council. In other words, if this road is closed the Brisbane City Council will call tenders for the construction of an off-street parking station. Under the terms and conditions of the lease, before it is ratified between the Council and the constructing authority, it will be referred to the Governor in Council for approval. If there is no provision for an adequate traffic flow, and traffic chaos can result because of the construction work, the Governor in Council can say, "No, we veto the idea."

Hon. members on my left say that that is not possible and that the Governor in Council has no power of veto. In other words, that the terms and conditions of building leases granted by the Brisbane City Council to constructing authorities over terms of 75 years would not have to be referred to the Governor in Council for approval prior to ratification.

When introducing an amendment last year to the Local Government Act to make provision for the extension of building leases from 30 to 75 years, the Minister for Local Government made the statement that before such leases could be ratified their terms and conditions would need the prior approval of the Governor in Council. If that is the case, some protection is afforded. If, as hon. members on my left say, that is not the case, the Brisbane City Council could, by this method, disrupt the flow of traffic anywhere in Brisbane.

Mr. Lickiss interjected.

Mr. LLOYD: I am not concerned with specific clauses in the legislation. What I am concerned about is what has been asserted in this Assembly by the Minister for Local Government and what is contained in this legislation. Hon. members on my left say that the Minister is wrong. Let us hear from the Minister himself. What I am saying is contained in "Hansard". It is part of the legislation that was introduced last year by

the Minister for Local Government and, because of what he said, we approved of the proposal to extend building leases from 30 to 75 years to enable this work to be carried out.

A very valid argument was presented by the hon. member for Brisbane, and the reply to it should be given in this Chamber. We should not be asked to support legislation that is drafted lightly. I am sure that when the Leader of the Opposition first heard of the legislation, he was in much the same position as I was and accepted the position as readily as I did. I understood that the Minister for Local Government would have to give prior approval before any lease could be signed between the Brisbane City Council and the constructing authority for the construction of an underground parking station. Now we are told that that is not so. In the interests of all, let us have the matter clarified. We have not been given this information. If what I understood is not correct, we are asked to support legislation in which we are blindly following someone who may want something.

Mr. Aikens: Do you agree with the hon. member for Brisbane that the Bill should be withdrawn?

Mr. LLOYD: I agree that the motion needs clarification. The hon. members for Mt. Coot-tha and Clayfield made statements that deserve a reply, because they could confuse the mind of the public. If the public mind is eased by a statement from the ministerial benches that leases for the construction of underground parking stations must receive the prior approval of the Governor in Council, perhaps we will be relieved of much of the worry that we now have. If no such ministerial statement is made, we are asked to follow blindly the lead of the Government. In legislation of this type, a complete explanation should be given to the Committee.

Hon. A. R. FLETCHER (Cunningham—Minister for Lands) (5 p.m.), in reply: I should like to make it quite clear that I do not intend to enter into an argument as to whether or not the proposed car park or square—the design of it or any other aspect of it—has anything to do with me. Right from the beginning of the argument that erupted on the question of the closure of part of Albert Street, I made it very clear that my opinion is that the City Council is responsible for what it does and that the Government should not have any part in it. Those hon. members who have attended Government party meetings know that that has always been my view.

Mr. Aikens: You are giving them Crown land with which they can do anything they like.

Mr. FLETCHER: Exactly, because I respect the integrity, the responsibility and the rights of the Brisbane City Council. I respect the rights of any duly constituted democratic authority, and the Brisbane City Council is as worthy of my respect as is the Pittsworth Shire Council, of which I used to be Chairman. I am as quick as the Mayor of Rockhampton to spring to the defence of the rights and privileges of local authorities if there appears to be a danger of their being infringed. I believe that what the Government is doing is only what the City of Brisbane has a right to expect from it. An election was held; the citizens of Brisbane elected a city council. I am not expressing any opinion as to whether I think it is a good council or a bad council or whether it has a good Lord Mayor or a bad Lord Mayor. The Lord Mayor has treated me with respect, as I have treated him with respect, on every occasion on which I have had dealings with him. In my opinion, the action that the Government is taking is the correct and responsible action.

Mr. Lloyd: If the Lord Mayor or the Brisbane City Council asked for the closure of the whole of Queen Street, would you just do it?

Mr. FLETCHER: That is not a very intelligent question.

Mr. Lloyd: You are not giving them an open order?

Mr. FLETCHER: That is not a fair question, either. However, it is not the first unfair thing that has been said by hon. members on both sides of the Chamber who have an axe to grind. Basically, that is a ridiculous question. If I were asked, "Is it reasonable to close part of Ann Street?", I should refer the hon. member who asked the question to the background of this proposal. It is to be found in the Wilbur Smith Report on the transport problems of the city of Brisbane, which was obtained by the Government at considerable expense. Wilbur Smith and Associates, an American engineering company, has undertaken many responsible jobs in other Australian capital cities and throughout the world. The company was asked to make an exhaustive study, and its report arising from that study has been accepted, I think it is fair to say, as a blueprint—not in all its detail, but as a blueprint—and a basis upon which to build in an attempt to overcome the traffic problems of Brisbane. In subparagraph 3 of paragraph 10.53 of the report, these improvements are suggested—

> "Close Albert Street between Adelaide and Ann Streets to facilitate development of the King George Square project. Albert Street would then revert to a two-way operation."

Further on, under the heading "Current Civil Projects", the report says—

> "The Brisbane City Council is planning to redevelop a portion of Brisbane's Central city area by providing a civic square in front of the City Hall with about 400 parking spaces below. This King George Square project will be closely integrated with urban renewal plans for the old market area near Roma Street. Land purchases

have been completed for adjacent properties and provision of additional terminal facilities in this vicinity will be substantial to meet existing and future parking demands."

This is the background and this is the reason for my saying in parts of the first few remarks I made that the main function of this Bill—the main one, not the only one because this is an immediate necessity so far as the Council is concerned—is to permit the Brisbane City Council to implement its plans for the provision of an underground car park beneath the enlarged city square. That is the main, immediate concern, but it does not mean that the Council is going to do it.

Mr. Aikens: What happens if the incoming council is not in favour of this?

Mr. FLETCHER: That is the Council's business. On considering the matter last night, I thought I had better put it beyond doubt and for that reason I am glad that I included these words in my remarks—

"In meeting this situation we are mindful of the Council's statutory charter and its autonomous standing in the discharge of its functions on behalf of the citizens of Brisbane. Out of respect for the democratic processes of government at local government level, we have decided to extend to the Council a free and unfettered right to use of the area involved on the basis that the scheme is essentially city development and the responsible authority, namely, the Council, is entitled to expect that it be placed in a position where it can exercise that authority and, of course, accept due responsibility for it."

Could I be more explicit that that?

Mr. Hinze: A very impartial Minister.

Mr. Ramsden: Didn't I agree with that?

Mr. Aikens interjected.

Mr. FLETCHER: I am not in the least put off by that sort of irresponsible remark. We have been advised by men who have been chosen over the years because of their expert capacity. We accept their advice in respect of our over-all desires to carry out certain policies.

Mr. Mann: Did you discuss the whole question with your Caucus?

Mr. FLETCHER: Yes.

Mr. Duffey: You have not convinced your colleagues in the corner.

Mr. FLETCHER: I think there has been some misapprehension. What has been taken as disagreement by a number of members has really only been disagreement on the method of doing it. I do not think there is a real right for anyone to say that there is a horrible lack of unanimity on this side of the Chamber. It is evident that many people are against the proposal, but what they are against is the method of carrying it out. Anybody is entitled to take this point of view if he wants to. I think it is a wrong point of view, and I have reasons for thinking that. Some of my reasons stem from the advice I have had, and I am grateful to some members of the Opposition for recognising that fact.

Like any other Minister who handles these matters, I lean heavily on expert advice and hon. members do not really reflect on me when they say this is a silly way to do it; they reflect on these well-trained, highly paid experts in this branch of government. They are the men who have said, "Right, we have taken the objections that have come to you from your Government members, men who are friends of yours"—or critics of mine, perhaps I should say. The experts have taken all of those things into account and have said, "In spite of all this, we are free to tell you that in this set of circumstances this is the proper and responsible way to do it. We know that there are arguments, probably honest ones, by people who honestly think there is another way that would be better but, from the public interest point of view, from the particular aspect of the circumstances in this case, this is the proper way to do it". And I say now that I think they are right. I have taken their advice, and nothing has been said today to convince me that they are wrong. In fact, in the light of what my advisers tell me, there is nothing that can be said in respect of this that can move me, because I think it is a good, responsible, clear-thinking way of doing it. The circumstances here are not as they are for a road that is not used, as the hon. member for Rockhampton said. This is something this Parliament should know about and be responsible for, because this is the centre of Brisbane. This is the special sort of treatment we are giving. The matter is too important to be treated otherwise.

Somebody said he hoped that this would be the first and last time. I think this should be the way that this sort of circumstance is always faced. This is being responsible. This puts it right in the top-quality tribunal of Queensland, which can decide to do or not to do something. Here we can hear both sides of the question. However, today we have had quite a lot of argument about things that have nothing to do with the simple things we are doing. We are closing this road; we are putting it into the hands of the Brisbane City Council. We respect the fact that the Council was put there to do a job. I think most of my colleagues, even though some have been construed as being against what is proposed, are really for it, but they have honest doubts about how it should be done.

Several hon. members on this side have sought an assurance that the passage of this Bill is not in effect approving, in advance, of a car park. To make sure that there was no chance of misinterpreting or misunderstanding what I read at the end of my introductory speech, I have re-read it. I think the answer is there. There is no possibility of any fair-minded person interpreting the passage of this Bill as approving of anything.

We are merely saying to the Council, "This is your responsibility. You can make your own mistakes. If you are successful, good on you". In the words of somebody higher, "Good on yer, mate!"

Mr. O'Donnell: I hope you do not classify him as higher up.

Mr. FLETCHER: I am sorry to differ, but I have to.

I think an assurance can be taken from what I have said that we do not approve of anything in detail.

Mr. Hanlon: You have to be satisfied about the validity of the closure of the road —no more and no less. That is the responsibility of the Parliament.

Mr. FLETCHER: That is right.

Mr. Hanlon: The car park and everything else is the Council's responsibility.

Mr. FLETCHER: That is entirely what I am saying.

Mr. Hanlon: You have to accept the responsibility for the road closure.

Mr. FLETCHER: Exactly. The responsibility for the road closure is, after all, the kernel of this nut.

Mr. Walsh: Have you taken away the right to object to the closure?

Mr. FLETCHER: Yes, most definitely.

Mr. Aikens: If you give the Council this land in fee simple, a future Council could sell it without going on with the car park.

Mr. FLETCHER: It could also sell the piece of land on which the City Hall is standing, because that, too, is held in fee simple. It could sell the big bridge over the river. It is not really worthy of the hon. member, who is a pretty shrewd gentleman, as he has frequently evidenced in this Chamber, to try to make us believe that the present Lord Mayor, or the Lord Mayor of any future Council, would want to sell something as important as this piece of land in the city square of Brisbane. That just does not add up.

Mr. Aikens: But they could do it if they wanted to?

Mr. FLETCHER: Yes, they could, but that does not make me the least bit worried.

I think it was the hon. member for Brisbane who said we ought to shelve the whole proposal until we know more about it. Those who have been advising us—Wilbur Smith and Associates, and our own traffic authorities and engineers—have all been through this with a fine-tooth comb. There is no question that we need this sort of reassurance; that point of time has passed long ago. This has been clearly understood by all in the Chamber. If not, hon. members have not been reading the newspapers. This has been a subject of debate for years.

Mr. Houston interjected.

Mr. FLETCHER. If the hon. member comes to me I will tell him, if he does not believe the newspapers.

Mr. Houston: I did not say that.

Mr. FLETCHER: There is always a big difference of opinion. I am just a little worried about a couple of opinions expressed by the hon. members for Clayfield and Toowong.

Mr. Walsh: You are really worried by what they said?

Mr. FLETCHER: I am not the least bit worried. I respect their right to have a point of view, but it is not my point of view, and I will bet it is not the point of view of the hon. member for Rockhampton South. They seemed to suggest that this Parliament should retain some control over the Brisbane City Council. As I said at the outset, that is exactly opposite to the view I have taken of our part in this matter.

The hon. member for Clayfield asked, "Are we going to let this monster keep its hands on this fair city and do what it likes?", or words to that effect. The hon. member for Toowong said we should be taking some responsibility for the developing and planning of Greater Brisbane. I respect their anxiety but I do not agree with it in any way. As an old local authority man I am jealous of the autonomy, rights and privileges of local authorities. I think it would be a sorry day when we interfered with them and said, "We will centralise power". I think decentralised power is, in this matter, the best thing in the world. I can see no possible advantage in cutting it down in any way. I do not think we should even consider superseding any of the autonomies, powers, rights, and privileges of local government.

Without going through each of the contributions I think I have touched on all the points that seem to be relevant and worth replying to. I think I should thank the Committee. Although there was much disagreement about how things were being done, generally I think I can derive satisfaction from the fact that, apart from a few warmly expressed opinions about my own fairness, there has been complete approval of what the Bill sets out to do.

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

Resolved in the affirmative under Standing Order No. 148.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

The House adjourned at 5.22 p.m.