

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 6 DECEMBER 1966

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

ASSENT TO BILLS

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

Brisbane City Square Bill

Racing and Betting Acts Amendment Bill.

QUESTIONS

SMALL-BOAT HARBOUR AND LAUNCHING RAMPS, CAIRNS

Mr. R. Jones, pursuant to notice, asked The Treasurer,—

(1) Further to his Answer to my Question on August 31, is the report by the consulting engineers on the small-boat harbour at Cairns available?

(2) If so, what are the details of the work plan and the approximate date of commencement of work?

(3) If not, did the survey include the provision of launching ramps and are they to be constructed in the interim?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) "A further report covering the proposals for a boat harbour at Cairns has been received and is being examined. Proposals for launching ramps incorporated in the report will be given urgent consideration."

ADDITIONAL CLASSROOMS AT TRINITY BAY HIGH SCHOOL, CAIRNS

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

Has consideration been given to the need for the planning and construction of additional classroom accommodation at the Trinity Bay High School, Cairns?

Answer:—

"Yes. Additional permanent accommodation to replace two (2) temporary classrooms will be constructed as soon as the necessary funds can be allocated for this project. It is noted that existing accommodation will be sufficient for the enrolment anticipated for the 1967 school year."

LEGAL AID FOR APPEALS BY PRISONERS PHILLIPS AND LAWRENCE

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

Has his attention been drawn to the report in *The Courier-Mail* of December 1 that two Boggo Road prisoners, Kevin Barry Phillips and Gary John Lawrence,

have had legal aid approved to defray the cost of an appeal against their recent conviction on charges of robbery, personal violence, indecent assault and attempted sodomy? If so, will the legal aid referred to be supplied by the Legal Assistance Committee set up by the Queensland Government?

Answer:—

"As indicated in my speech on the Second Reading of the Legal Assistance Bill (see Parliamentary Debates—Hansard—of December 8, 1965, p. 2238), during the early stages of the scheme of legal assistance under The Legal Assistance Act, attention is being paid to assistance in civil proceedings, particularly cases such as maintenance cases where great hardship is suffered. Legal assistance under that scheme has not been extended to criminal proceedings. Consequently, the legal aid which has been approved to prisoners Kevin Barry Phillips and Gary John Lawrence in their appeals against their recent convictions will be given by the Public Defender."

WATER CHARGES, TINAROO FALLS IRRIGATION AREAS

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

(1) Have irrigation water charges been increased in some instances in the Tinaroo Falls irrigation areas? If so, have the increases been made retrospective to June 1, 1966?

(2) Will he consider a complete survey of all charges for water and when an increase is intended, will he give the farmers prior advice and not make retrospective charges?

Answers:—

(1) "(a) Yes. Charges for supply from the channel systems to farms where water is used for tobacco production were raised by \$1 per acre foot for the first 40 acre feet and 50 cents per acre foot for supplies over this amount. Where tobacco is not grown the cost of supply was increased 50 cents per acre foot. For supply pumped by individuals from streams augmented from Tinaroo Falls Dam, charges for all supplies were increased by \$1 per acre foot. The increases in charges of from 11 to 14 per cent. compare with increases of approximately 20 per cent. in the basic wage, since charges were last amended. (b) Charges for supply from the channel system and for diversion from streams are applicable from July 1, 1966, and were gazetted on October 15, 1966."

(2) "It is required under the Irrigation Acts that charges for water supply in irrigation areas be fixed by the Governor in Council each year. Fees for supply of

water under license issued by the Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply, where stream flows are regulated from Commission storage, are also reviewed annually. Thus all charges are already subject to review on an annual basis. It will be appreciated that review of charges must take into account the result of operations during the preceding year and be related to the preparation of the State Budget. Under these circumstances it is not practicable to give notice to landholders on proposed changes in charges prior to the commencement of the financial year in which they are applicable."

WATER LEVEL, TINAROO FALLS DAM

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

(1) What is the present level of the Tinaroo Falls Dam?

(2) Is his Department satisfied that it is sufficient for both irrigation and hydro supply?

Answers:—

(1) "The level of the water in Tinaroo Falls Dam as at December 5 was 28 ft. 4 in. below the spillway crest, which provides a volume of 146,800 ac. ft. in storage."

(2) "This volume is adequate to meet full requirements for irrigation during the balance of 1966 and the whole of 1967. It is also adequate to meet full requirements of power generation for the balance of 1966 and for several months in 1967. The availability of supply for power generation throughout 1967 will depend on flows into and downstream of the dam during that year, and particularly during the first three months. It was originally found that stream flows in the period 1914 to 1916 determined the safe annual supply from Tinaroo Falls Dam. Flows during 1966 have been somewhat worse than those estimated for 1915. To provide for the possibility of 1915 or 1916 conditions occurring again in 1967, the Northern Electric Authority has, at the suggestion of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission, decided to reduce the use of water at Barron Falls from 245 cusecs to 170 cusecs as from December 1, 1966, to ensure that the latter amount would be available throughout 1967. Under these conditions it is understood that all requirements of power generation in the region during 1967 could be met from the existing stations at Barron Falls, Tully Falls, Townsville and Mackay. Should normal rainfall occur in the early months in 1967, the Northern Electric Authority will review the situation."

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Orders in Council under the Fish Supply Management Act of 1965.

Rules of Court under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Acts, 1961 to 1964.

Reports under the Legal Assistance Act of 1965.

PETITION

ALLEGED CRISIS IN EDUCATION

Mr. P. WOOD (Toowoomba East) presented a petition from 257 electors of Toowoomba praying that the Government take all necessary steps in the current session of Parliament to resolve the crisis in education in Queensland.

Petition received and read.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ROMA-INJUNE RAILWAY

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

The Honourable D. E. Nicholson, M.L.A.,
Speaker,
Legislative Assembly,
Parliament House,
Brisbane.

Dear Mr. Speaker,

I beg to inform you that, in accordance with Standing Order 137, I intend this day, Tuesday, 6 December, 1966, to move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

My reason for moving this motion is to give the House an opportunity of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the Government's action in confirming a decision of Cabinet to close the Roma-Injune railway line on 31 December, 1966.

This decision has—

(a) undermined the confidence of the people in the Government because there is obviously no appreciation of the potential of the area extending from Roma to the Arcadia Valley relative to the production of beef cattle, wool, grain and timber;

(b) not taken into consideration the drought conditions that have prevailed since the original decision to close the line on 30 June, 1965, was made in February, 1964, provided that the Main Roads Department had completed an all-weather road to Injune;

(c) perturbed the farmers and graziers concerned that the Minister for Transport has not visited the area to hear protests relative to the closure;

(d) ignored the necessity for a property-by-property investigation of future productive capacity, particularly relative to grain, as it would be totally uneconomic to use any transport except rail for this purpose;

(e) ignored the present Government policy of imposing agricultural conditions on ballot blocks even where some are west of the 20-inch isohyet;

(f) upset the residents of Injune in that the Government has abandoned that centre after investing a considerable amount of money in the hospital and the school, in addition to Federal Government expenditure on the post office and the aerodrome; and

(g) made urgent the necessity of debating the closure of the Roma-Injune line in order that the full case against this action by the Government may be presented, and in order that the Government may give full facts and figures to justify its action.

Yours faithfully,

J. W. HOUSTON."

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

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba—Leader of the Opposition) (11.18 a.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity you have given the House to debate this vitally important matter. Obviously you consider it important, otherwise you would not have taken this action. The Opposition regrets that because of the shortness of time we could not give you, the Premier, and the Minister for Transport, longer notice of our intention. I think you will agree that it was only on Friday that the public was given an inkling of the intended closure of this railway line. We feel that this matter is so important that the Minister should be given every opportunity in the House assembled to explain in full why it is now necessary to close this line, which has remained open under threat of closure since 1965. It was mentioned originally in 1964, but the line was given a reprieve till June, 1965, if my memory serves me correctly, provided that certain roadworks were carried out. The local residents are concerned about the matter, and Cabinet has now decided to proceed with the closure of the railway line. Therefore, I believe it is necessary for the Minister to give the House details of the reasons for that decision.

If we go back a little in time, we find that on 19 February, 1964, when the matter was discussed by Cabinet, the Minister for Transport at that time gave the following statement—I quote from "The Courier-Mail"—to the Press:—

"Roma to Injune Branch to be continued until the Main Roads Department completes a reasonable all-weather road, but not beyond June 30, 1965. In the meantime

the Railway Department will only carry out expenditure on the line to keep it in safe trafficable order, Length, 62 m. 40 c. Loss in 1963, £62,337."

There is no evidence to show that the road mentioned has been completed. According to many people who have travelled over it, it is anything but an all-weather road under the conditions prevailing in the area. The Minister should make known to the House and to the people concerned whether the road is in fact an all-weather road, and, if not, when it is likely to be put in satisfactory order.

When the announcement was made relative to the closing of various railway lines, the then Minister for Transport, who is now the Treasurer, made a statement that appeared in the Press and which I think is important. I do not remember his denying it; but he is in the House, and if it is incorrect I will accept his denial. Again I quote from "The Courier-Mail"—

"The Transport Minister (Mr. Chalk), who announced the line closures, said that there would be a major reduction in road tax charges in the areas affected."

That took place at the time. But what has happened recently? There has been a drastic increase in rail freights, and many other transport costs have increased. To my way of thinking, when the closures, one of which was the Roma-Injune line, were proposed originally, the reduction in road transport costs was one of the important features. However, as recently as 1 July of this year the road freights increased by 4.5 per cent. and the handling rate rose by 33½ per cent. from 1 August. Those are facts.

To take the matter a little further: if the Government closes this line, the only other method of transporting various commodities to and from the area now served by the railway will be by road transport. As hon. members know, road-transport operators in Western Queensland have posed a serious threat to the Government's revenue as a result of the increased freight charges. Is the State to be held to ransom by transport operators? I am not saying that the transport operators in the West are doing the wrong thing; that is a matter between them and the Government. But I do not believe that in an area such as this, which has tremendous potential, the closing of the railway line should be allowed when it is not known what transport charges will be imposed on the people by road-transport operators, who provide the only alternative means of transport. The Minister has not made this known to the House.

I think it is also worth quoting what the Minister for Transport said recently when the matter was referred to him. He said—

"The Government will not consider the reopening of this line unless new evidence is put before it.

Surely hon. members have heard enough in this Chamber about droughts to realise that the line has not had a chance to prove itself one way or the other over the past few years. In fact, the decision to close the line was based on the loss of £62,000 at a time that we thought was the end of the drought period.

I have here a statement made by the then Minister for Transport, as reported in "The Courier-Mail" of 6 July, 1961. It reads—

"But the Transport Minister (Mr. Chalk) said railway's revenue, despite big losses of traffic through the drought, was £551,466 up on the previous year's. But for the drought and basic wage increases the department could have come close to a profit."

Mr. Chalk said that as the Minister in charge of railways, but the important fact, of course, is that that article was written not last year or the year before, but in July, 1961. We have not to rely on our memories; we have a printed statement that in 1961 drought was affecting this State.

On more than one occasion I have heard Government members refer to losses incurred and other problems encountered as a result of drought, and I contend that the area we are now discussing has been hit by drought over a considerable number of years and that, as a result, its potential is not at this stage well known to those in authority. But it is well known to the local people, and in that respect I should like to read a letter written to the hon. member for Barcoo, who will follow me in this debate. It will give the House an intimate knowledge of the actual position. It reads—

"At the last meeting of the Arcadia Branch of the U.G.A. I was asked to write to you requesting your help in preventing the closure of the Injune railway line.

"It is more than obvious that the whole situation has altered since the original decision was made to close the line. The Arcadia area has been developed since the closure decision was made and this must have already made more business for the railway and the potential is here for much more.

"The cultivation potential of the Arcadia area (estimated 75,000 acres) is in jeopardy because of the temporary nature of the Injune railway. At present there are five men in the area who own crawler tractors and root-rakes and intend farming. If the railway closes it slams the door on all cash crops.

"The cattle population in this area is rapidly increasing (and with the increase in road freights) it would be reasonable to assume that many of the fat cattle leaving the area will go by rail to Brisbane.

"Hoping to receive your prompt help in this matter as the line is due to close on December 31st."

Mr. Ewan: Who wrote that?

Mr. HOUSTON: It is signed by the secretary of the U.G.A. in the area. It was received after we made our decision to have a very close look at this matter. Our decision to bring the matter to the House is not based solely on this letter, although naturally we are supporting the local people in their views. Surely local people should be given an opportunity to express their views. I do not know what the hon. member for Roma will have to say, but I hope to hear him in this debate. Hon. members opposite will certainly hear Opposition members.

I regret that the Minister for Transport did not see his way clear to visit this area and talk to the people. He could have visited the various properties and mingled with the people, and obtained first-hand information on what was going on before bringing the matter before Cabinet. We all know that Ministers visit areas where they can lie in the sun with leis around their necks; but when problems of this nature come before Ministers they should do everything in their power to see that local feeling is ascertained and local knowledge gained before they make recommendations to Cabinet. It is not a good idea to rely on information from others.

One of the things that is perturbing the Opposition, apart altogether from the closure of the line, which is bad enough, is the fact that once these lines are closed it is impossible to re-open them. So far, following every closure the Government has ripped up the line, allowed the bridges to deteriorate or be destroyed and disposed of station buildings and other property so that it will be virtually impossible for any future Government to rebuild the line.

If the Government goes against the wishes of the public and closes this line, I make the plea that it should not tear it up; let the line remain where it is so that if circumstances change for the better and the local people are proved correct in their assertion that with the breaking of the drought the area can develop as a grain-growing centre, at least the line can be re-opened without tremendous expense to the State. After all, railways are not just profit-making concerns. Naturally we want the State railway system to pay, but the great advantages of a railway system lie in its ability to provide a means of mass haulage and the part it can play in times of crisis. Indeed, the railways are essential for this State's development and we should not deprive this pocket of the State of a railway service.

A glance at the map reveals that the country served by this line includes a very fertile and developing area. It would be completely wrong to close the line and tear it up. What is to be gained by wrecking it? It is possible that within the next year or two new methods of carriage will be developed within the railway service; undoubtedly dieselisation will bring about a speeding-up of the service.

I move this motion on behalf of the Opposition, trusting that the Government will review its decision. I hope it will allow the line to remain open and give the local people an opportunity to show what they can do in the near future following the breaking of the drought.

Mr. O'DONNELL (Barcoo) (11.31 a.m.): I second the motion. In doing so I am keeping a promise I made to a gentleman who has passed on, Mr. Fred Heywood, that I would fight every inch of the way to ensure that this line was kept in operation. He was a member of the Springsure branch of the Central Coastal Graziers' Association. He and his fellow graziers felt that this line was of paramount importance to all the area south of Springsure, particularly Rolleston, Warrinilla and other parts affected by the Brigalow Development Scheme. That area has great potential for beef-cattle and grain production, the latter not only on the owner-operator basis but also on a share-farming basis. The closure of the railway line would prevent all hope of this grain production getting under way. That is why I am on my feet to give wholehearted support to the motion.

I raised this matter in the House in 1964 after I had made representations to the then Minister for Transport. At that time I asked for a 10-year trial period. I did not think at that time that I was being too ambitious in my request. At that stage we were hopeful that climatic conditions in the area would be favourable. We did have a drought period in 1960-61 which could have become a major catastrophe. With the introduction of the Brigalow Development Scheme and being aware of the hardships that the settlers would have to endure before they could get into production, I felt that a 10-year trial period was not too much to request.

Unfortunately for everybody, particularly the settlers, the worst drought on record then struck the area. The Minister for Lands and the Minister for Primary Industries, who have visited the brigalow area, know the disastrous impact of this terrible drought, which we all hope is now over.

I repeat that rail transport to the South is necessary in this area. For beef cattle alone rail transport is essential. The productive capacity of the area has been carefully assessed by experts. The cattle will not go only to Roma but will proceed to points farther south.

I should like to emphasise the potential of this area for grain-growing. Reference has already been made to the five owner-operator men in the Arcadia Valley who are preparing to plough the ground. With their initial success—and I am sure it will be a success—others will follow right through the valley so that 50,000 to 70,000 acres may come under the plough. What a wonderful impetus this will be for the settlers who have been worried by drought conditions. This will be an alternative to beef-cattle production and

will help them to become established, not only in crop fattening but also with grain as a cash crop. We know the prices realised for store cattle and breeders today and the difficulties associated with the beef-cattle industry. Anything that will help these people is indeed desirable.

I know I have not much time, but I should like to run through a few comments made by people outside the area who have put forward their views in the Press to gain the Government's attention. When talking about the Roma district I should like to show hon. members a photostat copy that I have here of an article headed, "One and a-half million dollars wheat harvest for Roma-Hodgson area—one of the best ever." That illustrates the productivity of the Roma area. As I go through these Press items, hon. members will see that the productivity can be extended north to Injune and even further north to the Arcadia Valley.

In commenting on the present situation I cannot quote railway figures—they have been denied to me—but I can go back to the Ford, Bacon and Davis Report, which shows that there was a loss of £62,000, or \$124,000 in 1963 or 1964. I point out that doubtless drought losses have contributed to the lack of business on this line in the last few years. We hope there may be a rehabilitation of this area as a result of good seasons and development north to Injune and the Arcadia Valley, up to Warrinilla, where all the settlers are doing their best to further increase production of cattle which, added to the introduction of crop fattening, will increase the opportunities for rail transport.

What will be the effect on Injune so far as cattle are concerned? Injune will lose the fat-cattle sales and I wonder how many store-cattle sales will be held. All this will result from the closure of this line. I know very well that little wool is transported on the line, but I believe that if we could get a co-ordinated road and rail service we would obtain wool for the railway and, with a better schedule, more sheep would be moved on to the sales at Dalby.

Turning to the grain situation, if we take a strip 50 by 20 miles wide in this area, which is a very narrow strip, there are 640,000 acres of land that could be considered as suitable for arable purposes. At present there are 12,800 acres under cultivation, and in five years' time it is certain that there will be 64,000 acres under cultivation. We must not forget that there are 2,000 acres under wheat this year producing 20,000 bags, and next year probably 7,000 acres will be under the same crop.

I have referred to Arcadia Valley and pointed out its potential for grain production. There are also valuable timber stands of cypress and hardwood in the Injune district.

The Roma-Injune line is playing an ever-increasing part in helping the settlers in their fight for survival during drought. We must not forget how important it was for the settlers to obtain the concessional freight rates for fodder supplies.

I should like to refer to subparagraph (e) of the motion before the House. It is a fact that the Government has ignored its present policy of imposing agricultural conditions on ballot blocks, even where some are west of the 20-inch isohyet. The area under discussion is in the 24-inch, 25-inch, or 26-inch rainfall area. The area west of the 20-inch isohyet outlined on the map in the Payne Report, includes the Kilcummin area, which is in my electorate, and some of the blocks there have been deemed by the Government to be suitable for agricultural development. That is significant, because agriculture is developing east of the 20-inch isohyet—an important factor today in the development of this State.

If we go back through the history of the Springsure-Emerald line we see that financially it was pretty rocky at times. But would we consider closing that line today? Of course not. There will be congestion in the Springsure yard, because closer settlement has meant greater grain production, particularly in sorghum, wheat and safflower. Would the Government consider closing the Blair Athol-Emerald line now that the coal has declined? Of course not, because it shows a profit in transporting grain, cattle, and sheep. Would the Government consider closing the Miles-Wandoan line? Of course not.

The Government should give this line a chance, because it will return good results to the department and the State. If it is not kept open the whole area will experience a period of retrogression and will have to exist solely on cattle and sheep. That is not right. These people must be given a chance. Farming is here to stay and wherever it can be implemented it will be of advantage to the man on the land, no matter whether he is the typical old grazier or the modern man imbued with up-to-date animal husbandry practices and agricultural methods. The two must go hand in hand. I ask that this line be left open for the benefit of such an important area of the State, which can look forward to nothing but great development if given reasonable seasons.

Hon. W. E. KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Transport) (11.43 a.m.): I feel that I should outline the history of this decision.

Mr. Bennett: It is about time you did.

Mr. KNOX: It has been outlined previously, and the hon. member who has just resumed his seat and other members who may participate in this debate should know the facts.

The decision to close this line was made on 18 February, 1964. Following strong recommendations from time to time by the hon. member for Roma (Mr. Ewan), the matter was reviewed on 30 March, 1965, and the time was extended to 30 June this year. When I became Minister for Transport at the end of last year the hon. member for Roma contacted me and brought certain information to my attention. As a result, the time was further extended to the end of December this year. For almost two years this matter has been under discussion, publicly and privately. The decision was made to close the line at the end of December this year and I shall tell the House why that decision was arrived at.

Following further representations by the hon. member for Roma the matter was again examined during the last fortnight, and Cabinet decided to confirm its original decision.

The figures on this line are rather interesting. One or two figures have been plucked out of the air by the Opposition, but we should look at the whole story.

Mr. O'Donnell: We cannot get the information.

Mr. KNOX: I have not been asked for the information.

To the end of the financial year 1960 the loss on this line amounted to \$145,000. I am referring here to financial years. In 1961 the loss was \$151,000. In 1962 it was \$130,000, and, in 1963, \$148,000. A decision was then made to close the line. Minimum maintenance was applied to it, and for this reason the loss dropped to \$84,000 in 1964. In 1965 the loss was \$78,000, and in 1966 it was \$88,000. The losses were starting to increase again. In the light of these losses, the Government's concern for the future of the line can be well understood.

Mr. Houston: Did you go out yourself to look at the area?

Mr. KNOX: I shall deal with that in a moment.

In the three months of this financial year to the end of September, 1966, revenue from the line has been \$8,000. There are three services up and three down each week, and they carried in that period of three months four horses, 1,954 head of cattle, no calves, 4,135 sheep, and 36 pigs.

Mr. Houston: You wouldn't expect much else at that time of the year.

Mr. KNOX: I am giving the latest information available; the Leader of the Opposition asked for it, and now he is getting it.

Mr. Houston: I appreciate that.

Mr. KNOX: That is the situation in fact and figures. I am somewhat surprised—as I am sure all hon. members are, including some on the Opposition benches—that the Opposition has seen fit to move this motion at this late stage when the public has known for nearly two years that the line was to be closed. The time of closure was extended for 12 months, and then there was a further extension of six months. In the time in which I have been the Minister for Transport no representations have been made to me on this matter by Opposition members. Of course, I can speak only for myself. The statements concerning extension times and closing of the line were made public, and the Opposition had every opportunity, when there was plenty of time to consider them, to make representations to me. Whilst I appreciate the courtesy extended to me by the Leader of the Opposition in his regret that shortness of time prevented the giving of longer notice of this motion, I recall that the Opposition has been aware since April of this year that the line would close at the end of December.

Mr. O'Donnell: That is completely untrue.

Mr. KNOX: If it is, why did the Australian Labour Party use it repeatedly in their campaign to try to embarrass the Government candidate and unseat the hon. member for Roma? They used this information and did everything else possible in an effort to show that the Government had no interest in the area. I am merely pointing out that the Opposition has had plenty of opportunity to bring this matter to the notice of the public.

I am not impressed with the argument that hon. members opposite are putting forward today. I feel that it is a face-saver because they realise that they neglected the area. No doubt a branch of the A.L.P. in the area concerned has been "on their backs" to do something about it, because the A.L.P. has been sadly lacking in any interest in this district.

I pay a tribute to the hon. member for Roma for his persistent and strong representation to me on this subject since I have been Minister for Transport. Because of his efforts, the closure of the line was delayed. The argument used then by the people of this area was that they were prepared to accept the closure of the line as long as a suitable road was provided.

Mr. Houston: No.

Mr. KNOX: The Leader of the Opposition and the seconder of his motion say, "No," but that is the position. I have received representations from the local authority at Roma claiming that the closure of the line should be delayed till 1970 or till the road is sealed. My colleague the Minister for Main Roads has information on the subject that will be of interest to the House. The point is that while I have been Minister for Transport the Opposition has not made any claim to have the closure of the line delayed, or, indeed, to have it kept open.

Mr. Houston: You gave no indication in the annual report of the Commissioner for Railways that you were going to close it.

Mr. KNOX: Rubbish! The matter has been raised in the House on three or four occasions; it has been the subject of debate in the Roma district; it has been the subject of Press comment in the Roma district.

Mr. Houston: From 4 November.

Mr. KNOX: Rubbish!

Mr. Houston: I have all the Press comments here.

Mr. KNOX: Why did the hon gentleman's party use that information during the last election campaign?

Mr. Hanlon: We said it was going to happen, and it has.

Mr. KNOX: It is a last-minute stand to try to save face, in view of the criticism that is being levelled at the Opposition by rank-and-file members of the A.L.P. I think they are smarting under the defeat the party received in the recent Federal election.

Mr. O'Donnell: You are making a political issue of it.

Mr. KNOX: If anyone is making a political issue of it, it is the Opposition. There have been plenty of opportunities to debate this issue.

Mr. Houston: When? When did we get the report?

Mr. KNOX: It was not necessary to have the report of the Commissioner to debate this matter.

Mr. Bennett interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I advise hon. members that I allowed discussion of this motion at a very late hour because I thought it was important. If the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues do not think it is sufficiently important to allow the Minister to reply to it, I draw their attention to subparagraph (g) of the letter that I received from the Leader of the Opposition—

"made urgent the necessity of debating the closure of the Roma-Injune line in order that the full case against this action by the Government may be presented, and in order that the Government may give full facts and figures to justify its action."

I ask hon. members on my left how the Minister can explain if they keep interjecting. I will not tolerate any further interjections. I will allow every hon. member to be heard without interruption.

Mr. HOUSTON: I rise to a point of order. Naturally, Mr. Speaker, the Opposition accepts your ruling and wishes to cooperate. However, I point out to you and

to the House that the lateness of the hour has no point in justification of the matter coming before the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is wasting further time.

Mr. KNOX: My failure to visit the area was also raised. The only request I received to visit the area came from the hon. member for Roma (Mr. Ewan), who saw me on two occasions and asked me if I would be good enough to visit the area before the closure date, or before the decision was finally made. The decision had been made, and I explained to the hon. member that it was not physically possible for me to visit the district in the time available. However, I indicated to him that I would be prepared to meet a deputation; and I am still prepared to meet a deputation from interested citizens who wish to wait on me to convey any information that has not been supplied previously. Information has been supplied to me already by the hon. member for Roma, who is always conscientious in looking after the interests of his electorate, and this has been examined. It is regretted that the decision to close the line on 31 December still stands.

I do not think the Opposition does itself very much credit by raising the matter in the way it has, because, as I said earlier, the Government's intention to close the railway line between Roma and Injune has been public knowledge for almost two years. My answer to the people of the district who want the line to remain open is to support it—to see that it is used. It is obvious from the figures that I have given the House this morning that the line is not being used as it deserves. It is true that in the financial year 1965 the usage of the line increased. But that was due entirely to the drought relief that was given and to those who patronised the railway in order to get fodder at concessional rates. I regret to say that in better times, those very same people do not use the railway nearly as much as they do in times of drought. It is regrettable, but they have taken the opportunity to use the road. The Government is not preventing them from using it. Apparently it is serving their needs and they prefer to use it. They have the choice of travelling by rail or by road. If they choose to travel by road, the Government sees little purpose in keeping the railway line open.

I might say that when I became Minister for Transport I was conscious of the details of this matter for the first time, and when I examined all the documents I was quite convinced that the decision made in 1964 was the right decision.

Mr. Davies: We thought the change of Ministers might change the decision.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has only two minutes of his time left.

Mr. KNOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had much more to say, but I think the information I have given the House quite conclusively supports the Government's decision in this matter and I think the A.L.P. should accept the situation as it is, regrettable as it is. No-one likes to be closing railway lines—it is not a popular move and we do not like doing it—but with the development that has taken place in the State and its roads today there are so many alternatives. This Government has encouraged road transport. One cannot obtain the road transport in New South Wales that is available in this State.

My colleague the Minister for Main Roads has done a mighty job on many of the new roads that have been built in this State and, because those roads are in existence, people are using them. I do not blame them for doing so, of course, but the result has been less traffic for the railways and this is one line that has suffered as a result of the increased traffic on the roads.

Mr. Houston: Are you going to lift the line?

Mr. KNOX: The line will be closed and the rails removed.

Mr. EWAN (Roma) (11.57 a.m.): In making my contribution to this debate, I first of all want to thank the Minister for his kindly remarks about me personally and my representations from time to time. However, in his statement of the history of this matter the Minister has gone slightly astray. This leads me to say that to some extent I support the sentiments expressed by the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Barcoo.

The proposed closure of this line is not something new. When the present Treasurer was Minister for Transport he discussed this matter with me—it was somewhere about 1962—and following that discussion and the supply to me of figures I do not mind admitting that I was clearly in favour of the closure of the line, to such an extent that I called a meeting of people in the Injune district and discussed the closure with them. It was quite well received conditional upon the provision of a good alternative form of all-weather transport—in other words, the construction of a reasonable all-weather road in accordance with this Government's policy.

The then Minister for Mines and Main Roads, the late Mr. Evans, followed by the present Minister, co-operated very fully in the provision of this road, but unfortunately the unavailability of funds will leave at least 16 miles of unfinished road even on the conclusion of the present work being performed by the Main Roads Department on 7 miles of road at a cost of \$237,000, in addition to a job that is being performed by the shire council.

Some people claim that the road as it is at present provides a reasonable all-weather road. Some experts say that, but the people who have lived there all their lives say that

it will not. Having driven over that road for many years, I agree with those who say it will not, despite the contention of the experts.

First of all, the Minister for Transport was quite correct in saying that I made representations to him about this line. I also made representations to the Cabinet. I have here a copy of "The Western Star" reporting a meeting attended by 121 people in the Injune district asking for a review in relation to the decision on the closure of the Injune railway line, and my request to Cabinet was that the survey be carried out on these lines. I do not know if that survey has been carried out. If it has, then I am absolutely shocked at the Cabinet's decision. As a reasonable person, in the case of a fully developed district that is on the decline and is showing huge and continuous losses on its railway line, I do not mind if the line is closed; but in a new district that is on the eve of great development and in which in the last few years great development has been shown, it is an entirely different matter. Previously no wheat was being grown in the district, whereas today there are 4,000 acres under wheat. In addition, 2,000 bags of barley from Womelbank will be coming in within a short time, and we all know what is going on in Arcadia. In his wisdom the Minister for Lands spent \$240,000 on providing a road from Arcadia to Injune. Is it any wonder that I have changed my views with the tremendous development and expansion that has taken place in the Injune area in the last three or four years?

Mr. Hanlon: You are big enough to admit that you have changed your views, but apparently the Government isn't.

Mr. Ewan: As an honest person, I cannot do anything else.

In registering my amazement at Cabinet's action in rejecting my representations for the continuance of this line, I draw attention to page 15 of the report of the Commissioner for Railways for the year ended 30 June, 1966, which indicates that 5,785 miles of line are open to rail traffic, including the 4ft. 8½ in. gauge from South Brisbane to the border, the 3 ft. 6 in. gauge in the various divisions, and the 2 ft. gauge of the Innisfail and Mourilyan tramways. The report indicates that the average loss over the whole complex was \$2,772.75 per mile. Let us compare that with the results on the Injune line. For these details I will refer to figures given in the Minister's letter to me, dated 2 December, which I received in the last delivery last night, the 5th of December. The yearly losses on this 63 miles of line have ranged from \$150,000 down to \$78,000 during the last seven years, four of which have been drought years. Let us look at last year's figures and compare them with the over-all loss shown in the report of the Commissioner for Railways. The loss for the 63 miles of the Injune line with \$88,059, or \$1,397 per mile, for the year ended 30 June, whereas the loss per mile over the whole complex was \$2,772.

If the Government closes the Injune railway line because it is not paying and treats the railway system as a revenue-producing concern rather than an adjunct of State development, to be consistent it should close the whole of the railway system with the exception of the lines that are paying. That would mean that the whole of the southern system, including the suburban lines, would have to be closed down. Do not let us be ridiculous.

With all the sincerity at my command I make this plea. I know that this is wheat-growing land. I have flown over it at low altitude, as have some of the Ministers. I know every inch of this country. I know what the Injune people say. It will be a great wheat-growing district in the future if it is given a chance to develop by the retention of the railway line, but if the railway line is taken away nobody can grow wheat there commercially. After all, there is an equalisation scheme of freights operating. If the line is taken away from the people the great farming industries will lapse and that great area will prove worthless to a lot of gallant fellows who have suffered the vicissitudes of drought, as have all other people on the land in the Injune area in the last four years.

The figures speak for themselves. The letter from the Minister for Transport is not confidential, so I shall publish it. It shocks me. With all the vehemence at my disposal I exhort the Minister and the responsible members of Cabinet to consider keeping this service operating for the next two years, at least until the road is finished, to determine whether or not the statements made by these practical men of many years' experience are true. We would be failing in our duties as administrators if we did not do so.

Mr. TUCKER (Townsville North) (12.4 a.m.): The Opposition felt that the proposed closure of this very important line of some 63 miles was a matter of great public importance and therefore considered that this motion should be debated in a reasonable way. My Leader took steps to move the motion so that the matter could be debated, but I was surprised to see the Minister for Transport adopt a very unreasonable attitude to what we felt was a very important matter, especially to the people of the district, by playing politics and claiming that the A.L.P. was not really concerned in this direction at all. He said we were attempting to score politically against the Government by moving the motion for adjournment but that is not our intention at all. We are speaking on behalf of many people who are concerned about the closure of this line.

In the short time available to me I wish to put on record some of the protests that have been made, not necessarily by people of our political thinking. First, I refer to an extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Eumamurrin branch of the Maranoa

Graziers' Association held on Sunday, 27 November, 1966, at 3 p.m. This motion was moved by Mr. G. Kadel and seconded by Mr. E. Kennedy—

"That this branch—

(1) strongly oppose the closure of the Injune Railway line.

(2) that an approach be made to the M.G.A. to call a public meeting at Injune to express an emphatic protest against closure of the line and that the Minister for Transport be invited to be present to address the meeting and that all interested organisations be invited to attend."

A telegram was sent to the Premier from the Bungil Shire Council on 18 November, 1966, in the following terms:—

"This Council considers it a most inopportune time to implement Cabinet decision to close Injune-Roma railway line in view of continuing adverse seasonal conditions and recent rapid advances in grain-growing industry and many other factors not repeat not previously taken into account."

That was a reasonable approach by these people, and by many of the residents of the area. They called public meetings and invited the Minister out there to put his case. That is not at all unreasonable. I acknowledge that the Minister is a busy man, but in the public interest it would not have hurt him to go out there to see these people and present his case—if, in fact, he had a case.

In "The Western Star" of 22 November this item appeared—

"The Minister for Transport, (Mr. Knox) had refused point blank to meet district deputations at Injune to discuss the proposed closure of the Roma-Injune railway line on December 31, Cr. S. Girle told last Friday's meeting of the Bungil Shire."

When a Minister isolates, or insulates, himself from the general public—

Mr. Ewan: You will notice that I corrected that in the next issue of "The Western Star". I pointed out that the Minister was prepared to receive a deputation.

Mr. TUCKER: The Minister was not prepared to go out there. That is where he fell down on the job. If he had had a good case the people in the area would surely have been prepared to listen to him and acknowledge what he was putting forward.

It is peculiar that the Minister was unable, or unwilling, to go out there and meet these people. He claimed that we were well aware of his intentions to close this line but I wish to place on record that there was no reference in this year's report of the Commissioner for Railways to indicate that this line would be closed.

Mr. Knox interjected.

Mr. TUCKER: I have only a few minutes to make my speech. If the Minister claims that I am wrong, I refer him to the Commissioner's report of 30 June, 1965, in which he refers to the closure of certain branch lines.

The closure of this line is completely contrary to the professed policy of the Government relative to decentralisation. It has been stated that the Government favours decentralisation, but surely the closure of this branch line does not contribute in any way to that policy.

Let me also point out that while the Minister says that the carriage of goods and cattle is down this year, he seems to forget that the area has experienced a drought for a considerable period, so it is no wonder cattle numbers are down. Tremendous cattle losses must have been suffered during the drought. If there are good seasons those numbers will be built up again. Therefore, it is unreasonable to quote figures for the last few months and say that because they show a decrease in the number of cattle carried, that is a guide to the number that will be carried in the future.

It has been claimed that 90 per cent. of the goods delivered to Injune business people is carried by rail. The Opposition claims that this move will create a road-transport monopoly. Immediately that happens there will be increased costs. It is no good the Government claiming that that will not happen. We have only to instance what is happening with our wool. Operators are prepared to think only of their own interests; they are prepared to bypass Brisbane and forget all about Queensland, and go direct to Sydney. Yet the Minister intends to close this line and hand over transport to such operators, leaving the people in the Injune area at the mercy of this road-transport monopoly.

Mr. Camm: This Government broke the monopoly.

Mr. TUCKER: The Government has not the intestinal fortitude to do anything about the wool situation.

The Minister dealt with running costs. We must consider the cost of maintaining this all-weather road. I have been told that for 24 miles it is black soil and is untrafficable for six weeks a year, and that it will not be sealed before 1970. Road transport will add to maintenance costs on the road. Those are important matters.

There is no doubt that this area is going ahead. Large stands of cypress and hardwood exist in the area, and four sawmills are operating in Roma and Injune. Opposition members know that there is a lot to be said for this area and that it is developing. When the line is closed some railway families will leave the area. That is not good. Some

years ago, when the Treasurer was in Townsville, he told me, "It is my intention to wrap up the railways into as small a parcel as possible." I can see this happening.

(Time expired.)

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (12.14 p.m.): It is with reluctance that I enter this debate, because I do not know everything about development in the Injune district. I listened carefully to the speech of the hon. member for Roma. I have a great deal of respect for his judgment. This district has great possibilities. I have had a good deal of experience—more than most hon. members—with the results of branch-line closures. Two lines have been closed in my district in the last seven years, namely, the Munbilla—Mt. Edwards line and the Churchill—Dugandan line, which was known as the Boonah line. My district is as good an agricultural district as any in the State. Those districts now are served by road instead of rail, and today have the best service they have ever had. It is very much better than the service provided by the railways.

I should like to give the House my experience with the closure of the Mt. Edwards line. I was a member of Cabinet at the time, and business was falling off. The Treasurer was then Minister for Transport, and he produced figures to show how much money was being lost on this line. I went to several potato-growers and others who had large farms in that area and said to them, "Why don't you fellows support the railways? Railway freights are cheaper than road freights." They said, "Yes, but road transport is so convenient. The crop is picked up on the farm and delivered to market, and arrives in fresh condition. We feel that we can afford to pay the extra for road transport." I did my utmost to get those people to patronise the railways. Of course, the railway service got worse and worse. As soon as people have a good road, they will not use the railways. We closed the line, and I did not receive even one complaint about it.

Mr. Houston: What were they transporting, and how far?

Mr. MULLER: It was approximately 60 miles. Taking into consideration the distance to the farms, in some cases it would be up to 80 miles.

The next line to be closed was the Boonah line, which was losing approximately £100,000 a year. There it was not a matter of road transport taking over when the line was closed; everything was already being carried by road because the road, although not as good as it is today, was reasonably good. I discussed the matter with the shire council. I said, "The people are up in arms about the closure of the line." This line was opened before I was born, and the Mt. Edwards line was opened in 1920.

Mr. Davies: What has this to do with the Injune line?

Mr. MULLER: The hon. member for Maryborough is always yapping about something of which he knows nothing. The people said, "Don't scrap our railway." I can quite understand why there was some concern, because closing railways looks like retrogression. From what happens in practice, however, it is actually progress. A public meeting was called by the chairman of the shire council in Boonah one Tuesday afternoon. Do hon. members know how many business people attended it? There was not one. The fact of the matter was that all goods were already being transported by road.

Mr. Ewan: There were 121 at the Injune meeting.

Mr. MULLER: The point is that the line was closed, but it was closed on the condition that was asked for this morning by the hon. member for Roma, and which I think is quite reasonable. I told the Government at that time, on behalf of the people of the district, that we would agree to the closure of the line if an all-weather road was provided. Such a road was constructed.

Much was said this morning about a possible increase in the number of cattle and sheep transported by the railways. I had a property at Preston, seven miles from the railway, and over the years I did not put a single beast on the railway. I may be asked why I was prepared to pay the extra cost of road transport. Semi-trailers pick up cattle at the yards and carry them to their destination. Many hon. members who are talking about the need for rail transport of cattle and sheep do not know what they are talking about. Under today's traffic conditions one cannot put cattle and sheep on the road without incurring very great risk. The owner's heart is in his mouth every minute his stock are on the road, as many people driving motor-cars today know less about cattle than the cattle know about them. For safety reasons, we are obliged to load stock at the yards and have them delivered to their destination. The situation is similar in the transport of farm produce, and that is why there is nothing to put on the railway.

I have noticed the situation with other lines, too. I frequently travel up and down the Brisbane Valley and see what is happening on the railway between Ipswich and Yarraman. I think it is a distance of about 101 miles. The rail motor runs empty, or almost empty, every day, while one sees goods and stock being carried by road transport and buses carrying passengers through from Murgon, Kingaroy, Goomeri, and other places. What can be done about that? We cannot close our eyes to the fact that these things are happening. If people insist on using road transport whether or not there is a railway line in the area, that is all there is to it.

I should like to give hon. members an idea how road transport has affected the people in the district where I live. It might be imagined that some of my statements are a bit exaggerated—

Mr. Bennett: They are all exaggerated.

Mr. MULLER: They are not.

When only rail transport was available, it sometimes took up to two days to get produce to the markets. There might be a shortage of trucks; a train might be overloaded and some of the trucks might be put into a siding. If that happened, there could be a considerable loss when the goods arrived at the markets. The mail used to arrive at Boonah at half past 11 or 12 o'clock by rail—

Mr. Hooper: If you were lucky.

Mr. MULLER: Yes. Now it arrives at 10 o'clock every morning, and it is almost possible to set a watch by its arrival. A bus service now leaves Boonah at 6 a.m. and arrives in Brisbane at about a quarter past 9. In the old days of the railway—I travelled by train many times—the train left at 6.30 a.m. and arrived at Roma Street about 11 a.m. In the evening, one had to catch the 4.40 p.m. and was lucky to get home by 9.30 p.m. or 10 p.m.

Mr. Davies: What about the motion before the House? Are you going to support it?

Mr. MULLER: The hon. member can wait and see.

People using the bus service now arrive home about 6.30 p.m. or 7 p.m. How can one persuade people to use the railways in face of that?

A matter such as this has to be viewed realistically. I realise that there are great possibilities in the Injune district, and also for developments farther afield. To relieve the minds of the hon. member for Roma and the people who live in the district, I point out that if they get a good road they will be miles better off than they are at present, even if it has to be extended a considerable distance farther out. They now have to cart their stock and their produce to the railway, load it onto the train, have it taken to Roma, and then have it reloaded. I will bet guineas to peanuts that if road transport operators can cart as much grain as they like, they will pick it up on the farms and take it straight to Roma. It was all right to take it to the railway in days gone by; methods are different today.

I do not wish to enter this debate to do the people of the district an injury.

(Time expired.)

Mr. SHERRINGTON (Salisbury) (12.24 p.m.): I did not intend to enter the debate, but as other hon. members seem to be taking the opportunity to expound their views on the Roma-Injune railway line—

Mr. Davies: It is a general railway Estimates debate.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Hooper): Order!

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I think I should join with the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Barcoo in voicing the Opposition's protest. Quite frankly, I do not know of anything more likely to kill the Injune area than the closing of the railway line. About three years ago I visited the area, and at that time the residents were very concerned about the closure of the coal mine. They expressed their resentment that, despite the Government's statement about decentralisation in its policy speech it was closing the coal mine and throwing on the labour market about 30 or 40 people who had no alternative work available to them. That was a classic example, because at that time the Injune area had limited opportunities for employment outside the agricultural and pastoral pursuits of the district.

Here again, on this occasion we find that, to accelerate further the deterioration of the area, the Government now intends to close the branch railway line. If the Government is going to carry on this type of attack on Queensland's economic structure, in time to come towns such as this one will completely disappear, and in many instances the people will move to the larger cities seeking employment. This drift has been occurring for some years, but despite that the Government still carries out a policy of closure of railway lines.

Let us examine the Minister's remarks this morning in reply to this motion by the Opposition. He chided the Opposition and said that since he became Minister no representations had been made by the Labour Opposition to the closure of this railway link. Could we hope to meet with any more success than was met with by the hon. member for Roma? Both the present Minister and the former Minister completely "wiped" the hon. member for Roma on this matter and, in addition, completely "wiped" the opposition expressed by the people of Injune to the closure of this line.

Let us see what some of these people have to say. I have here a report from "The Western Star" of 22 November, 1966, in which Councillor Dearden, of the Bungil Shire Council, complained that the Minister would not meet a deputation from the area to discuss the problem, or would not visit the area to discuss it, and said—

"If there was a Japanese coal contractor at Injune they would have built another railway line."

Mr. Chalk: It would have been a profitable one, too.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I am glad the former Minister for Transport interjects on this. If the Government is going to use the argument that immediately a line becomes unprofitable it will close it, why does it not build a link to the Inala area? It would be the most profitable passenger line in Queensland.

Mr. Chalk: Have a look at what I wrote to you about that matter.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: All the Minister has done is consistently agree with me that a link into Inala would be a profitable, paying line, yet he has not built it. That area has not been exploited at all.

Let us look at this question of closing lines because they have become unprofitable. As the hon. member for Roma pointed out this morning, the loss per mile on this line is less, on the average, than the loss over the whole railway system. If the Government applies the principle of closing lines because they are unprofitable, why is it not seeking other avenues to boost the State's railway revenue by linking to the system areas that would be profitable?

Mr. Chalk: That is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: Why does the Minister for Transport always say in this House that the Government has not the money to build a link into the Inala area and at the same time agree that it would be the greatest passenger revenue-producer in the State?

Mr. Chalk: You will get it when finance is available.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I doubt very much whether we will be alive to see it. How can one have confidence in a Government that is guilty of closing a line which figures have shown serves a district that is gradually transforming itself from a coal-mining and pastoral area into an agricultural area and also serves as railhead for a potentially great agricultural area at Arcadia? Is it any wonder that I view with suspicion any promise the Treasurer makes here that a railway line will eventually be built to my area.

The hon. member for Barcoo referred to the extent that this area has developed. He pointed out that over those years in respect of which the Minister for Transport referred to railway revenue on this line, the various Treasurers, including the former Minister for Transport, indicated that the decline in railway revenue was the result of drought. This morning the Minister, as an excuse for closing the line, gave figures for three months' operations at an unseasonable time of the year. He used this as an excuse to confirm Cabinet's previous decision to close the line. That information was given for public consumption in an effort to prove to the people that it should be closed from 31 December. He gave figures for three months of this financial year which covered a time when unseasonable conditions operated and when naturally there would be a decline in railway traffic from Injune. He failed to say that this falling-off in traffic could be explained by the drought, which caused a decline in cattle and sheep numbers throughout the State.

I do not think the position could have been put more clearly than it was by the hon. member for Roma. He was utterly astounded that his own Cabinet would make this decision in view of the case he had been continually putting up over the years as the member for the district. Then the Minister wants to chide the Opposition because it has not put any case to him since last December. Could we have expected to achieve any greater success than the hon. member for Roma over the last two years? Could we reasonably expect to have as much success as the various people in the district who, over the years, have been expressing their opinion in the newspapers on the possible closure of the line?

I wholeheartedly support the Opposition case. I fortify my argument by again referring to the fact that in "The Western Star" of 4 November, 1966, it was reported—

"During the 1965 drought large quantities of fodder were carted into the area by rail. With the concessional rail freights, this represented a considerable saving to district stock owners. It is expected that the railway could give this service in a future drought."

Are we to be satisfied with the fact that this tearing up of the railway line is the Government's contribution to the people on the land in times of drought? As has been pointed out by Opposition speakers, with the removal of this line, particularly with large transports using it, there will be heavy maintenance on a road to Injune.

(Time expired.)

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Main Roads) (12.34 p.m.): We have just listened to a discourse on the general closing of railway lines and the desirability of building one to Inala. As the Minister for Main Roads I will confine my remarks to the two duties the Main Roads Department undertook when it was first contemplated that this railway line should be closed. For the four years prior to 1964 the Main Roads Department had instituted an accelerated programme for the development of this road, spending in the order of \$80,000 or \$100,000 a year on it. Consequently traffic and rail freight on that line started to decrease from 1960 or 1961 with the commencement of the Main Roads Department programme. By 1964 traffic had decreased to such an extent that Cabinet made the decision to close the line. Since 1964 the people in that area have known that there was a possibility of the closure of the line, but they still did not use it. The best way to prove to the Government that a railway line should not be closed is to use it. But it was not used! The traffic on the road continued and we had many representations for further accelerated programmes for road-building in this area. Last year I went to Roma and met the Bungil Shire Council members on this matter. They asked me if an extension could be granted and another decision made in respect of the

closure of this line. The hon. member for Roma made further representations to the Premier, the Treasurer and the Railway Department, and as a result the closure of the line was deferred until December of this year.

I will now give some figures relative to expenditure on this road since 1964. In the first year after the decision was made to close the line the expenditure by the Department of Main Roads in this area doubled. In the next year, \$200,000 was spent, and for the current year \$290,000 is to be spent. I also gave an assurance to a deputation from that area that we would spend at least \$200,000 a year and that if extra money became available we would do extra work. Only today we have released another job in the area which will cost \$237,000. The whole of that sum will not be in addition to the \$200,000 because it is expected that the job will not be completed before June next year. The local authority, the Bungil Shire Council, requested that it be the constructing authority for the road. With this and other work in the shire, it is expected that all the personnel and the plant of the Bungil Shire Council will be working to the utmost capacity, and, consequently, a departmental gang has been allocated to the area. I assure hon. members that there is some consternation in council circles because the Department of Main Roads is going in there to complete portion of the road. The council desires that the work on the road be spread out, so that it will as the constructing authority, have the advantage of keeping the men in the district in employment. The finishing date depends on the money available. After next year's expenditure there will be 16 miles of the road to construct. Some of it will follow the present alignment of the railway line, so that it cannot be built in accordance with the present plans until the railway line is closed. If a decision is made not to close the railway line the plans for the construction of the road will have to be altered.

I repeat that the best way for the people in the area to indicate that the railway line should be kept open is to use it. In the first place, the road could not have been too bad as the tonnage on this railway line is only about 4 tons a day.

I think the hon. member for Townsville North said that we should take maintenance costs into consideration when assessing the relative values of railway and road. We do take maintenance costs into consideration, of course, but 4 tons extra a day will not make much difference to maintenance costs of the road.

There is another aspect to this matter which I know occupies the minds of the people in the area, namely, that when the railway line is closed they will be absolved from the payment of transport tax. Transport tax is a big item when goods are transported a fair distance. It can rise to 3 cents a ton a mile. With a 10-ton vehicle carrying goods for the

full distance on this road there could be a saving of \$18.90 a load because no transport tax would be payable when the railway line is closed.

I have heard a lot about making this road an all-weather road. The term is a bit of a misnomer, as no country in the world, however sophisticated its road standards may be, can claim to have all-weather roads. Cyclones, floods and wet weather can disrupt road services. It may be claimed that this road is untrafficable on the black-soil sections after a few points of rain, but so are the access roads. If the access roads are not open to traffic, what is the use of claiming that people cannot use this road because it is not an all-weather road? At present this road is trafficable far earlier than any of the roads leading onto it. It is expected that by 1970 only a small mileage will remain unsealed. As further funds become available we will hasten to seal it. We are spending \$200,000 a year and after next year only 16 miles will remain to be constructed. It is also expected that increased finance will become available as the work develops and the Bungil Shire Council indicates its ability to construct more road.

Mr. O'Donnell: Do you think it is economic to shift grain by road from Injune to Roma?

Mr. CAMM: Once any commodity is loaded onto the transport and the transport reaches a bitumen road it seems to be economic to cart for fairly long distances, so long as there is no transport tax. A good deal of extra cost is involved in unloading from the truck onto the railway and then unloading from the railway onto a truck. It has been proved in that area that the road transport of stock in particular is more economic than rail transport.

Mr. O'Donnell: I agree. But the point is whether it is economic to cart grain.

Mr. CAMM: There is an equilisation scheme with grain—wheat especially—and as yet it has not been proved that this will be a profitable wheat-growing area. It could be for summer crops such as sorghum, which will be used for cattle fattening.

Mr. Muller: Would it be possible to speed up the closing of the missing link?

Mr. CAMM: I said that we have assured the council that we will spend \$200,000 a year. That is the limit of its capacity to construct, considering the other jobs in that shire. If more money becomes available, certainly we will spend more, and to ensure that we use the money profitably the Main Roads Department is sending a gang out there to do the work.

Mr. Muller: I do not think they should have to wait until 1970.

Mr. CAMM: They will have a sealed road by 1970. As extra funds become available and the shire indicates its capacity to use the extra funds, they will be provided.

Mr. HANLON (Baroona) (12.43 p.m.): I support the Leader of the Opposition. I wish to deal with the lamentable response of the Minister for Transport to the opportunity the Opposition has afforded him, by moving this motion, to justify the decision to close this line. The Minister's reasoning seems to be purely and simply that because a decision to close the line was made a couple of years ago, he will not go back on it. I am glad to see that the Minister has re-entered the House. I was beginning to think he treated Parliament with the same degree of—

Mr. Chalk: And you didn't want to make it political!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Every hon. member who leaves the Chamber no doubt has good reason to do so. I ask the hon. member for Baroona to confine his remarks to the motion.

Mr. HANLON: I accept that the Minister was probably called out on ministerial business. The only reasoned response to the motion has come from the Minister for Mines and Main Roads. The Minister for Transport justifies his action by saying that a decision was made by the department some time ago and he is not prepared to go back on it. I make no apology for saying that the Minister was discourteous, not only to the people in the district but also to the hon. member for Roma, in not going out to look at the question on the spot and to meet the people there.

The hon. member for Roma indicated that he had stood by the Government and defended its original decision when this and various other lines were investigated with a view to closing them. He went out as a Government member and defended his Government's unpopular decision before his own electors, and for that he should be given credit. He is big enough to concede, in the light of the situation that has developed since then and the matters referred to by the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Barcoo, that the situation needs to be looked at in 1966 and not as it was in 1964, as apparently the Minister wants to do. In view of the hon. member's loyalty to the Government and his sincerity as a member, I think the Minister might well have paid him the courtesy of going to the area and talking to the people to justify this decision on the spot, instead of sitting in an office hundreds of miles away and saying, "If they want to come and see me, I am prepared to see them," and adding the rider, "If they have something new to tell me." He dismisses as nothing new what the hon. member for Roma said today.

The Minister criticised the Opposition for bringing this matter forward because, according to him, we have known for some time

that the line was to be closed. The Minister for Main Roads placed the emphasis in another place; he spoke of the possibility of the closure of the line being known. That is the whole point. The Opposition has known for some time that closure of the line has been under consideration. We knew up till last week-end that representations were being made through the hon. member for Roma, the Bungil Shire Council, and the Maranoa Graziers' Association. We know that those representations were under consideration and that a final decision had not been made. The Minister concedes that he has been taking all those representations to Cabinet up till the last week or so.

Mr. Knox: I have not seen the representations that you are referring to now.

Mr. HANLON: The hon. member for Townsville North had a copy of a telegram that was sent by the Bungil Shire Council to the Premier on 18 November. If the Premier did not bother to tell the Minister about it, he should discuss it with the Premier. That merely indicates that more time should be allowed before a final decision is made in the matter.

That is, of course, the purpose of this motion. Specifically included in it is the fact that we do not want to make political capital out of it, and one reason for moving the motion was to give the Minister an opportunity to justify this decision. The Minister says that the Opposition should have known that a final decision had been made. How could we have known that till we heard the news item released at the end of last week? I ask the Minister for Transport why he did not make a ministerial statement in the House confirming the Government's intention. He seemed to find it convenient to make a ministerial statement on certain land transactions arising from action taken relating to the Moura-Gladstone railway line. He found no difficulty in seeking leave of the House a week or so ago to make a ministerial statement on that matter, because it was a means by which he could perhaps score off landholders in the area.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is continuing with a personal attack on the Minister. I ask him to confine his remarks to the matter before the House.

Mr. HANLON: There is nothing personal in what I am saying, Mr. Speaker. I am merely stating facts, and if you think they indicate that the Minister was at fault, I am reluctantly obliged to agree with you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is misinterpreting the ruling of the Chair.

Mr. HANLON: I apologise to the Chair if you interpreted it that way, Mr. Speaker. I cannot forecast how you will interpret my remarks.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! If the hon. member continues to argue with the Chair, I will name him.

Mr. HANLON: I was pointing out that the Minister had not made a ministerial statement on this matter. If you think I should apologise for saying that, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to, because in fact he did not make any ministerial statement on the matter. But he did go to the trouble of making a ministerial statement designed purely and simply to score off a member of this House, or off landholders in the area of the Gladstone-Mourra railway line, and I am not going to apologise for saying that, because, again, it is a fact. I am saying that the Minister would have been better occupied if, instead of sitting up in his office doodling out a ministerial statement on that matter, he had let Parliament know about the definite closure of the Roma-Injune railway line. The Opposition would then have been in a position to take earlier the action that it has taken today.

I return to what I believe to be the essence of the Government's defence in this matter, which has been provided not by the Minister for Transport, who has the ministerial responsibility of justifying the Government's action, but by the Minister for Main Roads. He has given the House entirely new information. He says that the completion of the all-weather road to Injune can be proceeded with only if the railway line is closed, because certain portions of the line—

Mr. Camm: I did not say "proceeded with"; I said "built in accordance with present plans."

Mr. HANLON: The Minister mentioned a contract for \$237,000 that has been let recently—I think he said today.

Mr. Camm: Not a contract. We released the job today.

Mr. HANLON: Today?

Mr. Camm: It will go through the Executive Council on Thursday.

Mr. HANLON: Now it is Thursday. At least some results have come from the moving of this motion. The House has been told of a \$237,000 job being released. The Minister did say "today"—I am not quibbling with him over that—but now he says it is a formality, that it will go through Executive Council on Thursday.

Honourable Members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CAMM: I rise to a point of order. I think I should give an explanation for the benefit of the hon. member for Baroona, who has been in the House long enough to know the procedure. The job to which I referred was discussed by Cabinet yesterday and, of necessity, it must go through Executive Council on Thursday so that the expenditure

of the money required can be approved. As a result of that, I released a Press statement today and it appears in today's newspapers.

Mr. HANLON: I accept the Minister's remarks on that point; I am not quibbling with them. I am only pointing out some aspects of things that are happening during the closing stages of this session of Parliament, and in respect of which the Minister for Transport said that the Opposition should have moved a motion on the matter some weeks ago. The hon. member for Roma read out a letter that he received last night containing certain information from the Minister for Transport. In spite of the fact that he is the member for the district, he did not receive until last night information that he considers is of importance in the consideration of this question; yet the Opposition is being chided because it did not take action until this morning, after the news release at the week-end, I think, of the Government's final decision on the matter. Of course, members of the Opposition hope that it will not be a final decision, because they think that this debate has at least served the purpose of demonstrating that the Government has been much too hasty in making its final decision.

I acknowledge that if what the Minister for Main Roads said about the closure of the line being involved in some way in the roadworks is correct, it is something that could well be examined. But if the Opposition had not moved this motion it would not have been aware of that. I do not know whether the hon. member for Roma was aware of it earlier, but it suggests to me that the Opposition's giving notice of this motion earlier this morning has caused the Government to rush into action.

(Time expired.)

Mr. BENNETT (South Brisbane) (12.54 p.m.): I wholeheartedly support the motion moved by my Leader. It is manifestly clear that the Government has dumped not only the electors living in the Injune area but also one of its own members, after playing him along till after the last State election and allowing him to give statements to the Press and to make utterances during his campaign that he honestly believed to be true but which were, nevertheless, inaccurate because he was misled by those who could have told him better. Now he is being placed in the invidious position—I sympathise with him—of having to admit that he has been deceived by his own colleagues.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BENNETT: Well, of having to admit that the information he was given was inaccurate and that he is placed in the very invidious and embarrassing position of having to tell those who placed their confidence in him that, unfortunately, their confidence was misplaced. He apparently did not think that the Government would pursue its policy of

closing down branch railway lines in Queensland, a policy it has pursued relentlessly since it has been in office. I suppose a correct estimate of the length of railway line closed down by the Government would be something like 1,000 miles.

Mr. R. Jones: Would you say that the Government is confirming the well-established practice of Liberal Ministers closing down railway lines in Country Party electorates?

Mr. BENNETT: That is obvious. This decision was delayed until after last Saturday week's election. It is true that the Liberal Party was returned with a certain degree of confidence; but it is equally clear that the Liberal Party has the Country Party and this Government by the throat and that it is making decisions that are contrary to the interests of Country Party electorates. And so I admire the stand taken by the hon. member for Roma against interference in his electorate by people who know little about it. It will undoubtedly prejudice his prospects.

I was very interested in the representations of the hon. member for Salisbury on this subject when he indicated quite clearly that he has been fighting vigorously for the building of a railway link to the Inala area, to the electorate that he so honourably represents. My information—and I think it could prove to be quite accurate—is that it is the Government's intention, in due course, to do away with the South Brisbane Railway Station and to have no railway lines at all on the south side.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! This is not a general discussion on railway lines; it is a discussion on the closure of one particular line.

Mr. Davies: The hon. member for Fassifern—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I was waiting for that subject to be raised. The hon. member for Fassifern was giving reasons why a line should not be kept open. His speech was perfectly relevant in a debate on the closure of railway lines.

Mr. BENNETT: I was giving reasons why I thought South Brisbane station should be kept open, just as the hon. member for Fassifern gave his reasons why a line should not be kept open. With respect, Mr. Speaker, that is a true and strict analogy which we are entitled to draw in this Chamber.

We say that the Roma-Injune railway line should not be closed, and we say it not only in the interests of the people in the area but in the interests of those living in other parts of Queensland who will be treated in a similar fashion if this Parliament does not record its vigorous protest against proposals of this nature. That is why I adopted that attitude. I am submitting that my prognostications are definitely not without foundation, because already large mileages of railway line in the State have been closed down.

I point, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition did, to the Tablelands. I point also to the arguments employed by the Government in relation to financial economy. They are not consistent with the Government's claims in the past nor do they bear examination on modern-day techniques. In the 1954-58 period the present Premier used the argument that the closing of branch lines does not improve railway finances at all.

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

Mr. BENNETT: The Premier, when Leader of the Opposition, said in the speech I referred to—

"The Minister is mistaken if he thinks he can improve railway finance by closing the branch lines; on the contrary, the department would lose considerable revenue."

I also pointed out that, in any case, independent of revenue, it is against the public interest to tear up branch railway lines which still perform an essential service to the people, particularly at a time when this Government is talking about financial difficulty and yet is offering huge rail-freight concessions to the monopolies. Fundamentally, it is important to retain a public service and utility that is performing a worth-while task. Furthermore, this comes at a time when railway employees are meeting a crisis in that they are being retrenched by the dozen because they cannot be employed at suitable places in the trades and callings for which they have been trained. It is a shocking indictment of the Government that it would further jeopardise the future of loyal railway employees by plunging them into the position of having no jobs as a result of the closure of branch railway lines.

We were told that the South Coast line did not pay, yet a group of responsible local authorities in the area are prepared to replace that line, confident in the expectation that they can run it at a profit. Good luck to them! I think they are right. It proves the fallacy of the argument levelled against us from time to time that these branch lines do not pay.

The hon. member for Fassifern must support this motion, because he said the Roma-Injune line cannot and should not be closed until there is a proper main road or highway to replace it. We have had a clear indication that the road will not be completed before 1970 at the earliest. It will be like the road to the South Coast—inadequate to carry the traffic, and causing the carnage on the road so often referred to by Cabinet Ministers, requiring the services of extra policemen whom we have not got. The Roma-Injune road will be equally as hazardous as the Southport road. Over the Christmas period the Government will weep and wail about the accidents that no doubt will occur on the Pacific Highway, when fundamentally the cause of many of them will be the fact that the Government refuses

to provide the road that is so urgently needed. The Roma-Injune road will not be an all-weather road for many years to come, and it will be inadequate to carry the necessary traffic.

(Time expired.)

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer—Treasurer) (2.19 p.m.): I think it is about time we got a little rhyme and reason in this debate. The hon. member for South Brisbane spoke about the carnage on the road and several other matters completely divorced from the issue before us. True it is that the Opposition is entitled to move a motion of this kind, but I should expect that hon. members opposite would expound their argument about the closure of this line. We have not witnessed that. The first thing the hon. member for Salisbury spoke about was the construction of a railway line to Inala. I agree that there should be one there. In relation to that matter, I have said previously that when finance is available I believe it should be provided.

Let us have a look at the issue before us, as it is very important. What has happened this morning can be summed up under two headings. First, we had the sincere speech—and it was a very sincere speech—by the hon. member for Roma, who was fighting in the interests of the people he represents because a section of them indicated that the line should be retained. I admire him for his approach. He is doing what every hon. member should do, namely putting forward arguments on behalf of his people.

Second, what has been the attitude of the Opposition? With one exception, they have very little interest in the Roma-Injune line. They have an interest of a political nature in this area and they have seized upon this opportunity to gain some political kudos against the Government and possibly at the expense, they hope, of the hon. member for Roma. Other than the hon. member for Barcoo, the Opposition has very little interest in this issue on the Roma-Injune line.

Lines have been closed in other localities, but how often on previous occasions have we seen this attitude adopted by the Opposition to the closure of those lines? Admittedly, the Opposition was prepared to debate the closures on a broad plane, but in this instance they see a political opportunity, knowing only too well that if they can drive a sufficient wedge into the Government in relation to the representations of the hon. member for Roma, they will gain some political kudos.

I want to examine this matter in a plain approach to the facts as we know them. First, the hon. member for Barcoo, and the Leader of the Opposition in particular, claimed that this was sprung upon the people.

Mr. O'Donnell: That is not right.

Mr. CHALK: The hon. member's Leader said it was, and I take it that the hon. member agreed with his Leader. It was claimed that it was sprung upon the people. I ask the hon. member to listen to me; I listened to him.

The Leader of the Opposition said that this was not known until last Friday night. Let us examine what happened. Away back in 1964—it was my recommendation and therefore I accept responsibility for it—on 18 February, I recommended to Cabinet the closure of other railway lines. At the same time I recommended the continuation of the Roma-Injune line until June, 1965, because I believed it was necessary to try to improve the road facilities in that area. By 20 April, 1965, it was considered that the road had not yet been improved to the extent that we believed it should be, and consequently the decision was made to extend the life of the line until June, 1966.

Let us look at what happened in the intervening period. I received a deputation from the Bungil Shire Council and residents in the area and away back, on 30 June, 1963, I told Councillors Flower, Tomkins and Girdle that if they wanted the line to continue in operation, and if there was the demand they claimed there would be for it, they should go home and try to convince the people in the locality that the line should be used. What has happened since 1963? Has there been any increase in business? The Opposition claims that there has been an increase in productivity in the area, but what has happened in respect of the movement of livestock within that locality? It has not gone to the railways; it has gone to road transport because of this Government's policy of easing the movement of livestock transport—and I agree with that policy.

Mr. O'Donnell: How many head of cattle were carried during the last three years?

Mr. CHALK: The hon. member for Barcoo wants to take up that issue. I am giving him 3½ years on which to base his argument.

Let us look further. Did not the Government, following its policy and honouring its promises, pour nearly \$1,000,000 into improving this road? Do not tell me that because at present if there is heavy rain and people are cut off along this road, as soon as a good road is built in one area there can be operations on that road when people cannot get from their properties to the road. The Government endeavoured to build the road up to such a standard that under reasonable conditions it would be trafficable. Consequently, when in June, 1966, the hon. member for Roma asked that we try to keep this line open a while longer we agreed. But we laid down rigidly that this was the last extension.

What is the position from the point of view of the Railway Department? For the last three years the department has, advisedly I believe, reduced its maintenance on this line and has allowed the line to run down because

of its impending closure. If we allowed it to go any longer without closing it we would have to spend about \$100,000 immediately to ensure its safety. That is in addition to the loss that would be incurred. Would it not be better for the Government to spend a little more money on building the road? I have here a statement made by Mr. Makinson at a public meeting that as far as he was concerned the railway served no useful purpose and that the money should be put into road construction. That is what the Government is doing.

Let us look at the productivity of this area. The hon. member for Barcoo said that this was a great wheat area. I advise him to check with the Australian Wheat Board and the wheat-growers in the area. It is a marginal crop. It is not a crop that can be guaranteed yearly. I realise that a drought exists in the area at the moment. I also know that there is some productivity in the area. According to the Wheat Board, the maximum output that can be expected on this occasion is 21,000 bushels, or roughly 500 tons. Does the Government want to continue this line simply to move 500 tons of wheat and 859 tons of goods a year? How in the name of fortune could the Government possibly hope to balance the financial position? If we did that, how could we provide the line that the hon. member for Salisbury wants, particularly as we have incurred loss after loss in this area? What the Government is doing is what it did in other places, namely, close unprofitable lines.

Proof has been put forward that this area is a first-class grain area. That is true. It will continue to develop as a livestock area. Some grain will be grown there and grain will be required. Together with the development of a good all-weather road and the Government's policy on the movement of livestock, those are the things that will benefit the community. When the line goes, so does the road tax.

(Time expired.)

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH (Tablelands) (2.29 p.m.): I am pleased that the Leader of the Opposition moved this motion, because it gave the hon. member for Roma an opportunity to make a speech which the Treasurer thought was very good. Without the motion we would have been deprived of this opportunity of speaking on this important matter, and the hon. member for Roma would have been deprived of a chance of saying what he wanted to say on behalf of his constituents. It has been claimed that we are using this debate for political purposes. I think the motion was moved to give the hon. member for Roma an opportunity to say just what he felt about this proposal.

When the Treasurer summed up by saying that the speech by the hon. member for Roma was one of soundness and sincerity, I think he should have given us a little credit because we allowed it to be made. He said that the Opposition showed little interest in the closure of other lines. That also is untrue. I know that since I have

been in this House Opposition members have repeatedly protested against the closing of railway lines. A case in point not very long ago was the closure of the railway line to the South Coast.

We do not need to convince the people that railway lines should be used. As I have said in all of my speeches on transport matters, in this large State of Queensland all forms of transport are needed. It is no good withdrawing one so that the other is a paying proposition. That is what we are up against here, and that is the crux of the whole matter. If one is removed, the other will blossom forth.

The hon. member for Fassifern said he has not heard any complaint following the closure of railway lines. That does not mean, however, that closing them is in the best interests of Queensland. They were constructed many years ago, and I do not think any Government has the right to destroy them without consulting the people in the districts concerned and providing some alternative means of transport. By that I do not mean a promise of an all-weather road by 1970, but the provision of an all-weather road virtually guaranteed by engineers and accepted by the people. We heard the hon. member for Roma say that no expert could tell him if the road to be provided is an all-weather road. On many occasions in my area roads are washed away by freak storms, which are always likely to occur.

The railway line under discussion has proved itself and should be left alone. I am asking the Minister to show a little common sense. If he is going to be stubborn and close the line, at least leave it there for three years or till the road is available. There will then probably be not so much opposition to the closure of the line if the road has shown its suitability to cater for the district. Only then should the railway line be removed. We have the right to make laws, but not the right to destroy public utilities. When I made a similar statement to the late Hon. E. Evans, he said that if a railway does not pay it should be closed. The Treasurer also said that. If that is to be the justification for closing railway lines, a reference to the latest annual report of the Commissioner for Railways shows that all lines in the Southern Division, except in the Maryborough Section, should be closed. Surely that argument cannot be used.

I also asked if it can be proved that the roads pay, and everyone laughed. There is the unfairness of it. The Treasurer said that a certain gentleman recommended a road instead of a railway. He probably has a large shareholding in a transport firm. Is it not far better to have something that belongs to the people and is used by them? When there is such a facility and there are thoughts of destroying it, the people should be considered. We should consider the hon. member for Roma and his electorate, and adjacent areas, including that of the hon.

member for Barcoo. The people in those districts are the ones who should be considered. Without all forms of transport, Queensland will not go ahead. It needs road, rail, sea, and air transport, and it is a very short-sighted policy to destroy one section of the transport system in order to boost the use of another.

There has been mention of the closure of railway lines in other parts of the State, and the hon. member for Fassifern referred to the Boonah and Mt. Edwards lines. Although they resembled the Roma-Injune line in that they served agricultural areas, they were not as distant from Brisbane as is the Injune line. The closure of the Kairi-Millaa Millaa railway line in my electorate was probably comparable with the closure of the Roma-Injune line. The bitumen roads in the area were very narrow and dangerous, but they are being used successfully by road transport. However, the last 6 miles of the Kairi-Millaa Millaa line was continued in operation because one firm intended to use it. I am pleased it was, but it is no use cutting off the end of the line just because that part is not paying. It should be continued right through so that it will provide an amenity for a large number of people.

At that time, the Treasurer said that the Government was cutting off the dead wood. Instead of cutting off the dead wood, it is cutting off a feeder route to the great Queensland railway system. If one cuts off the feeder roots of a tree, the tree will die, and that is what will happen to the railway system if closures of this type continue. If the Government whittles away the branch lines, it is acting contrary to the interests of country people and the people of the Outback and contrary to its expressed policy of decentralisation. It will be acting not as a responsible Government but as a cash-register Government in saying, "It is not paying. We will use that as an excuse and cut it away." That is not good enough for the people of Queensland, and if the Government continues to implement such a policy it will not be long before people will refuse to settle in outback areas because of their memories of action such as this taken by the Government.

The Minister for Main Roads tried to bolster the Government's case by saying that \$200,000 would be allocated for road works in this area each year. A completed road is required, not a promise of money. In one breath he said that \$200,000 will be made available; in the next breath he said that the council cannot use any more money because it has jobs to attend to in other parts of the shire. Many excuses may be offered why the money cannot be used; many excuses may be offered why the road cannot be completed. When the Minister for Main Roads argues that way, I suggest that the House cannot hope for anything by 1970.

The hon. member for Fassifern said, "Can you give us something more definite before 1970?" What was the Minister's reply? He said that he would if he could. That is not good enough for the people who live in the

area. They have been there for a number of years. Surely they are entitled to expect a little more statesmanship than has been shown by the Minister.

(Time expired.)

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Premier) (2.39 p.m.): In launching an attack on the Government this morning, the Leader of the Opposition accused it of taking a hasty decision relative to the closure of the Roma-Injune railway. I join with the Treasurer in giving the lie direct to that assertion, because the closure of no other railway line in this State has received as much consideration as has the closure of the Roma-Injune railway line.

The Leader of the Opposition was rather apologetic about the fact that he had to take this action this morning and move the adjournment of the House. Why apologise? In fact it is an endeavour by the Opposition to gain a political advantage over the Government rather than action taken because it is worried about the people served by the Roma-Injune railway. Part of the motion says—

"made urgent the necessity of debating the closure of the Roma-Injune line in order that the full case against this action by the Government may be presented . . ."

Mr. Houston: One of the many reasons.

Mr. NICKLIN: Where is the case that has been presented this morning by hon. members opposite? First of all, the Leader of the Opposition led off with an attack on the Government because we were compelled to increase rail freights and road transport fees. Then the hon. member for Salisbury followed with an appeal for the building of a railway line to Inala.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I rise to a point of order. I made only very slight reference to that subject in the course of my speech. I thought it was bad enough for the Treasurer to try to use that point, but I gave the Premier credit for having more principle.

Mr. NICKLIN: The hon. member for South Brisbane, of course, put up his usual fantastic story. He spoke about the closure of all railway lines on the south side of the river.

The principal reason advanced for the moving of this motion was that it would give the Government an opportunity to disclose the full facts associated with its action. After listening to the Minister for Transport and the Treasurer, everyone knows that the full facts and figures—and the reasons for the Government's action—have been fully presented to this House, so it is unnecessary for me to repeat them.

At this stage I pay tribute to the hon. member for Roma, who has fought hard for his electors. No member of this House has fought harder for his people than has the hon. member for Roma. He has undoubtedly done a good job, and I am sure he will continue to do so for many years to come.

Hon. members opposite rose one after another and said, "Give the line and the people of the area a chance before making a decision." No railway line in this State that has been closed was given as much consideration and chance as has the Injune railway line. No railway line has been given as much investigation and thought relative to all factors associated with its continuance or closure. The reason for that is that the Government has a responsible approach to everything it does. I maintain that we made a very responsible approach to this question, unpleasant as the decision may undoubtedly be to some people in the Injune district.

Let us look at some of the lines of our approach. First of all, let us look at the traffic this railway line has handled over the years. On that ground alone—I am not going to repeat the figures as they have already been mentioned by the Minister for Transport and the Treasurer—there is no argument for keeping this line open. The second factor we looked at was the revenue received from the line. From that point of view, there is certainly no reason whatever to continue the services of this railway line. It has suffered a number of losses over the years; these have been quoted by the hon. member for Roma. The losses have been less for the last three years than they were in the previous three, but there is a very good reason for that. It is that the line was destined for closure and maintenance was cut. In 1963, we spent \$62,630 instead of a normal expenditure of \$121,993. In the next year we spent almost \$59,000 instead of a normal \$127,000, and in the third year \$53,636 instead of a normal \$132,000. That is the reason for the reduced losses in that period.

Let us now look at the last factor, which is the expenditure that would be required to keep this line going. To keep the line operating for another 12 months \$83,000 would have to be spent immediately, and to keep it going for longer than 12 months \$127,000 would have to be spent. Those factors must be considered in association with the growing losses experienced on this line over the years.

Do not forget, too, the interest, which will amount to \$26,000 annually if the line remains open. That is the financial position. On those facts and figures, can any responsible Government continue to operate this railway line?

A great deal has been made about the grain potential of the area. Let me read this assessment by the Division of Plant Industry of the Department of Primary Industries—

"Because of general unsuitability of soil type and terrain, little expansion in grain production can be anticipated in future in the area between Roma and the southern boundary of the Arcadia region."

There is very good reason for that assertion. The rainfall pattern in the area is such that successful wheat production year after year is very unlikely. If ploughing is done in that

area, major soil-erosion problems are likely. Only in favourable seasons can any real quantity of grain be grown there.

Let us look at this thing realistically. The area is a long way from any market and it is getting into the marginal area for wheat-growing. The only reason that wheat can be produced in any way profitably is that pool freights are operating. For how long will they operate? There is at present a move in the industry to do away with the pooling of freights. Take that away and the area is completely out for wheat production. Let us look at the production figures. In 1965-66 235 acres were sown with wheat, but there was no crop. During the present season 562 tons of wheat were grown in the area.

The hon. member for Barcoo makes a great song about Arcadia. That area has potential as a wheat-growing area as long as he can overcome the problem of growing wheat so far from a port.

Mr. O'Donnell: What about sorghum?

Mr. NICKLIN: The same remarks apply. In fact, it would probably pose a greater problem because it is a lower-value grain. The southern boundaries of Arcadia are 40 miles, and the northern boundaries 100 miles, from Injune. Can anyone cart wheat that distance and then put it on rail and make a profit out of it? Then there is the high cost of land preparation of brigalow country. It is entirely different from growing wheat on the Darling Downs country, where it is most successful. If anyone grows grain in the Arcadia area he should grow it to feed cattle.

One of the arguments advanced by the Leader of the Opposition was that the Government has abandoned Injune. Has anyone ever heard such nonsense? The Government has built up the town of Injune to such an extent that since we took office school attendances have increased from 114 to 210. We have spent \$94,000 on a new primary school and \$64,000 on a new secondary school. I have not time to deal with many more potent arguments in support of the Government's action, which was taken only after very mature consideration.

I challenge the Opposition to point to one area in Queensland in which a railway line has been closed that is not better off as a result of the closure.

(Time expired.)

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba—Leader of the Opposition) (2.45 p.m.), in reply: I do not think I have heard any Premier of the State "knock" an area as much as the Premier has on this occasion. He has told the people that it will not grow this and that it will not grow something else. He said, "If you do grow something there are no assured markets for it; there is no way of transporting it." In other words, he told the people, "You had better get out." I have never heard any worse "knocking" of an area.

The hon. gentleman referred to the increase in school attendances this year. I ask how many railwaymen are living there.

Dr. Delamothe interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: The Minister for Justice said that five railway workers live there. That is so much nonsense. He is not even justly assessing the position. In an area as sparsely populated as this, with a township with such a small population, every person counts. Government members talk about great developments, but they are "knocking" this area.

Mr. Chalk: How many trains go there a week?

Mr. HOUSTON: There are three trains a week; I ask the Treasurer not to show his ignorance. I believe what he said, but do not let us quibble over small points.

When the Minister for Transport commenced his speech he made it abundantly clear that the Government did not intend to change its decision; it would do nothing other than what has been decided, namely, close the line. We were told that the Minister for Lands is out in the area and will attend a special meeting tonight, so that he may talk to the people. What a waste of time it will be for the people to attend to hear what the Minister for Lands has to say if, no matter what he thinks, it will have no bearing on the case! Surely we could expect the Premier to say, "Very well, we will look at these arguments emanating from the other side of the House".

Mr. Chalk: Where are your arguments?

Mr. HOUSTON: If the Treasurer thinks they are not arguments, that is his privilege; but at least the Government should wait until the Minister for Lands returns and reports on what he has heard in the area where he is holding the meeting tonight. That is only common decency if the Minister is out there. Surely he is not out there only for propaganda purposes.

The Minister for Transport said point blank, "We are not going to change our decision". Hon. members opposite have spoken about giving this line a chance and we have heard repeatedly from the Treasurer that the drought has affected the economy of the State. I do not deny that, but I say it has affected this area, too. Would that not make more cautious the people who are living there, working and hoping to develop the area? Would it not prevent them from carrying out experiments? Surely these people who want to develop the area deserve a chance to do so; they are worthy of some consideration and encouragement but they will not be encouraged by closing the line because of paper losses. I do not deny that a loss is shown on the books, but has the Minister or anyone else tried to show us how

the loss has been sustained, or pointed out the various factors that are responsible for it?

The Minister for Justice said that only five railway families live in the area. If only five sets of wages are paid, where do all the other losses come from? The arguments advanced are not in accordance with the facts of the case.

The Minister chided me for saying that I apologised for moving this motion. I did not apologise. In reply to the Premier, his remarks are not an answer to an Opposition motion of this kind. I apologised to him and to Mr. Speaker for not being able to give longer notice. I did so mainly because I was chided a few days ago for not giving the Premier a copy of an amendment to a Bill that the Opposition submitted. I did not want to place myself in the same position again. I apologised sincerely on that occasion, but I do not apologise for moving this motion. It originated with the hon. member for Barcoo because of representations made to him and, with his authority, I read the letter that had been addressed to him.

A Government Member: Who wrote it?

Mr. HOUSTON: It was the secretary of the U.G.A. Surely the Minister will not deny that body the right to make representations to any member of Parliament. I agree that the hon. member for Roma has represented his electorate in the manner that would be expected of him; but so has the hon. member for Barcoo, who mentioned many ways in which the closure of this line will affect his area. The Opposition has accepted its responsibility in this matter, and we were very pleased that the hon. member for Roma spoke in this debate.

The Minister for Mines and Main Roads said he believed there should be an all-weather road, but that there is no need to complete it if the side roads are not completed. What rubbish! Does that mean that because every side road joining the Gold Coast Highway is not completed we should not go ahead with it? Of course we should. The Government made its decision knowing all the facts, one of which is that there is an unfinished road.

The Minister said he did not know when the road would be completed, but later said that it would be some time after 1970. I remember, when the Beef Roads Scheme was debated, that many Ministers said we must have money to bituminise those roads because the experts said that unless they were bituminised they would crack and deteriorate quickly and that thousands of dollars would be thrown down the drain. The same position exists here. The Minister said there would be 16 miles of black-soil road not bituminised.

Mr. Camm: I said there would be 16 miles of unsealed road. You would not know the difference between an unsealed road and a black-soil road.

Mr. HOUSTON: I know more about my business than the Minister does about his. However, we will not "argue the toss" about that.

In addition at present there are no big transport trucks on the road compared with what there will be when this development takes place. These heavy transports will deteriorate a road that is not yet constructed. We believe the road should have been completed before this action was taken.

The Government claims that this decision was not made suddenly. Of course it was. Normally such an important matter would have been referred to the Commissioner for Railways and would have been referred to in his annual report. Every other line closure was referred to in the report. It is rather strange that the report was not tabled until after the conclusion of the Estimates debate.

The closure of this line is another step in the Government's unhappy administration of this department. The Government claims that the railways have been modernised. All the Government has done is extend the work that was introduced by the hon. member for Toowoomba West when he was Minister for Transport. I give the Government credit for that. But what other method of modernisation has been introduced by it?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The motion has no reference to modernisation of railways.

Mr. HOUSTON: The Premier referred to losses. I say that if the system had been modernised to world standards no losses would have been incurred. New South Wales has a pick-a-back service.

(Time expired.)

Question—That the House do now adjourn (Mr. Houston's motion)—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 24

Bennett
Bromley
Byrne
Davies
Dean
Donald
Dufficy
Duggan
Graham
Hanlon
Harris
Houston
Jones, R.

Lloyd
Melloy
Newton
O'Donnell
Sherrington
Thackeray
Tucker
Wallis-Smith
Wood, P.
Tellers:
Hanson
Jordan

NOES, 40

Armstrong
Beardmore
Bjelke-Petersen
Camm
Campbell
Carey
Chalk
Chinchen
Delamothe
Dewar
Herbert
Hewitt, W. D.
Hinze
Hodges
Hooper
Houghton
Jones, V. E.
Kaus
Knox
Lickiss
Lonergan

Low
McKechnie
Miller
Muller
Murray
Newbery
Nicklin
Pizzey
Porter
Rae
Ramsden
Richter
Row
Smith
Tooth
Wharton
Wood, E. G. W.
Tellers:
Hewitt, N. T. E.
Lee

PAIRS

Inch
Mann

Hughes
Pilbeam

Resolved in the negative.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 to 7, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8—Repeal of and insertion of new s. 14C; Medical Boards—

Mr. HANLON (Baroona) (3.9 p.m.): As I mentioned at the second-reading stage, clause 8 is really the essence of the Bill because it provides for the reconstitution of the Cardiac Board and for the establishment of a General Medical Board and a number of other specialist boards. I do not intend to delay the Committee in reiterating the points that I made, because I think the Minister may have some comments to make on what I did say.

The Opposition has somewhat mixed feelings about increasing the number of boards, but the Minister indicated that an all-party committee will examine the Workers' Compensation Act and I think that will be a safeguard that will enable hon. members to see how the boards operate in practice.

There is only one thing that I wish to add to the remarks that I made on the second reading. When the Cardiac Board was established originally, the Opposition suggested very strongly to the former Treasurer, now Sir Thomas Hiley, that if the board was to have the confidence of claimants, and particularly of the unions, an effort should be made to appoint to it medical men other than those who had been produced regularly by the State Government Insurance Office and who had dogmatic views about cardiac complaints. We instanced particularly a specialist who was frequently utilised by the State Government Insurance Office as a witness in hearings before industrial magistrates of claims for compensation, and who in our opinion was called to give the very strong opinions he held relative to stress, strain, aggravation, and so on in cardiac complaints. We were not in any way challenging the integrity of the doctor concerned, but before the establishment of the Cardiac Board the office utilised him repeatedly in disputed hearings before industrial magistrates to put forward his strongly held views.

In our opinion he would not be a member of the Cardiac Board who would approach his duties with an open mind. We were not reflecting on him or suggesting that his integrity was not of the highest order, but, in statements he had made when called as a witness for the office he had indicated that he held strong opinions on these

matters. The Treasurer at that time, now Sir Thomas Hiley, said he would look at the record of evidence of specialists who had been called by the office, and, to ensure confidence in the board among claimants and unions, he agreed that he should endeavour as far as possible to obtain personnel from specialists who had not been repeatedly used by the office to advance some particular opinion relative to cardiac complaints.

We think this procedure could well be followed in appointing the personnel of the various new boards. I am not going to name any practitioners who might have been used by the office to put forward strong opinions on the various headings under which boards are to be established, but I suggest it might be a good idea if, in the appointments that are made to these boards, the Treasurer consulted with the unions, particularly those who are active in this field and have numerous members dealing with the Workers' Compensation Section, and sounded them out relative to any experience they or their legal advisers have had of particular medical practitioners in matters being heard by industrial magistrates. They might point out to him certain personnel whom they consider it might be preferable not to appoint to a board. I confine myself to those additional remarks.

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer—Treasurer) (3.14 p.m.): During the closing stages of the second-reading debate I promised to deal during the Committee stage, as opportunity presented itself on any particular clause, with one or two of the points that hon. members had raised. The hon. member for Barooka has, to some extent, repeated what he said at the second-reading stage in order to draw my attention particularly to the question of the Cardiac Board and to several other points he raised at that stage.

The query was raised whether the Government was going too far in legislating for six additional specialist boards. It was generally accepted that the Cardiac Board had functioned well, but there appeared to be some doubt among Opposition members whether the proposed boards would do the same. I point out that, apart from the Cardiac Board, there is under existing law a Miner's Phthisis Board and a Facial Disfigurement Board, both of which have also functioned satisfactorily. I see no reason to believe that the proposed additional boards will not function equally as well.

Mr. Bromley: As long as there is no delay in hearings.

Mr. CHALK: The boards are not being set up with the intention of delaying hearings. Quite candidly, from the point of view of the State Government Insurance Office, and every other point of view, the intention is to try to hasten finalisation of a claim rather

than have litigation or long argument. From that point of view I believe that the boards will help.

Mention was made of the right of appeal to an industrial magistrate from a board's decision. I indicated that I would have something to say about that. To give a claimant the right of appeal from the Cardiac Board's decision would, in my view, be a retrograde step, and would place an intolerable burden on an industrial magistrate. After all, with due respect, in these matters an industrial magistrate could be described as a layman. The Cardiac Board gives its decision on medical evidence, and if there was to be an appeal it would have to be to another medical tribunal. To whom could such an appeal lie, seeing that the board is composed of leading specialists in cardiology? There is still provision, in respect of the board, for an appeal on a point of law to an industrial magistrate and/or the Industrial Court.

The query was raised as to why all cardiac claims are submitted to the board. This action is taken because of the very nature of the condition from which the claimant suffers, and it was considered that only a specialist in cardiology could determine matters relating to cardiac conditions.

As to the other boards, it is not the intention of this legislation that the S.G.I.O. should submit every claim to one of the various boards. If this were done, particularly in regard to the Orthopaedic Board, the board would be sitting continuously and would still not be able to handle all the claims.

If the new boards are instituted, the S.G.I.O. will still go ahead and determine what could be described as clear-cut claims. It will submit to the board for determination only those claims which, on the medical evidence before it, it considers should be rejected, but there is a slight doubt whether this action would be fair to the claimant.

The same thing, of course, would apply where, on lay and medical evidence which it has collected, the S.G.I.O. is of the opinion that existing compensation should be terminated. In fairness to the claimant, if there is any doubt at all the matter would be referred to the board for determination.

Reference was made to a case where there may be a composite injury, that is, injury causing one or more conditions. Where there are two conditions which possibly bring in other boards, the idea was that the General Medical Board would be able to handle these cases as well, because there are 10 members of the General Medical Board each with different qualifications, so that a board could be convened to cover any condition that is not appropriate to other boards.

I mention these matters with the idea of trying to clear up the issue. I repeat what I said earlier: in the New Year I want to have a look at the Workers' Compensation Act generally. I am quite prepared to talk to selected members of the Opposition about it.

All I am trying to do is make sure that the Workers' Compensation Act is a good one and that it functions well.

Mr. HANLON (Baroona) (3.19 p.m.): I appreciate the Minister's remarks about consultation on these matters. I merely reiterate that I think it would be a good idea to consult with the unions about the personnel of these boards. We are not endeavouring to insert a requirement that they will have an actual right of appointment, although I think some consideration could be given to this at some time. Apart from the State Government Insurance Office, what opportunity is given to other people who might be concerned on each side of industry to choose some of the people who are appointed to the boards?

The Minister will notice that in previous clauses some restriction has been placed on the rights of those suffering from industrial deafness. There is some tightening up in this Bill to which we are not making an outright objection, although we have some concern, but in view of the creation of these boards we do not want to have a tightening up on the one hand and, on the other, having matters sent to medical boards whose hands are already tied by the provisions of the Act.

I referred to some of the difficulties in cases of mixed law, fact, and medical questions. We were a little concerned about the restriction on industrial deafness, and for that reason we want to ensure that the boards investigate these matters in such a way so as not to be unfair to those who pay the premiums and, what is more important, to those who suffer injury.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 9 and 10, as read, agreed to.

Clause 11—Amendment to First Schedule—

Mr. HANLON (Baroona) (3.21 p.m.): Subject to what the Treasurer says, we intend to oppose this clause. It goes further than we wish, unless the Minister can explain it better to us. Briefly, it means that in assessing the weekly payment in respect of compensation the S.G.I.O. is given the right to have regard to any payment, allowance or benefit made to the injured worker by his employer, or from a superannuation fund or other funds. The restriction is included that the fund must be one to which the employer contributes, and not the injured worker. The office is then entitled accordingly to reduce the compensation payable under the Act. Certain limitations are provided. The office is further entitled, in its discretion, to review any weekly payment. It may decrease or, subject to the prescribed maximum, increase such payments in the light of its examination of these matters.

We feel that this raises the question of why compensation is paid. We know that arguments can be put forward in support of the provision, but we believe from our examination of it that it is going too far in

divorcing compensation from the actual amount payable related to the entitlement according to the wage.

It may be true in certain circumstances, particularly where the employer is paying workers' compensation premiums and is also contributing to some form of superannuation fund on which the employee is drawing at the same time as he is drawing incapacity benefits, that the employer is paying more or less a "double-burger" in maintaining the superannuation fund for the employee and at the same time paying workers' compensation premiums. Subject to what the Minister may say, we intend to oppose the clause because we think the compensation should be related to the wage the man earns. If he is earning a certain wage and suffers an injury covered by the Act, we think his compensation should relate to what he directly loses from his weekly wage entitlement. We think he should be compensated for that. If he happens to be in an insurance fund or some other fund (even one that the employer maintains), we do not think that benefit should be offset against his workers' compensation benefit. On our present examination of the clause we are not prepared to give it our support as it stands.

Mr. BROMLEY (Norman) (3.24 p.m.): I did not intend to speak on this clause because I thought the Minister would reply to the points I raised at the second-reading stage. The clause relates to the assessing of the compensation payable and increasing or decreasing it accordingly and, as the hon. member for Baroona said, it refers to superannuation benefits and other sickness benefits.

I have one query, namely, how will the clause relate to a permanent disability settlement? There is no reference to P.D.S. on this occasion. Perhaps the Treasurer will say something in this regard. A person receiving weekly superannuation for an injury may also be entitled to a lump sum under certain medical benefits or superannuation schemes. There is no mention of that in the Bill.

I indicated at the second-reading stage that we were opposed to this principle, and personally I oppose it strongly. On behalf of the Opposition I say that this clause should be carefully scrutinised by the Minister. How does a P.D.S. affect superannuation or sickness benefits, and how does it affect a worker who receives an injury on the job?

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer—Treasurer) (3.26 p.m.): I appreciate the views expressed by members of the Opposition on this matter. If they consider the matter as it is placed before them in this measure they cannot do other than feel some concern in relation to it. However, I believe that they are fair minded and will realise that this is a set of circumstances we are trying to overcome because it cannot be tolerated.

The only payments, allowances or benefits which it is proposed that the office will take into consideration are those paid by

the employer. Where a worker insures himself against personal accident, or takes out medical benefits, etc., that fact is not taken into consideration. The reference to "superannuation or other fund an allowance, benefit or other payment in respect whereof the employer has contributed to the fund" is specifically brought in to cover the position that has arisen—I make no apology for saying this—on the waterfront.

The position there is that under the legislation of the Australian Stevedoring Industry Board, all employers of waterside labour are required to contribute to the fund, out of which payment for annual leave is made to the waterside workers. The board also allows the leave, not the employers of waterside labour. The employee does not contribute anything towards this fund, and it is considered that in so far as leave is concerned, it is a payment or allowance made by the employer and should be taken into account.

In making this statement, I want to point out to the Committee that it has been the practice for a minority of watersiders to conveniently have an accident one or two days prior to going on leave. They go on leave, receive their annual leave pay and, when the leave is up, they come back and then lodge a claim on the office for compensation. I can give the figures, so do not walk in on this one. They have taken this action because previously when they met with these accidents and came into the office to lodge a claim, they were immediately sent to the medical officers for examination. Many of these examinations resulted in the non-payment of compensation because the medical officer considered that the injury was too trivial to incapacitate the worker, or that the injury had incapacitated him only for a very limited period. Of course, the medical officer could not offer any opinion after the worker came back from leave as to what his condition was or how long it was likely to incapacitate him.

When this was first put up to me I thought it was a little far fetched and felt that perhaps we should not take the steps we are taking under this Bill. Then I asked for and was given figures and names. I shall not mention the names, but they are available. For the year ended 30 June, 1964, 145 waterside workers received compensation during their respective annual leave periods. Of this number, 27 employees had received workers' compensation payments during four consecutive leave periods.

Mr. Hanson: Why pick on the wharfies?

Mr. CHALK: Because they are the ones who are doing it. I believe that the Committee does not, and will not, accept the proposition that an injured worker is entitled to both a leave payment and workers' compensation. Workers' compensation is an award to make up for loss of wages or salary because of industrial injury. It seems to me a very clear principle that if there is

no loss of salary or wages, there should be no payment of workers' compensation. I realise that it can be argued that this is an abuse by only a handful of workers, and that no-one who is "square-dinkum" in his claim has anything to fear. On the other hand, I do not believe that the Opposition would wish to tolerate the present set-up, and that is the reason why this provision has been written into the Bill.

Mr. HANLON (Baroona) (3.31 p.m.): I invited the Minister to give some justification for this clause, and he has given us reason for opposing it by saying that initially it appeared to him to be a bit doubtful. We still intend to oppose the clause because we have not had the opportunity to look at the matter in as much detail as the Minister has been able to, and I do not think it fair to run the risk of penalising 100-odd men because of the alleged actions of 27.

Mr. Chalk: We are not penalising anybody.

Mr. HANLON: The clause reads—

"In assessing the weekly payment in respect of compensation under this Act the Office may have regard to any payment, allowance or benefit made to the injured worker in question by his employer or from a superannuation or other fund (being in the case of such superannuation or other fund and allowance, benefit or other payment in respect whereof the employer has contributed to the fund but in respect whereof the injured worker has not contributed to the fund) . . ."

The condition that it has to be a fund contributed to by the employer only applies only to payments made from a superannuation or other fund. It seems to me that the question of any other type of payment, allowance or benefit is a little open.

The Minister has identified waterside workers as the rods in the pickles, as it were. They are much maligned by some people who make propaganda, political or otherwise, from their efforts on the wharves. I am not for a moment suggesting that the Minister is doing that. Waterside workers themselves accept that they always seem to be on the wrong side of the fence in the propaganda of anti-labour forces. Their union is, however, very well organised, and has a very high code under which members who do not do the right thing are penalised.

I do not pretend to have any great knowledge of work on the waterfront, but my understanding of it is that people employed on the wharves have to depend very much on one another. Whilst they are often criticised and turned into comic-strip characters by cartoonists, theirs is nevertheless a dangerous occupation, even under modern conditions. Many people have been incapacitated through serious injury suffered whilst working on the waterfront. It is by no means an easy job or one that those outside it can with justification feel that they could carry

out more efficiently. The work contains a considerable element of danger, and, as I say, waterside workers have to depend very much on one another.

As the hon. member for Port Curtis interjected, the union imposes fairly severe fines on its members for breaches of safety provisions, and so on. The men know that they have to depend on one another not only industrially—and they do not make any apology for that—but also for their own safety at work. Consequently, the organisation of the union, and the conduct of its ballots, too, for that matter, are on a very high plane, and I do not think the union would encourage its members to take any unfair advantage of the Workers' Compensation Act. There may be a few who would endeavour to do so; but, as the hon. member for Port Curtis said by interjection, they would not be confined to the waterfront. People in many professions and occupations would endeavour to take advantage of the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act if they could.

Although the Treasurer has endeavoured to justify the amendment proposed in the clause and has given the Committee the assessment that led him to agree to its inclusion in the Bill, the Opposition is not prepared to identify itself with it and intends to oppose it.

Mr. BROMLEY (Norman) (3.37 p.m.): I do not wish to enter into any controversy, but I think it was very unfair of the Treasurer to indicate any particular section of the community that could be guilty of endeavouring to take unfair advantage of the Workers' Compensation Section of the State Government Insurance Office. I do not intend to defend any industry or any industrial worker who attempts to do that, but I think the Minister could well have said "a certain type of industry", without naming any particular one, as he did. I know that the Waterside Workers' Federation imposes fairly high fines on its members who contravene the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act.

The Treasurer indicated that a number of people had received compensation after returning from leave. I point out to the Committee that at the week-end I called a meeting of certain people in my electorate to discuss this clause, and I say here and now that quite a number of them said emphatically that some of the doctors in the public hospitals have said to an injured worker who was being taken to hospital, "You should not go on compensation for this injury. You should go on sick leave," thereby intimating that they would save the Government and the S.G.I.O. a certain amount of money in compensation payments. That has happened even in instances in which men have been taken direct from work to hospital. I will not mention names, but one person said to the doctor, "Well, if I

am not going to get compensation for this, although it happened at work and I have been brought here by the ambulance, you can remove the bandage and whatever you have on my foot and I will go to my own doctor, who will at least be 'fair dinkum' and give me a certificate for workers' compensation." In that case, that is what happened.

I do not condone any person's—I use the colloquialism—"bludging" on the community in any respect, but it seems rather strange that over the last few months people who have been injured at work and taken to hospital and treated and bandaged by a doctor have been told by him, "I will give you a sick leave form instead of filling out the form for workers' compensation." If the injured worker is prepared to accept that, admittedly he will save the Government money; but he is doing himself out of sick leave that would accumulate against the time when he suffers from influenza or some other illness that causes him to stay away from work.

It seems to me that this sort of thing is going on lately and I take a fairly dim view of it when a doctor can say, "I won't give you a compensation form; I think you will be away for only two or three days. You are entitled to sick leave; take that". The worker is doing himself out of money. This may not be known to many people, but it was made known to me over the week-end when I called a meeting of interested people.

Mr. SHERRINGTON (Salisbury) (3.41 p.m.): I did not intend to enter this debate, but I thought I should voice a few thoughts particularly in view of what the Minister said about his reasons for introducing this clause. He said that on the waterfront there had been something like 27 men guilty of the type of thing he outlined. When one considers that there are approximately 2,500 to 3,000 wharves registered in the port of Brisbane it would seem that every employee in Queensland will be penalised because approximately 3 per cent. of watersiders are guilty of this type of conduct.

Mr. Chalk: I think in fairness I should point out that I am only opening the gate slightly so that we can do something about it if we want to.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: The Minister is opening the gate, anyway. I have had many years in industry and I know that many good employers, because they are anxious to look after the welfare of employees particularly in times of sickness or accident, have set up funds so that when an employee is absent on compensation he will receive a payment from the fund to make up the difference between the compensation he is receiving and his full wage. If we are to introduce a system that will provide that if such a payment is made to the employee who is on

compensation because of injury it will be taken into account by the S.G.I.O., then we are certainly not encouraging good employers to look after their employees by establishing a fund that will guarantee any injured worker his full weekly wage. I do not think it is good enough to say that we have merely left the door open or that this has all been brought about because of the actions of 27 employees in Queensland.

Mr. NEWTON (Belmont) (3.44 p.m.): I should like to comment on the position of small employers who from time to time are forced to work as employees. I have known of people in this situation who have taken out a policy to cover themselves for seven days a week on small contract jobs. I recall on one occasion having been involved in an accident after having reverted to working for an employer. I was faced with the position of deciding whether to make a claim against the employer's policy or claiming on the S.G.I.O. under a policy I had taken out to cover myself as a small contractor. It was clearly indicated to me that I had only one choice—that of claiming against my own policy.

I endorse the remarks of other hon. members on this side. The trade union movement has never encouraged the type of conduct mentioned by the Minister in connection with this clause. We know from past experience of the importance, when making claims for workers' compensation, of making sure that every detail is fully covered down to the finest point. I agree entirely with what was said by the hon. member for Salisbury. It has been our experience that employees do not get anywhere near their award rate of pay while on compensation. For that reason they have been forced to augment their weekly compensation payment by 25s. or a smaller amount from some other source.

If a penalty is to be applied, as outlined by the Minister, some penalty should also apply to the person who gives the certificate. We all know that when an employee applies for workers' compensation it is not just a matter of his filling out a claim on his own behalf. He must have a claim completed by his employer, and he must have a certificate covering the accident. He must lodge all three documents before the claim receives any attention by the State Government Insurance Office. If the position is to be left open so that either the Minister or the General Manager will decide whether this clause is applicable, the penalties provided should also apply to the person who issued the certificate. I am sure my colleagues will agree that the persons who issue certificates—doctors, in the main—to assist a claimant to receive workers' compensation under the circumstances outlined by the Minister should be subject to the same penalties.

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer—Treasurer) (3.48 p.m.): There is not very much for me to reply to. I did mention waterside workers because that was the case that came before me. The general manager of an insurance company asked for a few more details. I have a case here. The claim submitted was the fifth consecutive claim coinciding with the claimant's annual leave. He said that his leave had been deferred but when the S.G.I.O. checked they found there was no mention of that fact anywhere.

All we are endeavouring to do is wipe out some of these snide practices that occur. I give the Committee the assurance that the clause is not intended to be forced on any fair and just person. I think the Opposition will agree that it is desirable to have this clause so that it can be applied when the same worker has made four or five consecutive claims when he has gone on leave.

I will certainly mention to the Medical Board the facts that the hon. member for Norman placed before the Committee. In fairness, I may say that we know of cases of injury in which the individual himself desired to be placed on sick leave. One reason for that is that he gets full payment. That is his own business and I am not arguing the pros and cons of it. Perhaps the doctor to whom the hon. member referred is doing the employee a kindness by saying, "This is one of those cases that could be illness or brought about by illness." When an employee is on sick leave he gets full payment, whereas when he is on compensation he does not. The hon. member knows what happens if an employee allows his sick leave to accumulate for too long.

Let us look at this matter genuinely. If I thought this was being done deliberately I should take a different attitude, but I do not believe that the majority of the members of the medical profession would do this. If the hon. member knows of such a set of circumstances I should be only too pleased to talk to him in confidence to see if the matters can be rectified.

Mr. Bromley: In the case of a person taking sick leave instead of going on compensation and the injury coming against him later on, would he still be entitled to compensation?

Mr. CHALK: That would depend on the nature of the medical opinion. If he exhausted his sick-leave entitlement I believe a reasonable attitude would be adopted.

I have mentioned this only so that the hon. member may have a fair indication of what we are trying to do. Generally speaking, the clause has been inserted for a purpose. I believe that provided it is administered as I would wish it to be—and as I believe it will be—no-one will be seriously affected.

Question—That clause 11, as read, stand part of the Bill—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 38

Armstrong	Miller
Beardmore	Muller
Bjelke-Petersen	Murray
Camm	Newbery
Campbell	Nicklin
Carey	Pizzey
Chalk	Porter
Chinchen	Rae
Delamothe	Ramsden
Dewar	Richter
Ewan	Row
Herbert	Smith
Hinze	Tooth
Hodges	Wharton
Houghton	Wood. E. G. W.
Jones, V. E.	
Kaus	
Lee	
Lickiss	<i>Tellers:</i>
Low	Hewitt, N. T. E.
McKechnie	Hewitt, W. D.

NOES, 25

Bennett	Lloyd
Bromley	Mann
Byrne	Melloy
Davies	Newton
Dean	O'Donnell
Donald	Sherrington
Dufficy	Thackeray
Duggan	Tucker
Graham	Wallis-Smith
Hanlon	
Hanson	<i>Tellers:</i>
Harris	Jones, R.
Houston	Wood, P.
Jordan	

PAIR

Hughes Inch

Resolved in the affirmative.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

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

HARBOURS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer—Treasurer) (4 p.m.): I move—

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

I believe I can say that this Bill was well received at the introductory stage and that there is very little to add to my previous remarks.

The hon. member for Windsor referred to the recovery of costs as presently provided in section 162 (6) of the present Act. On examination of the provisions of the Bill, it will be observed that this clause has been deleted in the recasting of section 162. Accordingly, in the recovery of costs in actions against harbour boards the normal process of law will henceforth apply. That meets the point raised by the hon. member.

I am happy to introduce the measure, which has the effect of correcting anomalies in the law relating to harbour boards and their administration. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. HANLON (Baroona) (4.1 p.m.): As the Treasurer mentioned, the Bill substantially has the support of the Opposition. We had some reservations on clause 9, which omits the words “forty years” and inserts “seventy-five years” in respect of leases granted by harbour boards.

Mr. Chalk: That is bringing harbour boards into line with local authorities.

Mr. HANLON: The Treasurer interjects that this brings harbour boards into line with what is being done in the case of local authorities. For that reason, we do not intend to oppose that provision. At the same time, there is a slight difference between harbour boards and local authorities.

Mr. Chalk: There is close liaison between the two.

Mr. HANLON: That is acknowledged. I mention it only because I think the hon. member for Port Curtis intends to refer to it. Only a couple of years ago the then Treasurer said he thought leases of 40 years were quite sufficient for harbour boards to grant. Now, in a short space of time, the period is to be increased to 75 years. An extension such as that will require great care in assessing future requirements. As an illustration, 75 years in reverse takes us back to 1891. Whilst we do not oppose this provision, we do not think there is an exact parallel between it and what is provided in the Local Government Act.

I shall leave further comments to the hon. member for Port Curtis.

Mr. HANSON (Port Curtis) (4.3 p.m.): Generally, the principles of the Bill are the results of representations made by conferences of representatives of harbour boards over many years. I was sorry that I was not in the Chamber when the Treasurer introduced the Bill, as I would very much have liked to speak at that stage. I think the Minister gave some preliminary advice to harbour boards that it was intended to make some of these amendments early in 1967. (At least, that is what my espionage service told me!)

As the hon. member for Baroona said, the measure is not surrounded by much controversy, and consequently has the endorsement of hon. members on this side of the House. The first principle of the Bill is a machinery provision tidying up the term “member”, so that it will include the chairman and deputy chairman of a harbour board. For many years under the Harbours Act no provision was made for deputy chairmen, and it is only in recent years that the office of deputy chairman has been embodied in harbour boards legislation. The clause is purely a machinery measure, but, as it tidies up the position, I am sure that most harbour boards will be very grateful for it.

The tenure of office that the Treasurer proposes to embody in the Bill has been adopted by many harbour boards over the years. In the case of the Gladstone Harbour Board, in which I was formerly interested, although the local authority elections were held about the middle or the end of May, it was usually about the middle of July before the board was reconstituted and members were able to take their seats, but there was always a considerable amount of anxiety on the part of western shires about their membership of the Rockhampton Harbour Board. The tenure of office of harbour board members will now become part and parcel of the Harbours Act, and I am sure that the change will meet with the approbation of most harbour boards.

The Minister is introducing a safeguard relative to the application of authority. It will be done by by-law, with the approval of the Governor in Council. Such a provision is needed urgently because the chairman or deputy chairman may adopt a domineering attitude and maintain that he has some sort of divine right in the exercise of authority or in controlling the officers who have authority bestowed on them. If representation is made in a common-sense way, I hope that the Minister will see that a by-law is invoked, with the approval of the Governor in Council, to safeguard the interests of the board.

The Bill contains provisions relative to the auditing of accounts. During the debate on the Treasury Estimates, I submitted that there should be some form of uniformity in harbour board accounting in this State. The Townsville Harbour Board has many efficient officers in its administration who are very active in making investments on behalf of the board in short-term loans. The board benefits from their activities, and I believe that a similar procedure should be followed by other boards in Queensland. Perhaps officers from some harbour boards could be transferred to other boards for a time. If they were, of course, it would be necessary to ensure that they were not at any disadvantage. If a uniform accounting procedure were adopted, officers of the Department of the Auditor-General would find it much easier to audit harbour board accounts.

The hon member for Baroona referred to the longer period for which leases may be given, and I stress to the House the remarks made in 1962 by Sir Thomas Hiley as he now is, when he was Treasurer and when an amending Bill was before the House. He said—

“Consequently, while the Government believe that 21 years, the present minimum, might be too short, they consider that a 40-year period is more reasonable . . .”

That is only four years ago—a very short period in parliamentary terms—but the Treasurer is now prepared to almost double what was regarded by the former Treasurer as a very reasonable term. As I mentioned

in the House a few days ago, the Government has changed its thinking in regard to certain matters.

I personally would act very cautiously in the granting of a 75-year lease. If such action is contemplated by the Government, I think it is very necessary to make it mandatory upon the harbour board concerned, by way of by-laws, to observe certain stringent conditions in the case of a long-term lease. For instance, there should be a provision to the effect that the building must be kept in good repair; there should be a painting clause and there should be a clause relative to the right of entry, not in terms of Government thinking, but a gentlemen's agreement between the two interested parties that regular inspections shall be made to ensure that the activities engaged in by the lessee are those for which the lease was originally sought. There should also be provision for insurance cover against damage by fire or as a result of the elements.

These are safeguards that must be looked at if the Government considers extending the terms of leases to 75 years. I know that prior to 1962 there were approaches from a certain instrumentality for a 99-year lease. The former Treasurer refused the request, but he increased the 21-year term that was available under Labour to 40 years. There are oil installations at many of our ports, some of them representing an investment of £300,000, or \$600,000, expended many years ago, and most of the companies concerned are satisfied with the 40-year lease.

I remember taking part in negotiations for a lease, some years ago, with Caltex Oil Pty. Ltd. and that company was very pleased indeed to take advantage of the 40-year lease proposal.

Certain harbour authorities have on their wharves today cold storage companies which invest considerable sums of money. In this modern day and age there is great emphasis on cold storage, but in 70 years' time the emphasis may have shifted. Other methods may have been evolved for keeping food-stuffs, and perhaps a cold-storage company that holds a long-term lease from the harbour board may desire to cancel it. In the meantime, that company could have been holding out many other industries that may have considerably increased trade through the port.

The hon. member for Baroona has suggested that we do not intend to oppose the 75-year lease proposal, but we nevertheless approach it very carefully because it is a considerable departure from Government policy of four years ago.

I was very interested that the Treasurer did not introduce a provision sought by the boards relative to the rateability of land. I trust that next year when he deliberates and moves more slowly and meticulously in harbour board matters the Treasurer will ensure that the matter of rateability of lands under the authority of harbour boards is set out clearly so that there cannot be any judicial argument about their rateability. A

very clear-cut decision whether harbour boards are instruments of the Crown or not was given in a judgment by the former Chief Justice and Mr. Justice Gibbs in an action taken by the Gladstone Town Council against the Gladstone Harbour Board.

There is a considerable amount of merit in the provision whereby reclaimed land will be dealt with under the authority given to the boards prior to the amendment of the 1955 Act. Nevertheless, I point out that at the 1961 conference of harbour boards held at Mackay a delegate pointed out that although we had reclaimed an area of about 3 acres designated as industrial land at a cost of £26,000, when application was made for freehold title to it the Government suggested that we should purchase it at so much an acre. That seemed to be something of an injustice to us after reclaiming the land at great expense. Prior to 1955, on application we could have obtained a deed of grant to it, but when we sought to obtain a certain title to it we were asked to pay a considerable amount of money per acre for it.

I suggest to the Treasurer that the provision that modernises the law with regard to legal actions against harbour boards is an improvement because it brings harbour boards into line with many of the other instrumentalities that had the privilege taken off them years ago. It has been suggested that it should not be the prerogative of harbour boards to enjoy this privilege.

I also suggest to the Treasurer that with the reclamation of land and the desire of harbour boards to have the land vested in them, there should be very close liaison between the department and the board concerned. Going back to 1963, I can remember when certain tidal land adjacent to the large enterprise presently being erected in Gladstone was owned by a large meat company. Representations were made to the board to assist the company in obtaining a certain title for this tidal land. At the time the company knew full well that it was negotiating with Comalco and the present alumina enterprise that is so actively engaged in the area. I will say that the advice of the board was heeded on that occasion, but certain representatives of the company approached the Land Administration Commission seeking some form of ownership of the tidal land.

In his short experience of administering the Harbours Act the Treasurer should realise, as should anybody connected with a port authority, that port authorities are very foolish if they do not retain behind their wharf areas acres and acres of land for future expansion. If they decide upon some other course and give waterfront land to industries that could quite easily go to the outskirts of the city they are failing in their duty. Port authorities must be very careful about the classes of business to which they give waterfront land and ensure that it will be directly connected with the future progress of the port. By failing to do so they commit a grave error.

I know of wharves in Brisbane on which an enormous sum of money was spent and behind which there is a considerable shortage of space. This is much to the detriment of the good working of the port. In Sydney, many port activities are being taken elsewhere as there is insufficient waterfront land to cope with all the harbour activities to be undertaken.

I do not wish to delay the House, as I am sure that the Treasurer is cognisant of the matters I have referred to. I trust that we may find some very effective amendments to the Harbours Act in 1967.

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer—Treasurer) (4.22 p.m.), in reply: The first point I should reply to was raised by the hon. member for Barooka, who said that the Opposition viewed with some concern the extension of periods of lease from 40 years to 75 years. Although the Opposition is not prepared to oppose the provision, it believes that it may be going a little too far. I draw attention to the clause, which clearly points out that when a lease is for more than a year a harbour board has to refer the matter to the Minister for his consent. Quite candidly, that provision is not being inserted for the purpose of granting leases for 75 years.

Mr. Hanson: The provision with respect to one year is already in the Act.

Mr. CHALK: That is quite right. I have listened very attentively to the hon. member. The idea behind this proposal concerns cases in which large capital investments may be involved. With containerisation and various other activities under way, some harbour boards believe that to get the right facilities a lease for a period longer than 40 years is necessary for amortisation purposes. We are providing for an extension of the period of lease from 40 to 75 years on the condition that it must come before the Minister of the day to determine whether it is necessary. I believe there is firm protection for the individual, the harbour board and the interests of the Government.

I listened very attentively to the eloquent oration by the hon. member for Port Curtis on the principles of land tenure and port administration. Such an eminent discourse, so meticulously prepared by him, indicates his grasp of this subject. I can only say that the views he has put forward are in keeping with those I outlined at the introductory stage of the Bill. In fact, I am not certain that his notes are not taken from my introductory speech. Nevertheless, I believe that having gone meticulously through it, point by point, he has emphasised to the people of Gladstone who read his comments in the local Press that he has given very forthright expression to his views.

I am certain that this Bill has the over-all commendation of hon. members on both sides.

Motion (Mr. Chalk) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

(Mr. Rae, Gregory, in the chair)

Clauses 1 to 14, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTS
AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. H. RICHTER (Somerset—Minister for Local Government and Conservation) (4.28 p.m.): I move—

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

I think I am correct in saying that this Bill was favourably received by hon. members. As I mentioned in my introductory speech, a number of the proposals contained in the Bill were put forward by the Local Government Association of Queensland. The various proposals are considered to be necessary and desirable for the effective carrying out by local authorities of their many important functions.

As mentioned at the introductory stage, certain proposals, for example, the new town planning section and the provisions which enable a local authority, in appropriate cases, to require a subdivider to contribute towards the provision of parks and recreation areas and the reticulation of subdivisional estates with water and sewerage, are based on corresponding provisions already in force in the City of Brisbane. We feel that similar powers should be conferred upon local authorities generally.

Mr. NEWTON (Belmont) (4.29 p.m.): Let me say on behalf of the Opposition that we have studied the Bill. The Minister in charge of this Bill keeps strictly to what is contained in a Bill when introducing it. Any hon. member who follows him closely can gather quickly before the Bill is printed what is proposed by it. As indicated by the Minister and a number of hon. members who spoke at the introductory stage, many of the proposals in the Bill flow from decisions of the Local Government Association conference.

It is true that whilst the principles are mainly machinery provisions, there are one or two that require some elaboration by the Minister. Let me deal in the first instance with the provision that gives to local authorities the right to introduce town planning schemes in their areas. Experience since the implementation of the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act leads us to view this provision with some seriousness. For a number of reasons, that Act has not, from our point of view, operated as smoothly as is desirable. It is to be hoped that when this Bill becomes

law local authorities throughout the State will not be confronted with many of the problems that face the Brisbane City Council as the local authority in the metropolitan area.

We do not know what the Government has in mind. When a Bill is brought before the House providing for the setting up of town planning committees, we take it that it will cover all local authorities apart from the one covered by the City of Brisbane Act, including a number of provincial cities. I do not know whether it is intended to cover them by this measure and not by some town planning Act. Our hope is that many of the obstacles confronting the Brisbane City Council under the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act will not have to be faced by other local authorities when they put similar plans into effect.

Of course, where town planning is to be carried out steps should be taken to ensure that the plan is displayed for a suitable time so that all in the local authority area concerned will have an opportunity to object to anything contained in it, and that Bills will not have to be introduced extending such periods.

Another matter with which I want to deal is the principle of realignment. It should be ensured that this matter is fully covered. Here I refer mainly to the provincial cities covered by the Local Government Act which, of course, also overrides the City of Brisbane Act on matters on which that Act is silent. A local authority may be involved in very heavy compensation payments when a realignment takes place.

There is a five-year plan to implement the recommendations contained in the Wilbur Smith Report, but other local authorities may be able to plan for five, 10 or 20 years ahead. They will have to decide where buildings are to be stepped back and how realignments will be implemented, and in some cases it may be necessary for them to resume whole blocks of land. The Act lays it down quite clearly that when a local authority has decided what it intends to do, it must proceed immediately to compensate landholders for realignments.

Mr. Richter: Only on vacant land.

Mr. NEWTON: I hope so. That assurance may overcome some of the difficulties that the Opposition has in the matter. If a person applies for a permit to construct a building and the council is fully aware that a realignment must take place, the Opposition is of opinion that the provisions of the Bill mean that that person has to be compensated for the land that may be involved in the realignment, which may not take place, of course, until the second or third stages of a town plan are implemented.

The provision in the Bill to delete a certain subsection of the Act and insert a completely new section in its place indicates clearly that the Government is covering the question of compensation more fully than it has been covered in the past. The Opposition has no argument against that. It believes that

people should be compensated where realignments are made in accordance with a town plan. But a number of local authorities throughout the State could be embarrassed if they had to meet numerous compensation claims in an area in which they intended to put the plan into operation.

The Opposition thinks that the Minister might well give the House further information about the provisions of the Bill that relate to areas being set aside for development. An area outside the city of Brisbane, for example, may be redeveloped. It must be zoned and shown on the town plan in a way that will indicate what it is being redeveloped for. However, although it may be shown in this way while the plan is being displayed, circumstances may change over the years. The Bill provides for the setting aside of land for park purposes, parking areas, and so on, and some of the land set aside for redevelopment may be required for similar purposes. In other cases, certain parts of a local authority area may be required for residential or industrial purposes.

Again we feel that while this does apply it could have a serious effect on some local authorities when they have to show clearly that a certain area is zoned for particular purposes. I think the Minister, in his reply, might clarify those two principles. If he can, the Opposition may have little to say in the Committee stage.

I might add that the Opposition is quite happy with this Bill because we know that the machinery matters were worked out at the Local Government Association conference and that the Minister wholeheartedly agreed to the principles contained in the amendments. If the Minister can clarify those matters we will be happy.

Mr. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha) (4.41 p.m.): I am pleased to see the provisions contained in this Bill being introduced, to amend the Local Government Act in certain particulars, more specifically in relation to the extension of town-planning provisions to conform to many of the provisions in the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act of 1964. It is pleasing to note the proposal to extend the jurisdiction of the Local Government Court as constituted under the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act of 1964 to cover the whole State. Both of these measures were recommended by me in 1964.

I make the plea, however, that the existing town planning legislation be considered as an interim measure only and that the time is not far distant when uniform town and regional planning legislation will be enacted to cover the whole State, with of course, the appropriate uniform appeal provisions that are now being extended to the whole State.

There is nothing more certain than that, in the eyes of the rest of Australia, we are a backward State in terms of provision for town and regional planning, or town and country planning as it is sometimes described. We are in a very favourable

position indeed to learn from the experience of other States and thus implement a very worth-while system in Queensland.

If one discusses the merits and problems of town and regional planning outside of this Chamber with professional bodies and professional people experienced in such matters, both inside and outside of the Public Service, there is very little doubt in one's mind about the absolute necessity and desirability of uniform legislation. In fact, I am at a loss to find any opponents of town and regional planning in this State, although I know they must exist. I suggest that opposition can come only as a result of the ignorance of those who do not know the benefits of town and regional planning, particularly the benefits such a system can bring to the development of the State. If we are really to develop our towns and cities in Queensland we will have to streamline and modify our thinking in terms of the year 1966. With 1967 just around the corner I make the plea: let us try to grasp the nettle and have a look at what is happening in other States. If in 1967 we make only the first step forward and critically investigate the conditions of town and regional planning as they apply not only in Australia but elsewhere in the world, it will at least be something.

I repeat what I said before, namely, this question of town and regional planning is not a matter of deciding whether we can afford the implementation of such a system. The fact is that we cannot afford the luxury of not planning for the future of this State. The Minister has the responsibility under the existing town-planning legislation of recommending town-planning schemes for approval, yet I believe that he has not the planners in his department to examine plans adequately in detail. I again stress the need for a ministerial portfolio of town and regional planning for Queensland, with suitable qualified staff to deal adequately with the vital issues of planning in this State.

The hon. member for Belmont referred to the matter of realignment. I propose to comment on this provision, which is an amendment to section 35 (10). In doing so I propose to deal in some detail with what is happening at the moment by way of set-backs and the need for this proposed amendment. To avoid resumptions, when giving site approvals councils are requesting set-back without compensation for the land in front of the proposed new building alignment. In other words, the land between the new building alignment and the old building alignment has the purpose of being used for a road but remains the property of the person who constructs the building. Most people resent this type of approach because it is virtually a mild form of blackmail in that land is used or made available for public use without compensation.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not in order in discussing the Brisbane Town Plan in detail. He can deal with it in general, but not in detail.

Mr. LICKISS: I am pointing out what happens with councils who operate under section 35 (10) of the Local Government Act. This is equally applicable to the Brisbane City Council as to any other council in Queensland. It is applicable to the Brisbane City Council by virtue of its operations under the Local Government Act. The proposal under this legislation is to ensure that where lawful set-back would otherwise be required, or a realignment established, the council concerned will compensate the owner for the land taken between the old alignment and the new alignment. This does not in any way prevent the lawful operation of section 35 (10) in terms of an alignment notice where road-widening is necessary and where buildings do exist. It is well known that when a realignment notice is placed on a road, and thus on land where buildings do exist, immediately the dead hand is placed on the property and in terms of the Local Government Act the legal owner of the land and the buildings is restricted in what he can do by way of modification to his buildings and even in the maximum amount of maintenance he can carry out. I suggest that this has always been a very cheap form of resumption for the local authority.

I know that the hon. member for Belmont said that local authorities could be caught up in large capital outlays by way of resumptions. I point out that the local authority is made up of the elected representatives of the people of the area. In terms of any fair type of government, no individual member of the community should be disadvantaged, at least economically, for the benefit of the majority. Where it is necessary to resume land in the interests of the community, the community should bear the cost. This is not a matter of "having a shot" at the local authority; it is just a matter of good local government and how it is effected here and elsewhere.

No compensation is paid by way of injurious affection where a realignment notice is served, even after the proposed amendment is made law. No compensation for injurious affection is provided for a building on land on which a realignment notice is served. Road-widening appears to have been excluded from the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act, and consequently this same provision will be carried over in that form to the Local Government Act. Although it becomes in actual fact an amendment to the plan, injurious affection will not apply in terms of compensation if the road is subject to realignment. We know that immediately a realignment notice is placed on a property, land or building, the sale value of that property diminishes rapidly, consequently the injurious affection is obvious. No compensation is payable under the law at the

moment. The only time that compensation is paid is when the buildings are removed, or if there is an application for rebuilding. Compensation is then payable in terms of the value of the land between the old alignment and the new alignment, or in cases where the local authority decides to proceed before the building has reached the stage that it is about to fall down. That could be 20 years after the realignment notice is served and even then compensation is paid only as at the time of resumption. If we look at what has happened elsewhere to see how the value of buildings can be depreciated by disclosing in the Press that it is proposed to take them over (as was done with certain buildings in King George Square), we see the extent to which a local authority can affect the value of property. In other words, the property is immediately depreciated in value upon the serving of notice of likely resumption or of being subject to a realignment.

There is another unfair provision in section 35 (10) in that, having run the property down for 20 or 30 years—and there is no time limit on a notice of resumption—the local authority can say, "We are not going to proceed with it." It can then offer the vacant land back to the person who owned it prior to the set-back but, of course, it is worthless to him because he has already set back his building alignment 10 or 20 feet from the then normal business alignment. The council can also say to the person who has not been permitted to maintain his building in the normal fashion for 20 or 30 years, "We are not going to proceed with the alignment." Having injuriously affected his property for many years in terms of a commercial enterprise, it can say, "We are not going ahead with it," and compensation is not payable.

When looking at some of our legislative provisions, it is about time that we paid attention to the rights of the individual. I believe that realignment in any town-planning scheme should be implemented only by way of amendment to the town plan because, in fact, it is an amendment to the town plan. The implementation of the Wilbur Smith Report in the Greater Brisbane area will be an amendment to the Town Plan in many instances, and similar circumstances will arise from time to time in many provincial cities and towns in this State.

Mr. Newton: That is already done in Stage I.

Mr. LICKISS: It is a fact that we are implementing Stage I of the Wilbur Smith Report in Brisbane. For example, the widening of Shafston Avenue is an amendment to the Town Plan. Consequently, immediately it is proposed to go ahead with this scheme it should be treated as a normal amendment to a town plan and advertised accordingly. Provision would then exist, if my recommendation is accepted, for injurious affection, and compensation for resumption would flow in the normal course of events.

As it stands we have expressly prohibited under the town planning legislation—and we will do so in this legislation—a road-widening

to be considered an amendment to the town plan, and therefore it is not subject to compensation for injurious affection.

More than ever there is evidence in this Bill for the necessity for a uniform resumption Act which we hoped would be brought down this session. Under the Local Government Act the provision for resumption lies in the Public Works Land Resumption Acts, 1916 to 1955. Within the City of Brisbane the council operates under the City of Brisbane Improvement Act. If the Wilbur Smith Report is to be implemented as the town planning scheme and the necessary resumptions are to be carried out by the Main Roads Department within the City of Brisbane under the Public Works Land Resumption Act, and pursuant to the Main Roads Acts, or if this is not possible it may be done under the Acts under which the Co-ordinator-General's Department resumes land, different provisions for resumption apply to the various schemes, authorities and areas. Consequently the time is long overdue for a uniform resumption Act to apply to the whole of Queensland.

Section 49F of the Local Government Act is to be amended to provide for parking-station leases up to 75 years. That is the section that the Brisbane City Council might use as a basis for implementing its now famous city square cum car park. I am pleased to see that the local authorities will be bound by the provisions of the other section—I think it is section 32 (4)—of the Local Government Act, in that by extending the terms of leases from 30 to 75 years the approval of the Governor in Council will be necessary for all leases granted under this section.

The proposals contained in the Bill will go a long way towards extending the provisions of town planning throughout the State on a more satisfactory basis. I am confident that the jurisdiction of the Local Government Court, when made available to all sections of the community who wish to appeal against town planning legislation, will be a welcome innovation. I stress the wish that I should like to see uniform town and regional planning legislation introduced into this Parliament, and the creation, without delay, of a portfolio covering town and regional planning to plan adequately the future development of the State. The realignment provisions as they presently exist should be taken out of the Local Government Act and inserted, as an amendment, in the town planning legislation, and subject to claims for injurious affection and compensation for resumption where applicable.

Mrs. JORDAN (Ipswich West) (4.59 p.m.): As I said at the introductory stage of the Bill, I support and indeed welcome most of the proposals. In the main they are what a number of local authorities, particularly those in provincial cities, and more particularly in Ipswich, have wanted for some time, both individually and

collectively. Therefore I intend neither to reiterate what I said previously nor to echo anything said by other hon. members.

In relation to the power of a local authority to amend a town plan, it seems to me that the Bill provides a great improvement to the existing situation. After perusing the Bill and discussing it with people who are knowledgeable in this sphere, I find that they are very much in favour of, and approve, the amendment in the Bill.

On the matter of appeals, I heard some mumblings and grumbings of disagreement to the effect that the Local Government Court will make appeals too easy. I cannot agree with that although, as a member of a local authority, I look at it also from the point of view of the common good, which a person elected to a local authority must do. I cannot agree that objection will be made too easy. Indeed, I believe that the whole idea of using the Local Government Court for appeals has been for this very reason. It will make appeals easier and save time, and I also feel that the machinery of appeal will be easier of access to the people as a whole. Whilst we work for the common good, we must do our utmost to protect the individual and see that justice prevails. I think that the new approach endeavours to do just that.

The main thing that I am concerned about is the position of local authorities and owners in relation to realignment proposals contained in clause 11. The position concerning the land between the old and new alignments needs more clarification. The Minister said that the owner is precluded from building on the land between the old and new alignments or altering any existing buildings, but that the local authority would have the right to allow or disallow minor repairs. I would like some clarification on this point.

From a perusal of the Local Government Act, from what the Minister said, and from the Bill, there appears to be some doubt about the position in relation to the erection of new buildings. If the alignment has to await the erection of a building, an absurd situation could arise. If, on the other hand, this is to force the local authority immediately to resume the land between the old and new alignments, no local authority could afford the huge compensation that would have to be paid if a number of properties had to be resumed at the one time. This has particular application to old cities such as Ipswich, where the streets are very narrow, as any move to widen them would mean that a lot of money would have to be paid in compensation within a short period of time. The local authority would therefore immediately have to abandon plans to widen the streets because it could not find the money for the compensation involved.

There could also be the situation in which there were some buildings and some vacant land, and in which the council desired, because of traffic density, to widen a road.

Some owners could deliberately try to stop the council from continuing with the work, and could stage sales that would eventually force the council to pay immediate compensation because of loss of use of the land. Staged sales could force the Council to pay compensation immediately because of the indicated loss of value and the non-usage of the land.

These points are not really clear either to me or to the people with whom I have discussed the question, and I should like the Minister to explain them a little more clearly than he did at the introductory stage. I thought that the words he used were clear; but people to whom I spoke expressed doubts, and then I realised that two meanings could be read into them. Perhaps I am a little dumb, or perhaps some of the people to whom I spoke are a little dumb, but I would appreciate it if the Minister could explain more clearly the provisions of the Bill relating to compensation for the land between the old and new alignments.

If the realignment is done as the opportunity arises and as the implementation of the town plan requires, it will greatly facilitate the work of local authorities in proceeding with their plans to keep pace with needs and to plan progressively for the future. It must be possible for local authorities to lay down a realignment long before an area is built up, and for that realignment to be notified, as the Minister said, to the Registrar of Titles. It must be made impossible, too, for people to hold up realignments deliberately. Make no mistake about it, there are a few people who seek to do that for one reason or another. They are few in number, thank goodness; nevertheless, there are those who do it, and they have been able to hold up for a considerable period work that is needed for the common good and for the progress of a particular area.

If under the provisions of the Bill councils have not the power to prevent new buildings being constructed on land affected by the new alignment and have to allow the building to be completed before the provisions of the Act can be invoked, a silly situation will arise. I am sure that the people who put this point of view to me are not interpreting the provisions of the Bill correctly; I am equally sure that the Minister, with his interest in and knowledge of local government, will see that such a position does not arise. However, for the benefit of those who have expressed that doubt, I should like the Minister to make the position clear.

I think it is up to members of this House, particularly Opposition members, to ensure that no-one is taken down in compensation or walked over roughshod when action necessary for the progress of our cities is taken, or when action must be taken to meet the needs of increasing traffic on the roads in each local authority area.

I still agree with and commend the other clauses of the Bill, as I said at the introductory stage, but I should like the Minister

to explain more fully the points to which I have referred relative to the land between the old and new alignments.

Hon. H. RICHTER (Somerset—Minister for Local Government and Conservation) (5.9 p.m.), in reply: The hon. member for Belmont spoke mainly of compensation for realignment, as did the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha (Mr. Lickiss) and the hon. member for Ipswich West (Mrs. Jordan). The argument is really centred on that question.

The purpose of this amendment is to give the individual the right to compensation for land the use of which he has been denied and on which he still has to pay rates. If the piece of land contains a building that is being used by the individual no compensation is payable. He pays rates on the whole of the land and has the use of it, and that is fair enough. But at the present time some local authorities put a realignment on a road that denies a property-owner the right to use a strip of his land although he still has to pay rates on it. We think that is very unfair. If a realignment is put on a strip of land, it should be resumed. If it has a building on it that has to be shifted back, compensation should be paid for that.

I do not think the point raised by the hon. member for Ipswich West will really arise, namely, that all this compensation will have to be paid twice, unless the council decides to widen a road or a street with buildings on it. There are many places today where a realignment has been put on a road and no compensation paid to the property-owner. He has no right to build on the land or to use it, but he still pays rates on a strip that is of no use to him.

The point raised by the hon. member for Mount Coot-tha in regard to injurious affection is worthy of consideration and I will certainly have a look at it, because I believe there is some merit in what he says. Certain of this land could be frozen because of a realignment, and there is no compensation for that at the present time. We do not wish to embarrass local authorities in this respect, but I feel that the rights of the individual must be considered. It is very unfair to put an imposition on an individual when one is denying him the right to use his land and also compelling him to pay rates on land he cannot use.

I believe the hon. member for Belmont referred to town planning and the displaying of the plan. The plan will have to be displayed for three months in the usual way. Minor amendments are being made to the City of Brisbane Town Plan and people have the right to object to them. The hon. member also spoke about the development and redevelopment of an area. The position is that if the council wishes to redevelop an area and decides to resume the land it must first of all rezone it and pay compensation in accordance with the rezoned purpose. It must be rezoned first before the council can

resume and redevelop, otherwise it could resume an area and then rezone it for industrial or commercial use.

Mr. Newton: That is what I had in mind.

Mr. Richter: That is all covered. Apart from that, I think the Bill has the approval of the House.

Motion (Mr. Richter) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

(Mr. Rae, Gregory, in the chair)

Clauses 1 to 9, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 10—Amendments of s. 34; Sub-division of land—

Mr. LICKISS (Mt. Cooth-tha) (5.16 p.m.): I very much appreciate the Minister's statement that he intends to have a look at the matter of injurious affection. Clause 10 deals with claims for compensation. It will be noted that in line 39 provision is made for compensation for injurious affection, with the exclusion "(not being a road widening)", and lines 40 and 41 provide that there shall be no claim against the local authority for injurious affection under certain circumstances. This is where I believe, in terms of improved properties, a great deal of injury is done to the person whose developed property is subject to a realignment notice.

One suggestion I make to the Minister is that if it is necessary for a local authority to place a realignment notice on a property, it should remain valid only for a relatively few years. I do not think a property should be tied down for 20 or 30 years without the council executing its rights within that time. Within a certain time the council should execute its rights, take the land and pay normal compensation. The realignment notice should be placed on a property for a specified maximum number of years, say, seven years, and if the council does not move in that time I suggest that the realignment notice should be removed.

Mr. E. G. W. WOOD: I rise to a point of order. I would suggest that the subclause now being discussed is subclause 10 of clause 8.

Mr. LICKISS: May I continue, Mr. Rae?

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Rae): Yes.

Mr. LICKISS: I think I have made my point, anyway. If the realignment notice is necessary it should be put on the property for only a maximum number of years to ensure that undue injurious affection will not occur.

Clause 10, as read, agreed to.

Clause 11—Amendment of s. 35 (10); Realignment—

Mr. NEWTON (Belmont) (5.19 p.m.): As I understand it, this is the clause that deals with the question of realignment.

Mr. Richter: It refers to the subsection of the Act.

Mr. NEWTON: We have no complaints with the assurance given by the Minister about the person claiming compensation because, as we have already stated, we are quite clear on that point. The position is clarified as to the payment of rates on the land if it is taken over by the local authority, but we are concerned about cases in which minor, but not substantial, repairs to a building are allowed to continue where realignment is to take place. This comes back to the point raised by the hon. member for Ipswich West. The Bill clearly indicates the way this is to operate. If a person has a building, he cannot carry out substantial repairs to it but he may continue to carry out minor repairs. As a result, it may be some time before the building is condemned by the local authority. It might have to hold out in relation to the land being taken over for realignment purposes. That is a point on which we should like some clarification.

Mr. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha) (5.22 p.m.): Much of what I have said is applicable here. The hon. member for Belmont has put one side of the picture in relation to people wishing to maintain a building in a state of good repair. Section 35 (10), dealing with realignment, specifies how a person may go about maintaining a building. I believe that in certain sections of Wynnum, for example, some shops in the commercial area which have not been built for more than five years are under a notice of realignment. The investment in those shops runs into many thousands of dollars. It is all very well to look at this matter from the point of view of a person wishing to maintain his building for as long as possible. As mentioned by the hon. member for Belmont, this is only natural, but business activities may depend on the presentation of the building. If a person has a furniture shop he may be told, "You can paint the front of the building for the next 20 years but you cannot do anything else. You cannot put a decent, modernised shop front on it in 10 years' time but you can still paint the front of it." His business is being run down, because to a large degree the presentation of his shop has a large bearing on the business carried on. This is how the dead hand is placed on a property. If we injuriously affect a person to such an extent he should be entitled to compensation for injurious affection.

I do not believe that, at the whim of a council by resolution, it should be able to place a realignment notice on a property and virtually restrict the use of the land. Consequently, my previous remarks are applicable.

Clause 11, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 12 to 15, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

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

CITY OF BRISBANE ACTS AMEND-
MENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. H. RICHTER (Somerset—Minister for Local Government and Conservation) (5.25 p.m.): I move—

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

I feel that this Bill was favourably received on its introduction. Hon. members will recall that it places the Brisbane City Council in a similar position to local authorities generally in the charging of interest on rates in arrears. It also requires the council to publish, on a date to be fixed by the Governor in Council and once at least in every period of five years thereafter, a book containing a reprint of Acts, ordinances, etc. relating to the affairs of the Brisbane City Council which are considered to be of general public interest. Copies of this book will be procurable by members of the public on payment of the sum fixed by the council.

The Bill further provides that, pending the first publication of the book, Chapter 67 of the council's ordinances, which deals with the proof of ordinances made by the council, shall be deemed to be in force. Hon. members may recall that following a recent judgment of the Full Court of Queensland this ordinance could not be used by the council to prove other ordinances as it had not been published in a book as required by section 55 of the Acts.

Mr. NEWTON (Belmont) (5.27 p.m.): On behalf of the Opposition, let me say that it is true that this Bill was received favourably on its introduction. We have very little objection to it. It contains a proposal for an increase in the interest the council can charge on arrears of rates. That provision will be implemented by the Brisbane City Council, as by other local authorities, in an effort to overcome rate arrears.

The provision for the publication of the booklet makes clear that it shall contain ordinances, rules, Orders in Council, resolutions, regulations, and by-laws affecting the City of Brisbane. That provision was in the Act as far back as 1949. The Lord Mayor was then Mr. J. B. Chandler, a former member of this Parliament. Irrespective of that, no booklet has been published since 1949.

The Bill clearly indicates the periods in which the booklet is to be published. The Government should assist the present Brisbane City Council to have this booklet printed and brought up to date. If such booklets had been prepared and kept up to date, I am sure that the Brisbane City Council, and probably many other local authorities in provincial cities, would not have to face the problems that presently arise concerning their regulations and ordinances.

It is also interesting to note that the Bill contains a change of principle in the issuing of the certificates to accompany each volume of the reprint. Under the Act, each volume must contain a certificate by the Lord Mayor or the Town Clerk, or an officer authorised by the Lord Mayor or the Town Clerk. For some reason or other, the issuing of certificates to the effect that what is contained in the booklet is true and correct is now to be solely the responsibility of the Lord Mayor.

The clause also provides that the Council may, by resolution, fix the price of the booklet, and that, following its publication on a date to be prescribed by the Governor in Council by Order in Council, it must be reprinted at least once in every period of five years. Costs rise, and the clause allows the council to fix the cost of the booklet. I feel that the Government of the day has some responsibility to assist the council in the reprinting of the booklet. It must be brought up to date at prescribed intervals so that interested people can obtain copies. I am sure that in the City of Brisbane there are a great many who are interested in the ordinances and by-laws of the council.

The Opposition has no objection to the Bill, as we feel that it will be of assistance to the council and to the public generally in the metropolitan area.

Hon. H. RICHTER (Somerset—Minister for Local Government and Conservation) (5.34 p.m.), in reply: Briefly, the provision is—

“(c) such Proclamations, Orders in Council, rules and directions made under this Act as the Governor in Council by Order in Council from time to time determines;”

The Bill covers very many documents, and the Brisbane City Council is not being expected to print them all. We have to be reasonable, and we have already informed the council what documents have to be published. These will be only matters that are of interest to the public—references to ordinances, and so on. The Government must give the council sufficient notice to enable it to have the book printed. We will not hurry the council, but we must fix a date.

Motion (Mr. Richter) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 to 5, both inclusive, and schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

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

MEDICAL ACTS AND OTHER ACTS
(ADMINISTRATION) BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. S. D. TOOTH (Ashgrove—Minister for Health) (5.37 p.m.): I move—

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

As I explained at the introductory stage, the Bill is purely and simply a machinery one. I gave fairly comprehensive details of its provisions, and at this stage I simply commend it to the House.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba—Leader of the Opposition) (5.38 p.m.): Apparently all hon. members who wished to speak on the Bill did so at the introductory stage, and I indicate that the Opposition is prepared to support it.

Motion (Mr. Tooth) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 to 8, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

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

The House adjourned at 5.40 p.m.
