

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 16 MARCH 1967

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

QUESTIONS**USE OF LIQUOR AND DRUGS BY MINORS**

(a) **Mr. Houston**, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Justice,—

Following the Answer to my Question on March 9, 1967, by the Minister for Education regarding offences of being under the influence of liquor or drugs, during the prosecutions of the 1,751 persons under twenty-one years listed in the statistics, did the prosecutor endeavour to ascertain the source of supply? If so, in how many cases was this determined and what action was taken?

Answer:—

“The Department of Justice was not involved in these prosecutions and consequently is unable to Answer the Question asked.”

(b) **Mr. Houston**, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

Following the Answer to my Question on March 9, 1967, regarding persons being under the influence of liquor or drugs, during the course of examination of the 1,751 persons under twenty-one years listed in the statistics, in how many cases were police able to ascertain the source of supply of the liquor or drugs and what action was then taken?

Answer:—

“The information sought is not available and could not be obtained without a detailed investigation of the circumstances of each case. It is impracticable to have such detailed investigations carried out.”

ROYAL COMMISSION INTO MARKETING AND HANDLING OF FARM PRODUCE

Mr. Houston, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Primary Industries,—

Has he received a request from the Australian Primary Producers' Union to institute a Royal Commission into the marketing and handling of farm produce, particularly in view of the wide margin between wholesale and retail prices? If so, will he accede to the request?

Answer:—

"Yes, I have received such a request. However, in the light of information already available to my Department on the subject, I consider a Royal Commission is not warranted."

BRIEFING OF VICTORIAN BARRISTER BY TOWNSVILLE CITY COUNCIL

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

(1) Does the Townsville City Council frequently engage a Victorian barrister named Gifford to appear in Townsville Courts on behalf of the Council?

(2) Is Gifford a Queen's Counsel and as such is he debarred from appearing in a Court without another barrister to act as his junior?

(3) Does such junior counsel receive a fee amounting to two-thirds of the fee paid to Gifford?

(4) Is it because of this legal ethic that the Townsville City Council pays \$1,000 or more in fees every time Gifford is brought to Townsville?

(5) Is there any provision in the Local Government or other relevant Act which provides for the engagement by a Local Authority of competent local or Queensland legal practitioners and, if not, will he consider an amendment to that effect?

Answer:—

(1 to 5) "The matter of engagement of Counsel by a Local Authority is entirely one for decision by the Local Authority concerned."

USE OF HAWTHORNE PARK, BRISBANE, BY QUEENSLAND AMATEUR CYCLING CLUB

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

(1) Is Hawthorne Park, Brisbane, Crown land and, if so, in whom is it vested and for what purposes?

(2) Is portion of this park used at times for cycling races conducted by the Queensland Amateur Cycling Club? If so, do the terms of their lease, permission or

trust provide that such cycling events should be conducted fairly and impartially, particularly as such would apply to riders from North Queensland and, if not, why not?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) "Hawthorne Park is held by the Brisbane City Council under freehold title and does not come under the jurisdiction of the Department of Lands."

TRAIN ARRANGEMENTS FOR CLONCURRY CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

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

Have arrangements been finalised for the running of an excursion train or the provision of extra passenger accommodation on time-table trains in connection with the forthcoming Cloncurry Centenary Celebrations and, if so, what has been decided?

Answer:—

"Additional passenger accommodation will be provided on the express freight train departing Townsville at 11.45 a.m., Thursday, April 20, as requested by the Cloncurry Centenary Celebrations Committee."

RESUMPTIONS FOR RIVERSIDE EXPRESSWAY AND STORY BRIDGE EXPRESSWAY

Mr. Bromley, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Mines,—

In view of his assurance given some time ago that he would make available to the public relevant information concerning resumptions, progress, details of the route of freeways, expressways, &c., particularly on the south side of the Brisbane River, which are not clearly defined in the Wilbur Smith report, as and when they were finally determined, will he now supply any information in this regard which is of vital concern to those residents who will be affected and who are constantly contacting me by telephone and letter seeking this information?

Answer:—

"It is not possible to give reliable information concerning resumptions until such time as designs have reached a certain stage of finality. Every effort is being made to have designs brought to the stage where people can be given advice of how they are likely to be affected. So far we are dealing only with works in the modified Stage 1 accepted by the Government. The resumptions for the Riverside Expressway and the Story Bridge Expressway are already in hand and the design for these works has advanced to the stage where it will be possible to call tenders within a

few months. Frequent meetings are held by the policy committee which is controlling the implementation of the Brisbane Transportation Plan, and after each of these I have made a Press statement giving information to all concerned on decisions which have been taken up to date by that Committee."

FLOOD RELIEF FOR FAR NORTH
QUEENSLAND

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

(1) Following my representations by telephone to his office on March 13 and 14 seeking a deputation on behalf of Far Northern Honourable Members, what action has been taken in regard to the serious situation developing in the area presently subject to torrential rains and disastrous and widespread floodings?

(2) Is a state of emergency now to be declared for the area?

(3) Do reports indicate the necessity for immediate emergency relief grants to alleviate hardship of those who have suffered loss as a direct result of flood?

(4) Has an approach been made to the Commonwealth Government to share with the State the costs of relief to flood victims?

(5) How soon after the floods recede is it anticipated assessment of flood damage will be available?

(6) Will his Government give immediate and urgent consideration to the diversion and re-allocation of public works and substantial funds for the reconstruction of bridges, roadworks, &c., and the restoration of property in the affected areas?

Answers:—

(1) "I have been personally in touch with the situation in the flooded areas of North Queensland from the time it became apparent that a flood problem existed. Not only has this been through Government officials but also by direct contact with the Honourable Member for Mulgrave, Mr. Roy Armstrong, and the Honourable Member for Cook, Mr. Adair. Both of these Honourable Members have been doing a tremendous rescue job in the Cairns-Innisfail area. Mr. Armstrong is still there and only last night sent me the following telegram:—"Will you favourably consider approaching Federal Government for financial assistance to relieve hardship in the flooded areas of North Queensland which is now evident. Evidence much damage to roads, bridges, cane farms. Farm machinery, cars, household equipment, furniture, &c., submerged for days. Have been working with police and volunteers

bring in people from flood areas and taking supplies to people in isolated areas by boat. Some items of food in short supply. Doing our best to arrange continuity of food supplies. Too early for accurate assessment damage. Will keep you informed."

(2) "No."

(3) "Authority has already been given to Stipendiary Magistrates in the areas concerned to incur expenditure for the relief of personal distress. Additionally, food, clothing and medical supplies have already been made available to those in need."

(4) "There is a standing arrangement whereby the Commonwealth Government will assist the State, on a dollar for dollar basis, in the expenditure it incurs in the relief of personal distress amongst flood victims."

(5) "The Honourable Member should know that it is impossible to Answer this Question at present."

(6) "Consideration will be given to the question of rehabilitation in the areas concerned as soon as a proper and accurate assessment of the position can be made."

NATIONAL DISASTER INSURANCE
SCHEME

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

(1) Has his Government given urgent consideration to investigation into and approach to the Commonwealth Government for assistance in establishing a State or national disaster insurance scheme?

(2) In examining any such insurance scheme to cover widespread damage caused by cyclone, flood, bush-fire or drought, &c., will the Government consider the possibility of basing it on the provisions of the War Damage Insurance Scheme to allow a low contributory and attractive structure with individual coverage involving all disaster situations not provided for in normal circumstances?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) "The proposal that there should be established Commonwealth or State Insurance schemes designed to cover losses occasioned by natural disasters is not new and its possibilities have been closely examined on several occasions by the Government. Indeed, I raised this very matter of a national scheme at the Premier's Conference in March, 1959, but as little or no support was forthcoming from the Commonwealth and other State Governments, it was not possible to pursue the question further. On a State-wide basis, such schemes are neither economically feasible nor administratively practicable. Some of the factors militating

against their institution include the necessity for compulsion and the doubtful powers of the State to legislate in this fashion; the provision of adequate capital to meet any heavy claims in the fund in its initial years and before any substantial reserve has accumulated; and the high rates of premium which would be required from the average householder or property owner."

LIQUOR PRICES AT ISLAND TOURIST RESORTS

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

(1) As prices charged for beer and spirits at island tourist resorts off the Queensland coast appear to be in excess of liquor prices operating at adjacent tourist resorts in the State, have any exemptions been granted to operate outside the jurisdiction of territorial waters and the three-mile limit, or has the Licensing Commission granted application to allow these charges to operate?

(2) If not, will he take immediate action to compel licensees to charge the normal prices for such commodities?

Answers:—

(1) "The Licensing Commission has power under *"The Liquor Acts, 1912 to 1965,"* to fix maximum prices for liquor sold in public bars and bottle departments of hotels, only when it considers that prices being charged for liquor in those parts of the licensed premises are excessive. No exemptions have been granted to operate outside the jurisdiction of territorial waters and the three-mile limit, nor has the Licensing Commission dealt with prices at island tourist resorts in any way."

(2) "The Commission has not had occasion to investigate any such prices but upon receipt of any complaint as to the prices being charged for liquor in public bars or bottle departments of island tourist resorts, the Commission will investigate the matter and if such prices are found to be excessive, will take any necessary action with regard thereto."

WORKERS' COMPENSATION FOR SKIN INFECTIONS FROM PINEAPPLE JUICE

Mr. Melloy, pursuant to notice, asked The Treasurer,—

(1) Do skin infections caused by pineapple juice qualify a worker for compensation payments under the Workers' Compensation Acts?

(2) Will he have the incidence of skin infection from this cause in workers at Northgate Cannery investigated?

(3) Will he have re-opened any recent claims for compensation for skin injury at the cannery which have been refused?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes, if the injury is suffered by a worker in the course of his employment."

(2) "This is not a matter which comes within my Ministerial jurisdiction. I suggest that the Honourable Member approach the cannery management on the matter."

(3) "The Acts provide for right of appeal by workers against rejection by the State Government Insurance Office of claims for Workers' Compensation."

USE OF MARGARINE IN HOME SCIENCE COURSES AT STATE SCHOOLS

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

(1) Is margarine and not butter included in recipes supplied to home science students doing cooking courses in Queensland schools?

(2) Were instructions given to all schools for the continued use of margarine as opposed to butter?

(3) If the Answers to Questions (1) and (2) are in the affirmative, when was the instruction given and by whom?

(4) Owing to the possible future disadvantage to the Queensland dairying industry by the continued use of margarine in the above-mentioned recipes, have any representations been made to him or his Department by dairying organisations to correct or change the instructions issued?

Answers:—

(1) "No. Margarine is not named in any of these recipes as an essential ingredient. In connexion with some recipes students are advised that, if margarine is used in the home, it may be used as an alternative to butter. It is never listed alone as an ingredient, and it is never named ahead of butter as an ingredient."

(2) "No."

(3) "See 1 and 2 above."

(4) "No. Dairymen's organisations have never made representations of the nature suggested because Departmental policy in this matter has never operated against the interests of the dairying industry."

FAILURE BY SOLICITORS TO ISSUE WRITS
IN TRAFFIC ACCIDENT ACTIONS

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

(1) Is he aware that from time to time some solicitors, who are the exception, allow actions for damages and injuries sustained on the highway to run out of time which then become statute barred?

(2) As these actions sometimes involve damages amounting to many thousands of dollars, is he aware that failure to issue the writ in time causes severe financial embarrassment and loss to the plaintiff?

(3) Although the plaintiff then normally has a good action for negligence against the particular solicitor, is he aware that very often the judgment he obtains is an empty one in that the solicitor very often is not in a financial position and does not have the money to meet the judgment?

(4) If so, will he consider introducing legislation similar to third party motor vehicle insurance legislation making it compulsory for all solicitors to have an insurance policy to indemnify them against any claims of this nature and thus protect the injured litigant?

Answers:—

(1 to 3) "I am not aware of any case where a judgment has been obtained against a solicitor on account of his negligence to bring, on behalf of a plaintiff, an action for damages for personal injuries within the time prescribed and where the plaintiff has been unable to recover the amount awarded to him under such a judgment."

(4) "The matter will be further considered when the Honourable Member brings to my notice instances of the alleged empty type of judgment which he states in his Question occurs very often."

"WHITE CANE" LEGISLATION TO
PROTECT BLIND PERSONS

Mr. Davies for Mr. Bennett, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

(1) Has his attention been drawn to what is known as "White Cane" legislation in Western Australia which in effect places an obligation with suitable penalties on motorists to take protective action when blind people showing a white cane are crossing streets and busy highways?

(2) As this legislation has done much to protect the life and limb of blind people in Western Australia as well as give confidence to those unfortunate people, will he consider the introduction of "White Cane" legislation in this State with suitable adaptations for Queensland conditions and the Traffic Act and Regulations?

Answers:—

(1) "I am aware of the existence of the relevant Regulation in Western Australia."

(2) "A proposal for the adoption of a similar Regulation on a uniform basis throughout Australia has been rejected by the Australian Road Traffic Code Committee on at least two occasions. That Committee represents organisations and Departments interested in traffic and transport throughout Australia and recommended that blind persons be encouraged to use white canes and that publicity be given to the use of such canes by blind persons. From time to time action is taken to implement those recommendations. It is considered that the Queensland laws contain ample provision to enable appropriate action to be taken against a driver whose culpable negligence causes danger to any person on a road."

CROWN EMPLOYEES FOR OUTWARD
BOUND CAMPS

Mr. Davies for Mr. Bennett, pursuant to notice, asked The Premier,—

(1) Has his attention been drawn to an article in *The Courier-Mail* of March 15, 1967, headed "YOUNG WORLD—Outward Bound brings out Best", and contributed by Mr. Ben Whitehouse of Bardon who recently returned from an outward bound camp?

(2) If so, does he realise that such opportunities are advantageous to the youth of Queensland, giving them the chance to show initiative, face challenges, improve physical fitness, encourage the spirit of leadership and develop other desirable qualities in the young generation such as leadership?

(3) Is he aware that most of the boys who attend this camp are sponsored by firms, industries and companies who believe that their staffs profit by such experience?

(4) If so, will he consider sponsoring public servants and young policemen at such a camp in order that they will be given the same opportunities as those in private enterprise?

Answers:—

(1) "I have read the article referred to by the Honourable Member."

(2) "Yes."

(3) "No, but it is noted that the article in question contains the following:—'Most of the boys are sponsored by their firms and industries and go in the companies' time. Others, like Ben, sponsor themselves for the cost of \$120, and a few can apply for scholarships which cover all costs.'"

(4) "If a Crown employee is desirous of attending an outward bound camp, consideration, subject to the exigencies of the

service, would be given to the granting of the necessary leave of absence. In fact, approval has already been given for the granting of the necessary leave to officers of the Public Service to enable them to attend outward bound camps."

OFFICE ACCOMMODATION FOR PRINCIPAL
MISTRESS, WYNNUM STATE HIGH
SCHOOL

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

As the Principal mistress of the Wynnum State High School is embarrassed on many occasions by having to interview both parents and students on the school verandah or in hallways as she has no office, will he urgently consider the immediate completion of the area approved by the Department for her use and also supply suitable furniture for the office?

Answer:—

"A plan has been completed for the provision of an office for the Principal mistress and an estimate of the cost of this work is now being prepared. Suitable furniture will be provided when construction of the office in question has been completed."

IMPROVEMENTS TO WYNNUM CENTRAL
RAILWAY STATION

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

(1) Will he consider supplying indication signs for both the ladies' and gentlemen's toilets at Wynnum Central Railway Station?

(2) Will he provide an extra step to the station mistress's entrance at this station?

(3) Will he have the floor in the gentlemen's toilet, which has eight holes through rotted boards, repaired?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) "The matters referred to will be investigated and action, where necessary, will be taken."

USE OF "NEW ROAD," HUGHENDEN
RAILWAY YARDS

Mr. Bromley for **Mr. Inch**, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Transport,—

(1) What are the reasons for the infrequent use of a length of railway line known as the "New Road" at the Hughenden railway yards?

(2) As a more extensive use of this road would facilitate shunting operations in the yards, will he endeavour to have the present situation rectified and thus provide for a more efficient and speedier marshalling of trains at Hughenden?

Answers:—

(1) "To facilitate the shunting of long 'Down' trains which foul the level crossing at the Prairie end of Hughenden Yard, such 'Down' trains are divided and the excess length placed in the 'new road'."

(2) "The best use is being made of the 'New Road' at the present time as the loop line is available to shunt 'Down' trains from both ends and the method provides for a more efficient marshalling of through 'Down' trains."

BLUE-TAILED MULLET

Mr. Bromley, pursuant to notice, asked The Treasurer,—

(1) Was the Executive Council's decision to reduce the size of takeable blue-tailed mullet from fifteen inches to nine inches made as a result of consultation with the Professional Fishermen's League and/or any other organisations?

(2) What is the usual or average number of these mullet caught daily?

(3) What are the various parts of the State's fishing waters in which these fish are caught?

Answers:—

(1) "The reduction in the minimum legal size of the blue-tailed mullet was made as a result of a request from the Professional Fishermen's League."

(2) "The average daily landings are less than 100 lb. in the whole of Queensland."

(3) "The principal fishing centres for these fish are Cairns, Mackay, and Maryborough."

COMMISSION TO CONTROL EDUCATION

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

(1) In view of the promise made by the Liberal Party in the policy speech in 1957, which as a result is now Government policy, that a three-man Education Commission to take control of Queensland's State primary and high schools would be established, will he now indicate if it will be proceeded with and, if not, why not?

(2) If this policy has received consideration, what progress has been made to promulgate the establishment of the commission?

Answers:—

(1) "It must be obvious to the Honourable Member that the Government has made no alteration to the present system of administration."

(2) "It is not customary to indicate Government policy in answer to a question."

EXTENSIONS TO FISHERMEN'S WHARF
IN PIONEER RIVER, MACKAY

Mr. Davies for **Mr. Graham**, pursuant to notice, asked The Treasurer,—

With reference to an article appearing in the Mackay *Daily Mercury* of March 9 concerning the need for extensions to the fishermen's wharf in the Pioneer River, have the Queensland Professional Fishermen's Association ever made an application for extensions to the wharf? If so, what action is being taken to comply with their request?

Answer:—

"Requests for extensions to the fishermen's wharf have been made by the Queensland Professional Fishermen's Association. This request, like requests from many other areas, has been examined but work can only be carried out in an order of priority as finance can be made available."

ARCHITECTURE COURSE AT TOWNSVILLE
TECHNICAL COLLEGE

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

(1) Is there presently a technological course in architecture being conducted in the evening at the Townsville Technical College? If not, when was it terminated and for what reason?

(2) When was a firm decision made to introduce this course at the college and was it sufficiently advertised so as to come under the notice of all who might have been interested?

(3) How many students initially enrolled in the course?

(4) If the course has been cancelled, what alternative in this sphere is available to northern students?

(5) Would cadet appointments to the architectural branch of the Department of Works in Townsville assist in having the course re-opened?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes. The new Associate Diploma Course, however, could not be offered because of lack of enrolments."

(2) "The decision to introduce the new Associate Diploma Course in Architecture was made in September, 1966, following a survey in the Townsville area to ascertain the likely intake of cadet architects if the course were made available. Extensive publicity was given to courses that would be offered at Townsville Technical College if sufficient students enrolled."

(3) "Four."

(4) "None. Subject to sufficient enrolments the course will be offered in 1968; the four students referred to in (3) will then be eligible to enrol."

(5) "The course could not be re-opened at this late date as it would not be possible to cover the syllabus satisfactorily with more than one month of the year already gone."

ROYALTY ON OIL

Mr. Lloyd, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Mines,—

(1) In the most recent assessment of royalties payable to the Government on oil produced in Queensland, what are the details, including amounts of the costs involved in reducing the price payable to the producing company at the borehead?

(2) How many barrels of oil were involved in this assessment?

(3) How much was received by way of royalty as a result of this assessment?

(4) What is the present pipeline charge per barrel of oil in this State?

Answers:—

(1) "In respect of royalty for January 1967, payable in February, 261,534 barrels of oil were sold for \$820,863.42, plus 1,508,000 cubic feet of gas (that is 281 barrels) for \$744.09, making a total of \$821,607.51. Charges were—tariff \$116,173.70, trucking \$12,943.15 and gathering charges \$15,339.78, a total of \$144,456.63. The wellhead value was thus \$677,150.88."

(2) "261,534 barrels of oil plus 281 of gas."

(3) "Royalty paid was 10 per cent. of \$677,150.88, \$67,715.09; less rental, \$333.33. Net royalty payable, \$67,381.76."

(4) "The present pipeline charge per barrel of oil in this State on this assessment was 42c per barrel on 171,094 barrels and 49.1c per barrel on 90,253 barrels."

FLOOD DAMAGE, MT. SURPRISE-
GEORGETOWN BEEF ROAD

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

(1) Has any damage been caused by flood waters to bridge works at Junction Creek and at other points along the Mt. Surprise-Georgetown Beef Road?

(2) Is the road from Mt. Surprise to Georgetown usable at present and, if not, where is the road untrafficable and for how long will the present delays continue?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) "The conditions in the area make this information unavailable at present."

NEW ART GALLERY

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

(1) Has his attention been drawn to the heading in *The Courier-Mail* of March 15, "Art Criticism of State Government," wherein the Director of the Queensland Art Gallery, Mr. Laurie Thomas, stated "Queensland has to move now like other States where Art is concerned—unless you want to have a race of farmers and clots"?

(2) Does the Government intend to build a new Queensland Art Gallery to avoid such an eventuality? If so, when?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes, and I particularly deplore the offensive language of the reported statement."

(2) "The building of a new Art Gallery will depend upon the availability of a suitable site and the extent of public support of an appeal for donations. A site is presently being considered as part of the Bligh Plan. It is not possible at this juncture to indicate when a new Art Gallery will be built."

STAFF AT QUEENSLAND HOUSE,
LONDON

Mr. Dean, pursuant to notice, asked The Premier,—

(1) What is the number of staff employed at Queensland House, London, and how many are Queenslanders?

(2) What is the classification of each staff member?

(3) Have any complaints been made during the last twelve months of lack of attention extended to visitors to Queensland House and, if so, how many complaints has he received during the period referred to?

(4) Is he aware that some Queenslanders while in London prefer to visit the Commonwealth Offices rather than Queensland House because of the better services?

Answers:—

(1) "Staff employed total 28, of whom 7 are Queenslanders."

(2) "Staff classifications are as follow:—

| Position | Per Fortnight |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Agent-General | \$318.20 |
| Chief Clerk and Official Secretary | \$268.00—\$276.00 |
| Industry Liaison Officer | \$199.00—\$207.00 |
| Accountant and Senior Clerk | \$199.00—\$207.00 |
| Migration Officer | \$176.00—\$184.00 |
| Purchasing Officer | \$164.50—\$172.50 |
| Shipping and Travel Officer | \$153.00—\$161.00 |
| Assistant Accountant | \$153.00—\$161.00 |

| Position | Per Fortnight |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Clerk | \$116.60—\$138.00 |
| Clerks (2) | \$42.70—\$131.40 |
| Hospitality Officer | \$133.10—\$140.00 |
| Personal Assistant | \$133.10 |
| Clerk (Records) | \$113.50—\$120.40 |
| Clerk (Migration) | \$113.50—\$120.40 |
| Clerk-Typists (7) | \$36.50—\$89.00 |
| Temporary Clerk-Typists (2) | \$36.50—\$83.30 |
| Chaffeur and Storeman | \$88.60 |
| Messenger and Care-taker | \$88.20—\$95.10 |
| Storeman | \$80.80 |

(3) "No complaints have been received. On the other hand, we have had many written and verbal intimations from people who have visited the London Office about the wonderful attention and hospitality they have received from the staff there."

(4) "No. On the contrary, Queenslanders prefer to visit Queensland House rather than Australia House."

FORM OF QUESTION

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH (Tablelands) proceeding to give notice of a question—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member appears to be prosecuting a quarrel by way of questions. He has already asked about four questions on the same subject.

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH: I have not asked this question previously.

Mr. SPEAKER: Submit the question, and I shall have a look at it.

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH (Tablelands) proceeding further to give notice of the same question—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member's question is out of order. It has already been asked. I cannot allow it, and the hon. member will discontinue giving notice of it.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr. MURRAY (Clayfield) (11.30 a.m.), by leave: My attention has been drawn to a statement made last night when I was not in the Chamber that levels at me an accusation that is totally false. It is, I think, a disclosure from the joint party meeting, which is extraordinary, and is totally false. I understand that the hon. member for Gregory said—

"It is a rotten state of affairs when some individual can come into this Chamber and attempt quite openly to gain the public Press by openly condemning and humiliating the Premier and the Minister for Health when he knows full well that in the Caucus meeting he went along with the proposition and said, 'I believe it has some good ideas.'"

I deny that assertion absolutely. I deny that I indicated any support for the measure at any time in that way, either in the words that the hon. member for Gregory used or in any other words approximating them. I ask the House to accept these facts, and I think all Government members who were present at the joint party meeting would know that they are facts. I believe that the words the hon. member for Gregory used are an attack on me that is damaging and contemptible.

Mr. DUGGAN (Toowoomba West) (11.33 a.m.), by leave: The personal explanation that I wish to make arises out of the challenge made to me last night by the Premier, when he said that he accepted the rules of the House in accepting my assurance that I had not made a certain statement but that he had heard me say it. I shall quote from the uncorrected proofs of the proceedings. The Premier, referring to me, said—

“We have read the newspapers and have seen that there may be a difference of opinion among the Government members, so we will vote against it to embarrass the Government.” There should be better co-ordination and team work among members of the Opposition.”

I told the Premier that I did not use the words “to embarrass the Government”. He said that he would accept my assurance, but that he had heard them. The uncorrected report of my speech in the “Hansard” proof is as follows:—

“His gamble failed. We decided unanimously on this matter on the public evidence in the newspapers of the coalition’s inability to agree on this very important matter.”

There is no reference to embarrassment of the Government. I respectfully suggest that the Premier might have his hearing aid improved slightly.

DEATH OF MR. W. M. EWAN, M.L.A.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Premier) (11.34 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

“1. That this House desires to place on record its sense of the loss this State has sustained by the death of William Manson Ewan, Esquire, member for the electoral district of Roma.

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

I know that hon. members on both sides of the House were profoundly shocked at the news that the late honourable member had

passed away following a sudden illness shortly after Parliament resumed sitting early last Tuesday afternoon.

From time to time it is our sad duty to record the passing of hon. members of this Chamber, but I feel that on this occasion, because of the manner of the hon. member’s passing, it has had a greater effect on all of us.

The late hon. gentleman first entered Parliament in 1950 as member for Roma, and served one term until his defeat at the poll in 1953. He regained the seat in 1957 and served continuously until his passing last Tuesday.

The hon. gentleman was born in New South Wales, on a station property near Nowra, and received his early education in Sydney. He finished his education at Warwick when his family moved to Queensland. He was born on the land, and the land remained his main source of livelihood and interest during his lifetime. He was a grazier near Morven at the age of 23, and later had business interests in Roma.

In a very active life the late Mr. Ewan devoted a great deal of time to public affairs. He was, indeed, a very public-spirited gentleman and wherever he lived in this State he took an active part in the community life of the particular area. For example, he was chairman of the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade at Mitchell from 1940 to 1950, and an executive councillor of the United Graziers’ Association of Queensland from 1942 to 1950. During his short absence from Parliament following his defeat in 1953 he maintained a keen interest in politics, and during that period was Senior Vice-President of the Queensland branch of the Australian Country Party; in fact, he held that office from 1953 until he relinquished it shortly after his election in 1957.

As one who had a very close association with the hon. gentleman in the political field and who was a partner with him in many election campaigns, I should like to say that he was a wonderful organiser. When one went into any area with him to assist in a political campaign, one could be sure that every detail was complete right down to the very last element that was necessary. There were few equals of Bill Ewan in organising and conducting a political campaign.

In this House, the late hon. member will be remembered as a very ardent advocate for the man on the land. His wide knowledge of land matters equipped him admirably for that self-appointed role and all his submissions, on land matters in particular, were listened to with a great deal of respect and interest. He was a vigorous but fair debater who remained unruffled by interjections; in fact, he gave as much as he received when contentious issues were in dispute, without in any way impairing the dignity of this Chamber.

The late Mr. Ewan was diligent in his parliamentary duties and was a tireless worker for his constituents. In fact, the last official act that he undertook before his passing was an endeavour to do something to obviate the trouble that had been caused in his electorate by the closing down of the meatworks at Roma and the consequent dismissal of some 200 men. He was very concerned about this and, as was usual in all his representations, he was right on the ball in an endeavour to do something to help not only those men but this valuable industry and his electorate generally. That was typical of the whole of his activities on behalf of his electorate over the years, and I am sure that during the period in which he represented that electorate he must have gained a great deal of satisfaction from seeing so much progress result from his representations. Indeed, he left behind him many very valuable projects which were largely achieved as the result of his representations and constant advocacy of them.

Outside the House Bill Ewan was regarded as a man of extreme courtesy and friendliness. With that inborn trait of the Westerner, he was a congenial host to many who enjoyed his hospitality. I am sure that all who had the pleasure of his hospitality in his home at Roma and at other places realised his wonderful friendliness and his virtues in that respect.

The late hon. member was a grand friend and a true Queenslander. During his lifetime he made a very worth-while contribution to the State he loved so much. This Parliament and the State will be the poorer for his passing. I am sure all hon. members join in this expression of sympathy to his widow and family.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba—Leader of the Opposition) (11.41 a.m.): On behalf of the Opposition, I sincerely join the Premier in expressing our sympathy to the widow and family of the late Bill Ewan. He was a friend to everyone in this Chamber. On every occasion that one met him, whether it was in the dining room, the billiard room or anywhere else, he would always have a cheerful remark to pass, and continually demonstrated his ready wit. As members of the Opposition we found him to be a person we could always talk to. If one had a problem with which he could help, he was always ready to assist.

As an opponent in debate, the late hon. member played his part very well. On this side we always recognised him as one who could be relied upon to make a hard fight of any issue in which he took part. I suppose history will recall that his last fight in this House was the one for which he will be mainly remembered, particularly in his own electorate. I refer, of course, to the occasion when he expressed, with some force, his opinion on the closure of the Roma-Injune

railway line. In that debate we saw Bill Ewan as the type of man he was—a person not worried about party allegiance but putting the position purely and simply as he saw it.

The Premier has said that Bill Ewan worried about his electorate. We realise that to the full. Whenever I have been in his electorate for other than political purposes he has had discussions with me in which he expressed concern about providing work for the unemployed and helping those who needed help in other directions.

This State can ill-afford to lose men of Bill Ewan's calibre. It is worth noting that he was not an old man. His death demonstrates the heavy toll that parliamentary life takes on people who devote their full energies to, and who worry about, carrying out their duties as we believe they should be carried out.

We join with the Premier in this expression of sympathy to the late Bill Ewan's widow and family.

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

Mr. NICKLIN: Mr. Speaker, I suggest that, as a mark of respect to the memory of the late hon. member, the sitting be suspended from 2.15 until 4.30 p.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: Hon. members, as a mark of respect to the memory of the late hon. member, the sitting will be suspended from 2.15 until 4.30 p.m.

FARMERS' ASSISTANCE (DEBTS ADJUSTMENT) BILL

INITIATION

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

“That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider introducing a Bill to enable certain moneys made available by the Commonwealth to be applied to or for the benefit of farmers.”

Motion agreed to.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer—Treasurer) (11.46 a.m.): I move—

“That a Bill be introduced to enable certain moneys made available by the Commonwealth to be applied to or for the benefit of farmers.”

Many of our primary producers, especially those in the Far West, have suffered very heavily in recent times through drought. Even though good rains that have fallen in this area in the past fortnight or so will assist tremendously those whose areas have been

drought-stricken to overcome many of their problems, at the same time it will take them quite a period to rebuild their flocks and herds to normal numbers. It is our belief that the graziers who have been so hard hit will need special aid to assist them to overcome the effects of this calamity of drought.

During the past few months quite a number of approaches have been made to me at Government level, and also by or on behalf of various wool houses and others who have, either directly or indirectly, been financially interested in properties in the West. It has been suggested in these approaches that a special effort should be made to render some assistance to those in difficulties. For that reason, certain matters were considered by Cabinet to determine how help could be provided. That is why I am bringing down this legislation this morning.

First, I think I should point out that, with Commonwealth assistance, we have already introduced schemes to assist the grazier to carry on and also to rehabilitate him on his holdings. As hon. members will be well aware, these measures include loans at the low interest rate of 3 per cent. for carry-on and restocking purposes in cases where credit is not available through normal commercial channels. On these loans no interest or redemption was payable for the first year or so to avoid placing an immediate further burden upon the primary producer.

We have also granted rebates of up to 75 per cent. of rail freight on fodder for starving stock and up to 50 per cent. on rail movement of starving stock, together with a remission of road transport fees on fodder and starving stock, and a subsidy upon the road transport of fodder from railhead to property.

Although not an immediate relief to the graziers, non-payable grants have been made to local authorities to provide relief work for those affected by drought and to maintain employment in rural areas, so that those who could not find employment on station properties might at least be encouraged to remain in the areas concerned to be available when rains came. I believe that this effort assisted to relieve some of the problems in the areas concerned.

In addition to the above schemes of drought assistance, the Crown is providing further relief by not pressing for the payment of Crown rentals. Where these are deferred because of drought, a penalty is not charged. I remind the Committee that the Government has recently introduced new legislation to extend certain Crown leases and their current rental period by three years.

I can also advise the Committee that at the present time we have under discussion with the Commonwealth Government some further possible relief measures of special significance to the remote western areas. However, because no final decision has been

made in these matters, I am not in a position to make any announcement concerning these at this stage. But let me assure the Committee that this Government will do everything possible to induce the Commonwealth Government to provide additional assistance for those who have come through difficult periods.

There is still one field in which aid is required, that is, the assistance of those badly affected by drought to make compositions and arrangements with creditors and to give a stay of proceedings in actions by creditors in suitable cases. The purpose of the Bill I am now recommending to the Committee is to provide aid in this field.

I remind the Committee that in 1935 the Commonwealth Government passed the Loan (Farmers' Debt Adjustment) Act. This was a post-depression Act designed to give relief to primary producers who found themselves in financial difficulties owing to the depression.

Under that Act the Commonwealth made certain funds available to the States for the purpose of assisting farmers to make compositions with their creditors and who, as a result of such assistance, would have a reasonable prospect of successfully carrying on farming operations. The States were required to pass complementary legislation. The whole of the moneys advanced had to be used for the purposes of the Act, and no portion could be used in respect of any debt due or accruing to the Commonwealth or the State or a governmental authority, or for the payment of any expenses incurred by the State in connection with the administration of the scheme. A further requirement was that the State legislation had to provide for an authority to be constituted, empowered to take action having the effect of suspending, either wholly or in part, the rights of any secured or unsecured creditor of a farmer against that farmer.

I stress that the corner-stone of the Commonwealth Act was that the composition or arrangement had to be necessary to ensure that the farmer would continue to carry on operations, and would give him a reasonable prospect of carrying on those operations successfully.

As required by the Commonwealth legislation, the State passed complementary legislation known as the Farmers' Assistance (Debts Adjustment) Acts, 1935 to 1945. These Acts were based on the Commonwealth Act and contained the provisions required by that Act to be included in the State legislation.

Following the passing of the State Act in 1935 the Commonwealth advanced certain moneys to the State, and these in turn were made available to eligible applicants. The money actually handled by the State at that time was in the vicinity of \$1,500,000. We have from time to time received repayments from applicants who received assistance from

the fund established under the Acts, and at present a total of approximately \$1,500,000 is held in the Trust Fund.

I should like to make it quite clear that, whilst this money is held by the State, it is held under trust in terms of section 7 (1) (d) of the Commonwealth Act. That section provides that if any of the moneys are advanced to or for the benefit of the farmer and are repaid wholly or in part to the State, the money so repaid shall be applied by the State for the purposes of the State's scheme as laid down in the Act of 1935. Thus the money is not available for any purpose the State desires, but only for expenditure under a scheme that meets the requirements of the Commonwealth Act. As I mentioned in my earlier remarks, approaches were made to me on this matter by Government members and by persons outside Parliament.

Mr. Byrne: You are referring all the time to the drought.

Mr. CHALK: I ask the hon. member to be just a little patient and I shall tell him what I propose to do. I am dealing with the Act of 1935, which had reference to droughts.

Whilst the State law is still operative, it is not wholly applicable to present circumstances, and several requests have been made to the Government to amend the Acts and make them more applicable to present drought needs. We have therefore decided to repeal the 1935-45 Acts and to bring down a new Act to meet present needs. In doing so, however, we have been faced with the difficulty of drawing a Bill in such a way that it does not conflict with the requirements of the 1935 Commonwealth legislation. I have already referred to the restrictions upon the use of moneys available in the Trust Fund, and we want to make sure that we can expend the balance of \$1,500,000 in that fund for current relief purposes.

Consideration was therefore given to a draft Bill incorporating the basic requirements of the Commonwealth legislation, but making the arrangements and the purposes for which assistance may be granted more suitable for current conditions. The new scheme was then discussed with Commonwealth officers by officers of my department, since obviously any scheme introduced by the State must be accepted by the Commonwealth as being in keeping with the Commonwealth legislation.

Mr. Aikens: Is the word "drought" obligatory in the Commonwealth legislation?

Mr. CHALK: I ask the hon. member to listen for a while. He is being terribly impatient.

Mr. Aikens: If you speak lucidly, I will.

Mr. CHALK: I will clear up everything, if the hon. member will not be so impetuous. As I said before his interjection, the Government has to ensure that anything it writes

into the Act, which will be the Act referred to in the Commonwealth legislation, must not in any way conflict with the view of the Commonwealth Government relative to its Act.

It was for that reason that I arranged for the Under Treasurer, Mr. Sewell, to go to Canberra and discuss with Commonwealth officers what type of new Bill might be introduced into this Assembly to enable the Government to provide the relief for distress that it desired. Mr. Sewell returned from that meeting and informed me of a proposal that he thought would succeed. A Bill was then drafted and sent south for perusal by officers of the Commonwealth Government. In the last three days, having arranged for those officers to peruse the draft Bill, I have had personal discussions with the Federal Treasurer, Mr. McMahon, and I am pleased to announce to the Committee this morning that Mr. McMahon advised me yesterday afternoon that the draft Bill that I had presented was acceptable to the Commonwealth. Naturally, the Bill will be passed subject to its acceptance by the Commonwealth, and I can indicate now that I have the assurance of the Federal Treasurer that what the Government proposes to do is quite within the bounds of Commonwealth law.

I shall now outline the main features of the proposed scheme. The purposes for which assistance may be given are limited to drought or any other act of God. Any farmer—which term is widely defined to include a grazier—whose financial position is substantially affected by such factors may apply for assistance to effect a composition or scheme of arrangement with his creditors or any of them.

An application may be made to the Agricultural Bank Board before a composition has been put to the creditors, or, if the farmer so desires, he may get his creditors to approve it before he submits his application. If satisfied on the face of the application that it should be accepted for further investigation, that is, that there is some *prima facie* case, the board may accept it and a stay of proceedings by the farmer's creditors automatically comes into operation. Before it considers the application, the board may require further information and may set a time limit for it to be supplied. The stay of proceedings will not apply for any longer than will be necessary for the board to secure enough information to consider and decide on the application.

If the board considers the application and is not satisfied that the granting of assistance will ensure that the farmer can carry on successfully, it must reject the application. I stress that this is a requirement of the 1935 Commonwealth legislation, on which the new scheme is founded. The stay of proceedings ceases on refusal of an application.

It may be that the applicant fails for sufficient cause to provide information sought by the board in the time specified, and this could be sufficient reason for the application to be rejected. However, if all information is supplied and if, after full inquiries have been made, the board is satisfied and approves the application, then the applicant receives assistance and the stay of proceedings will continue for a period of up to 12 months, or longer if the board approves an extension.

A composition under the scheme could include local authority rates. However, in line with the Commonwealth Act, no assistance may be given in respect of any composition of Crown debts. It could be that Crown debts are a substantial factor in a farmer's prospects of rehabilitation, and statutory power will therefore be given for the State to compound its debts. Although the fund cannot be used in such an event, some deferment, partial write-off, or other action in regard to Crown debts, plus a composition by other creditors, may see the farmer through.

The Bill also provides that the assistance granted shall be by way of loan and that such security will be sought as the board deems fit. The terms and conditions (including interest) will be prescribed by regulation.

The new feature of the proposed scheme, apart from specifying drought as the major reason for assistance, is that the applicant need not come to the board with a settled scheme of arrangement. So long as he had a proposal that seemed to be reasonable on the face of it, the board would register his application and grant a stay of proceedings. In this case the farmer would be given a reasonable period within which to settle the scheme with his creditors before the board would give final consideration to the application. This appears to be a more flexible arrangement than previously, when a scheme had to be settled before the application was lodged.

There is one further point that I should like to make clear to the Committee. The balance in the fund is not large relatively, and the State cannot afford to become simply a substitute creditor or mortgagee for all primary producers affected by drought. There is just not enough money available to allow the fund to take over the full debts of all primary producers in difficulty because of the drought or other problems, or even a large proportion of such debts.

All applications will be considered sympathetically and I give the Committee the assurance that the Government will do its utmost to rehabilitate producers in those areas most affected. However, in order to give the greatest help to the greatest number, it may be necessary to give preference to those cases involving only the payment of some debt charges in arrears rather than the capital sum. If a case arises where an annual payment to a mortgagee is in arrears, it may

only be necessary to advance the amount of this payment rather than take over the bulk of the debt owing.

Every effort will be made to assist the farmer, but, on the other hand, I do hope that the creditors will be prepared to co-operate and show some forbearance and thus help the Government to help those who are in need.

I believe that most creditors will appreciate the Government's desire to help, and that they will be willing to sit around the table and approach the problem in a reasonable manner. If so, then the State, through this scheme, will be able to aid in the rehabilitation of those who are capable of being put back on their feet.

I repeat, however, that the scheme will not be able to aid those who are hopelessly insolvent. Suggestions by any applicants of arrangements with creditors must be reasonable. The board cannot be expected to accept for registration proposals which no creditor could reasonably be expected to accept. Applications therefore will be registered only if on their face they appear to the board to be a responsible approach.

Because of the change we are now making we could receive many applications. I believe that if the limited funds we have available are handled correctly, we will be able to give some relief to quite a number of people. I do feel that the proposals which I have now put forward will help those who are most stricken. All I can hope is that now that very good rains have fallen in many of the western parts of the State, inland Queensland generally will have a much quicker productive recovery than was expected; that the coming seasons will be much kinder to the man on the land, whether he be a grazier or a farmer, residing inland or on the coast; and that as a result of the improved weather conditions Queensland's economic stability will rapidly improve.

I know that at the present time there are also problems in North Queensland because of flooding. It is true that most of my emphasis this morning has been on drought. The emphasis has been on drought because it is drought that has stricken most of Queensland's people, and drought conditions are what have caused the Government the greatest concern to date.

This morning the Premier indicated to hon. members the happenings in the North in the past few days, and I assure the Committee that this Government will do all it can to assist those who have been affected by flood. I realise that the major damage will be to means of transport and to facilities and amenities on properties, and that possibly some serious damage has been caused to crops. We know that these are matters that must have our prompt consideration. The Premier indicated this morning that immediately we can get a full assessment of the

damage, then just as we are endeavouring to give some assistance to drought-stricken areas, so we will treat those affected by flood.

As I have outlined, this Bill makes two, as I describe them, major changes to the old legislation, which is being repealed. Firstly it allows a farmer to come forward and ask for registration without first of all having secured a composition from his creditor. I believe that is how it should be. If a creditor is a little trigger-happy he can cause not only a lot of embarrassment to the farmer by moving in quickly to try to collect his debt, but also considerable trouble for others who have some investment in the farmer's interest. First, by giving a farmer the opportunity to seek registration and then to talk to his creditors about a composition, I believe we will be helping.

On the second point concerning the basis on which money is made available, we have said that the interest rate on a loan will be set by regulation. If we write a certain rate into the Bill it will be there for all time. I believe that there should be sufficient elasticity to enable the Government to consider the circumstances applying at the time when a problem is under consideration.

I believe that the Bill will do much good. Generally speaking, it is one which hon. members on both sides of the Chamber should be pleased to see introduced. I commend it to all hon. members for their consideration.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba—Leader of the Opposition) (12.17 p.m.): The Treasurer need have no doubt that the Opposition will accept the introduction of this Bill. If we have any great objection to it, it is in the sense that we hope it is not too late. When drought, flood or any other disaster beyond the normal control of human beings affects our lives much suffering is involved if prompt action is not taken.

The Minister indicated in his opening remarks that there are some people who, even at this stage, are beyond help. I trust that they are not in that state solely because of the drought. Queensland is still basically a primary-producing State; to a great extent our economy is tied to the success of our primary industries, and it is likely to be for a long time. Apart from the humane angle—from a purely economic angle—we cannot allow those in our primary industries to be lost to us.

I feel that the general provisions of the Bill as outlined by the Minister will be acceptable. I agree that action must be taken to ensure that the "sharks" and others who want to capitalise on the misfortunes of our farming community are not allowed to do so. Those who trade with the farmers, those whose livelihood depends on their goodwill and their financial security, should be prepared to accept some responsibility when farmers suffer financial hardship.

Drought and similar disasters should not be the Government's sole responsibility, although the Government should render aid quickly when it is needed. Those who benefit most from one section of the community should be prepared to assist that section when assistance is needed. We all know that there are many people in the community who benefit greatly from the activities of farmers, and they have some responsibility also.

The Minister referred to people to whom farmers are indebted. Practical experience shows that people conducting a business, whether it is on the land or a secondary enterprise, must have ready cash, and to get it they go to various money-lenders. It is to be regretted that the tendency over the years has been for banks and banking institutions to fail to carry out the work they were originally intended to do. I do not say that that is the Treasurer's responsibility, but it is a fact. People desiring assistance in the private sector are forced to go to hire-purchase companies rather than to banks.

Money is required on the land to replace machinery and, in the case of drought or flood, to purchase new seed and fertiliser, and to repair fences. To get that money these people are forced to go to money-lenders rather than to the banks. Those who have lent this money should not be allowed to benefit from the misfortunes of those who have sought their assistance. I hope they will accept some responsibility in this matter and help to tide the farmers over.

We should get as much money as possible for the State. If the sum of \$1,500,000 mentioned by the Treasurer is not sufficient and other sections of the community have played their part, I hope the Commonwealth Government will make more money available. If the private sector is not playing its part, the State Government should take action to assist those who need help.

Those who have worked the land, either as share-farmers or as farmers in their own right, and have contributed a good deal to this country should not be forced to sell because of losses sustained in flood or drought. Property values in Queensland are increasing, not decreasing. Only yesterday a large property in the Clermont area was sold for a record price. That indicates that although we have passed through a severe drought, those who are interested in the land realise that the land is still of tremendous value to the community.

I should like to ask the Treasurer whether a property has to be in a declared drought-relief area before the board will determine that it has been affected by drought and needs assistance, or will each property be considered—

Mr. Chalk: Each case will be considered on its merits.

Mr. HOUSTON: Then it need not necessarily be in a declared drought area, but it could need assistance if, for instance, it has been affected by a scarcity of water for irrigation purposes. I take it that a crop failure, for instance, will also be considered, irrespective of what caused it, provided it was not the result of negligence.

Mr. Chalk: We have endeavoured to open the legislation much wider than it was previously.

Mr. HOUSTON: I shall conclude on those remarks, as I know that some of my colleagues want to refer to the matter as it affects their rural areas. I look forward to seeing justice done to those who deserve it. The Treasurer and all engaged in primary industry can rest assured that the Opposition will do everything possible to co-operate in seeing that people on the land are in no way penalised by circumstances beyond their control.

Mr. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha) (12.26 p.m.): I believe that the Bill will be welcomed by all who have been associated with, and injuriously affected by, the long drought. It will also be welcomed and accepted by the community in general. Its provisions extend beyond those at present in force, and will materially assist farmers and graziers who at any time suffer severely through what might be termed an act of God or a natural calamity.

In welcoming the method by which what the Bill proposes is to be implemented, I feel that I must pay a tribute to the provisions and purpose of the Farmers' Assistance (Debts Adjustment) Act that is now to be repealed. Hon. members are no doubt aware that it was passed in 1935, when not only this country but other parts of the world were recovering from a very severe depression. That Act, which followed the passing of the enabling Act of the Commonwealth Government known as the Loan (Farmers' Debt Adjustment) Act, played a very important part in the recovery of the farming and grazing sectors of the community at that time.

I wish publicly to thank the Treasurer for affording me the opportunity to place certain matters before him on his return from overseas. As is well known, this problem has been kept in mind and under constant investigation for some considerable time. It was recognised that a problem of a rather extraordinary nature did exist, and that remedial action was necessary as early as possible. It was for that reason that in a previous debate in this Chamber I requested that the cobwebs be brushed off the Farmers' Assistance (Debts Adjustment) Acts, 1935 to 1945, to see if it could be amended to fulfil present requirements. I felt that some amendments would be necessary to introduce a new principle to that Act, this being something

that had not previously been covered in the legislation because there was no need for it. I refer to some provision to meet a disaster or calamity caused by an act of God. It was also necessary to incorporate such a principle in the Act without conflicting with it.

The matter that I then mentioned to the Treasurer was that special provision should be made where hardship or difficulty of a financial nature was aggravated by an act of God or natural calamity that even the most prudent grazier or farmer could not forecast. No-one could forecast this drought; it was not in accordance with the natural history of the areas affected.

It will be recalled that during the debate that I have mentioned I called for a measure that would enable a temporary stay of proceedings to allow rational thought and consideration to be given to a situation that had been promoted substantially by drought conditions—some action that I implied would be just and fair in the circumstances. Therefore, Mr. Campbell, I take this opportunity of congratulating the Treasurer and his officers and the Parliamentary Draftsman for being able to steer a course with the proposed legislation that does not in fact conflict with the principles of the enabling Act of 1935 as passed by the Commonwealth Government of the day.

I believe that, in fairness to the Committee, I should now detail very briefly some of the points which I submitted to my Leader, the Treasurer, and which I thought could have some bearing on the issue before us today. I trust that the Treasurer will not have any objection to my quoting quite freely from these notes, which expose the reason that led me at that stage to suggest that the Farmers' Assistance (Debts Adjustment) Acts, 1935 to 1945, should be further amended.

Let me hasten to assure the Committee also that the Treasurer's action in introducing new legislation in lieu of amending the existing legislation was beyond my expectations under the circumstances, and I do not think that hon. members generally would have expected that action to be taken. However, I say quite categorically that I believe that in this particular case it is preferable to merely patching up existing legislation. Under certain circumstances it is difficult to amend legislation to make it applicable to present-day requirements, and I think it was preferable in the present circumstances to introduce new legislation and repeal the old. I know that there are other matters that would have to be considered, and, if necessary, I shall be quite happy to comment on them at a later stage of the passage of the Bill.

For the record, and for the information of the Committee, I now propose to quote in full the notes that I submitted to the Treasurer—

“THE FARMERS' ASSISTANCE (DEBTS ADJUSTMENT) ACTS, 1935 to 1945

1. Moneys in the Fund provided by the Commonwealth Government; therefore it is necessary in seeking a suitable amendment not to conflict with any arrangement as between the Commonwealth and the State Governments.

2. In view of (1) it will be possible to amend the above Act provided the amendment will not impose a further charge on the fund (i.e. on the Commonwealth) or vary the purposes of the principal Act.

3. The aim should be to return, as expeditiously as possible, stability to the grazing areas affected by drought. This, in turn, requires—

(a) time

(b) capital

(c) favourable seasonal conditions

provided, of course, existing markets or reasonable markets for production remain.

4. Restoration of confidence and hope for the rural producer affected by the protracted drought is essential and urgent.

5. Lending Authorities must bear some of the risk of the drought—but must not lose confidence in the rural sector. Ready short-term and long-term finance is a permanent requirement in rural expansion and development.

6. Over-anxious, fringe lending authorities must not be allowed to create chaos in the existing rural industries by forcing those Institutions (who have a sound history of finance in the arid and semi-arid areas of the State and who would normally view this extraordinary situation, through sheer experience, with a greater degree of patience and sympathy) into following precipitate actions to recover from the assets of graziers at this unfavourable time.

7. Unless some sanity can be introduced quickly into the arena to have a steadying effect I believe this precipitate panic action could snowball and create havoc and heart-break, setting back the rural industries substantially.

8. The use of the provisions of the Act in the present form is and has, since 1935, been available to the farmer to submit an application after taking certain prerequisite action.

9. Again, one would not wish to unnecessarily start a stream of applications generally from farmers who might find themselves in difficulties not through drought but through general practice and/or because of the economics of certain industries

(i.e. sugar). Nevertheless, the Act is applicable to all such farmers in financial trouble and where suitable arrangements can be made by respective farmers in conformity with the Act.

10. PROBLEM: The problem exists in the areas severely affected by prolonged drought conditions where even conservative business ventures and transactions have resulted in severe losses; where stock numbers have dwindled and the capacity to produce has fallen to a level where normal working expenses cannot be met, let alone the provision of additional funds (from earnings) to service debts.

11. The situation may not in all cases be directly attributable to the seasonal conditions but in all cases drought is a contributing factor. In many cases the drought is directly responsible for placing what has hitherto been considered to be normal economic propositions backed by adequate liquidity and finance either on or past the point of no return in the hands of the present landholders unless assistance is given as a matter of urgency to prevent precipitate action to realise on remaining assets at this point of time when reasonable realisation of values could not even be remotely expected.

12. MORATORIUM: It would be most unwise to declare a General Moratorium—this could shake the confidence necessary for a staged recovery. This action is not recommended at this stage and should be only a last resort.

13. STAY OF PROCEEDINGS: This is necessary and urgent to engender a stabilising influence on those creditors who for one reason or another are anxious to precipitate action to recover or to follow some creditor who is contemplating such action. This proposition should be examined as a matter of urgency and steps taken to provide adequate machinery to prevent this occurring.

14. PROBLEMS UNDER EXISTING PROVISIONS OF ACT AND UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES:

(1) Difficulties facing the farmer/ grazier making an arrangement with all creditors and thus presenting an acceptable scheme to the Board;

(2) No specific provisions in the Act to separate the various categories of circumstances which prompt an application for assistance. There is no provision for additional consideration for circumstances created substantially by an act of God over which say graziers have little or no control, particularly in relation to the extended period of such unpredictable and abnormal conditions as we have had and are still enduring.

15. REQUIREMENT: To provide within the Act just and proper provisions to assist, and which provisions will meet with the

approval of the general community; provisions which will have both moral and ethical justifications; provisions which will afford a measure of protection on the one hand to the farmer/grazier and on the other hand to the genuine creditor who has himself taken a calculated risk. The immediate danger is where precipitate action by some creditors would—

(a) break the confidence of those in temporary but acute difficulties;

(b) benefit mostly people presently outside of and not in any way a party to or connected with the transactions.

It is necessary therefore to amend Section 9 of the Act to provide for the specific cases where the difficulties of the farmer are caused by a natural calamity."

Needless to say, no other reason is necessary for me to be most profound and sincere in congratulating the Treasurer on the action he has taken.

In conclusion, I trust that the graziers, the traditional lending authorities, and all those associated in any way with rural industries in the areas affected by drought, will appreciate the Treasurer's action today in legislating not for the benefit of one section as against another, but in the interests of the common good and for the better government of the State of Queensland, both now and in the future.

Mr. HANLON (Baroona) (12.40 p.m.): As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, the only argument the Opposition would have with the Treasurer about this matter is that steps have not been taken prior to this to make better use of the money held in the Federal Aid Rehabilitation Fund. However, as has been pointed out by the Treasurer, the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha, there were restrictions under the old Act arising from the original Commonwealth Act of 1935, in that applicants had to have reasonable prospects of carrying on successfully.

The Treasurer has mentioned the rain in areas that were severely affected by drought, and it could be that farmers and graziers in those areas could now come in under this scheme. At 30 June, 1966, the Federal Aid Rehabilitation Fund had a credit balance of \$1,502,000. Despite the very severe difficulties experienced by many graziers and farmers during the drought in recent years, as a Parliament we seem to have been making merely a nominal or formal appropriation from this fund. In 1965-66 the appropriation was \$100,000. Although that was the anticipated expenditure, the actual expenditure was nil.

The Treasurer did not indicate whether any applications under the old Act had been rejected. I have noticed Orders in Council going through extending the date within which applications could be made. I have noticed Press publicity being given to the

possibility of this scheme for those who could qualify under the restrictions of the old Act. A similar nominal appropriation of \$100,000 was made for the current financial year. With the repeal of the old Act and the passage of this Bill, if some of the applications can be received and dealt with by the board before the end of the financial year it is possible that the appropriation will not be sufficient, even though there is not much of the financial year left.

It is pleasing to find that action is being taken in co-operation with the Commonwealth Government to get this scheme working effectively under conditions appropriate to the times, and that it can be extended, if necessary, to the disabilities of farmers or graziers through any other act of God apart from drought, which has been the main worry up to date.

As Treasurers are prone to say, on this occasion the Treasurer has said, "Of course, we have to remember that the State cannot become very deeply involved in assuming liabilities to any great extent in this matter". He pointed out that applications would have to be dealt with in their order and in the light of the circumstances of the particular case to the limit of the funds available. He pointed out that at the present time there is \$1,500,000 in the fund. During the last Budget debate we drew attention to the balance of \$615,000 in the Drought Relief Fund and the fact that the Government had seen fit to transfer that money back to Consolidated Revenue.

I do not intend to revive the argument I had with the Treasurer on that occasion. He said that in his opinion, if the Commonwealth Government was prepared to meet the expenditure of the State in these matters, there was no point in the State's drawing on its own funds for that purpose.

When listening to the Treasurer speaking somewhat guardedly about how far the Government could go with this scheme within the limitations of the fund, it came to my mind that these are circumstances in which we could give some consideration to the balance that was in the Drought Relief Fund and that was repaid to Consolidated Revenue. As Commonwealth money was furnished to take its place and was duly expended, I wondered whether there is room there to meet some additional applications in these circumstances.

Furthermore, in view of the Treasurer's remarks at that time, as I understood him, that the Commonwealth Government was prepared to back the State in any proper assistance furnished because of the drought and would recognise cases in which assistance should be given—the Commonwealth Government was prepared to reimburse the State—here, again, I think there is some case for the State to approach the Commonwealth Government, not in the terms of the Commonwealth Act, but to appeal on logic that

it give to the State the right to spend what is necessary to assist people in this State affected by drought. This is a possible avenue of assistance for farmers.

I look forward to reading the Bill. The remarks of the Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha clearly indicate the benefit that will flow from the Government's proposal. I think we will see quite a change in the transactions in this fund compared with those of previous years. I know that reference was made to this matter by the hon. member for Kedron in the last election campaign, when he was Deputy Leader of the Opposition. He pointed out in rural areas—as did the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha today—the existence of this fund and the fact that it required some concentrated effort to make proper use of it.

I have been asked questions by farmers in rural areas about the difficulties surrounding this fund. The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha referred to the difficulties, and I had to point out to the farmers the limitations of the Act as it applied in their cases and tell them what their prospects were of getting approval for any application to the board.

This measure is extremely worth while and, subject to examination, it should receive the endorsement of hon. members generally.

Mr. WHARTON (Burnett) (12.48 p.m.): I wish to take part in the debate on what I regard as a very important measure. I congratulate the Minister upon its introduction. He has done an excellent job and has placed the principles of the Bill before us very clearly. It is indeed a forward step in the life of this Parliament.

After listening to the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha, I wondered whether we should be praising him for his submissions. I feel that he has made a contribution to the introduction of this legislation. While I commend the hon. member for his interest, I believe that the Minister did not display the same egotism when presenting the Bill as the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha did in his speech. I did not become a member of this Assembly especially to achieve any high office. I came here to try to help the people I represent. That is why I support the Bill.

Over a number of years I have tried to get assistance under the Farmers' Assistance (Debts Adjustment) Acts, 1935 to 1945. Unfortunately, that Act has been of little benefit to those seeking assistance. Prior to the introduction of this Bill one almost had to be bankrupt to participate in that fund. A farmer or grazier who has been plagued with drought and has suffered financial difficulties or has had to face price fluctuations and such things has not the heart to go to all the trouble of compounding his debts and is not enthusiastic about applying to the Agricultural Bank in the hope he will receive consideration.

When the Act of 1935 was introduced it did achieve something, but in recent years many of my constituents have endeavoured to obtain relief under that legislation, without success.

I know of one Gin Gin cane farmer who was plagued with drought and lost his crop. He accumulated a large amount of debts. Rather than compound his debts he lost heart and was forced to sell at a ridiculously low price. Had assistance been granted he would have been enabled to continue farming.

Mr. Bennett: This Government has forced a lot of people out of business.

Mr. WHARTON: This Government and the Commonwealth Government have done a good deal for the farming community in times of drought. Look at the drought relief extended by the State Government and the financial assistance given to local authorities by the Commonwealth Government. Many farmers have received assistance from that money by being able to accept employment on council projects to tide them over.

The hon. member for South Brisbane should agree that that is very desirable.

Mr. Bennett: You are not doing nearly enough.

Mr. WHARTON: Nobody can ever do enough for some people, but some assistance has been afforded by the State and Federal Governments to those who have needed it.

Considering the vast number of farmers who have been hit by drought, no one person in particular will get a very big slice of the \$1,500,000 cake.

Mr. Bennett: What about the Farm Water Supplies Assistance Scheme?

Mr. WHARTON: That is a good scheme and it is being applied quite well, although as yet not enough farmers are taking advantage of it. I am proud to be associated with the Government that introduced it and, as a result, achieved something for the farmers. The measure now before the Committee deals with the adjustment of farmers' debts, and very much more than the \$1,500,000 that is in the fund would be required to give a great deal of help to all who need it. However, anything that assists farmers to meet their debts is a good thing.

The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha mentioned acts of God. The sugar industry, for example, is faced also with the problem of fluctuating prices. The low returns presently being received for sugar are a calamity. I know many farmers who, although harassed by debt, would be able to continue if they could obtain some measure of financial relief. I know of one cane-grower who, as a result of the drought, could not meet his fuel account. The company to whom he owed the money brought in the bailiff, which means that some part of that man's property will be taken and sold.

This fund can be of assistance in cases such as that. What the really distressed and financially embarrassed farmers want is sufficient relief to keep the bailiff off their properties, and the Bill will assist those who would otherwise become almost bankrupt. When they get into that position, often they feel that they do not want to carry on. Under this legislation, I feel that they will be able to continue working their properties.

Mr. Bennett: There will be more going bankrupt now than there were when there was price control on petrol.

Mr. WHARTON: I do not think that that comes into it. It is a pity that the hon. member's fees were not controlled, too.

Assistance is required not only in the sugar industry but in other primary industries as well. The Bill repeals the existing legislation and it will allow farmers to sort out their financial affairs before they reach a hopeless state. I feel that it is the type of legislation that will achieve something, and I commend the Treasurer on its introduction.

[Sitting suspended from 12.59 to 4.30 p.m.]

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (4.30 p.m.): I rise principally to commend the provisions of the Bill, as they will be helpful in a great many cases. However, there is the danger that an impression will be gained by a number of people outside that this is a cure-all. We must try to avoid creating such an impression. As a result of the drought graziers will be in financial difficulties for many years, and wherever possible we should try to help them.

The main point about the legislation is that it extends a spirit of goodwill and, as far as possible, an offer to help. However, a number of people outside may interpret it in such a way that they will become over-optimistic about its possibilities. We should leave no doubt in their minds that the measure has certain limitations.

I was in this Assembly when the existing Act became law. I entered Parliament at that time and I was curious about the help it would provide. We must realise that the circumstances now are much more difficult than they were in 1935.

Mr. Chalk: That was the depression period.

Mr. MULLER: That is true. The passing of the Act was due mainly to the depression, which caused high prices and sad scenes, particularly in the southern States. Members of the Commonwealth Parliament at that time devised it as a means of assisting some of those in need.

We must realise that we cannot help the impossible cases. One word looms large in the title of the Bill, and we should not overlook it. I refer to the word "adjustment", and we must pay careful attention to it in

putting the measure into practice. If my interpretation of the measure is correct, judging by what I know happened in the past, it means that there will be a round-table conference between the man who is affected and his creditors. To give an illustration, in the past the adjustment worked in this way: if a man owed, say \$60,000 and his creditors were prepared to forgo portion of the amount owing to them the fund would provide him with money. In that way the property-holder would be helped back on his feet.

In an extreme case, where the man has no assets at all, it may be better for the creditors to do nothing. There are other cases, perhaps, that would not qualify because the assets may be too valuable for the person affected to share in the benefits of the Bill.

The question of forgoing part of the debt is a big one. It does not matter whether a bank or a broker is involved; the money is owed and while the property-holder is still on the land there is a possibility that he will come good. It is only after a lifetime of experience that a person knows just how wide a difference there can be between men. One man might be given no chance of recovery but to the surprise of everybody he will come good, while another person who runs his business well and should do well is not as successful as might be expected.

The amount in the fund is not large. My main fear is that people might misinterpret the provisions of the Bill and become over-optimistic about the benefits it will confer. We must remember what has happened in the last 12 months. Some people have lost their stock and have borrowed money to buy more stock. They have then either lost the stock again or been forced to sell them at a low price in an effort to recover part of their asset. There are some extremely sad cases, due to no fault of the landowners concerned. But they are still in financial difficulties.

The main aim of the Bill is good, but the Bill still presents tremendous difficulties. In my experience, particularly in the years I served in the Department of Lands, I have heard many men criticise the refusal of banks to lend large sums of money. They seemed to have the idea that if they could borrow money everything would be all right and they could not fail. Cases such as this are worthy of consideration. A lease cannot be mortgaged without the approval of the Minister for Lands, and I know of one person who, because he could not get money from the bank, dealt with a hire-purchase company. He was a young man, quite genuine, and a good worker. He told me he intended to borrow \$60,000 at 15 per cent. interest. I said to him, "You cannot pay that rate of interest. No matter how successful you might be or how hard you work, you will need a good deal of luck to help you." He said, "I am desperate, and I have to borrow this money from the hire-purchase company

at that rate of interest or forfeit my lease. Why can't the Government do something about controlling interest rates?" I said, "In my opinion the interest rate is high because you are considered to be a bad risk. You intend to borrow \$60,000 to buy cattle. You must realise that values in the stock market fluctuate, and if the market fell 30 per cent. you would lose \$20,000 cold."

Some of these people are in their present position very largely as the result of unsound judgment. I have often heard banks criticised, and I admit that I was sometimes critical of them when I was a young man and wanted to borrow more than they would advance. Now I realise that I have the banks to thank for sound advice and for making me aware of the dangers of over-borrowing.

The Bill has possibilities, although it is not capable of dealing with all the problems of the man on the land. I am not in a position to know whether those in the sugar industry are eligible to share the benefits of the proposed legislation, but I do know that many men in the sheep and cattle industries will probably be looking for assistance. There is real danger in overstocking at high prices. Anyone who buys store cattle at present values is courting danger. Although I do not want to be a scaremonger, it is always dangerous when prices hit the moon, as a fall could come at any time.

Our principal market for beef is the United States. Statistics show that sales of beef to Great Britain last year decreased by half. Although it is true that the countries of the East increased their purchases, the main outlet is the United States, and if American importers found some other source of supply or for any other reason decided not to take as much Australian beef, prices would fall again. That is the real danger.

The problem is made all the more difficult because costs today are so high. After the depression and until about the last decade or so, costs were within reason. Today, the farther one goes from the capital city into the outback areas of the State, the higher costs become. Last week I received a letter from a man whom I do not know. I made inquiries from people who do know him, and they informed me that he is very reliable. Amongst other things, he told me in his letter that the grazing industry today is not prosperous. He estimated that the return on capital invested in a property running about 7,000 or 8,000 sheep would be approximately 3½ per cent. That allows nothing for all the work done by the grazier himself.

This man said that one of the great difficulties is transport, and he estimated that transport changes represent 25 per cent. of the total cost of running a property. That illustrates what some of these people are up against. When those who have been in the business for a long time say that their position is as difficult as that, it is impossible not to sit up and take notice.

I think, too, that it will be necessary to look at the adjustment of debts by means other than the provisions of the Bill. When introducing the legislation the Treasurer said that he is investigating ways and means of giving further assistance, and is considering calling for Commonwealth aid. When speaking on the Land Acts Amendment Bill about a fortnight ago I referred to the possibility of putting some of these people on their feet.

One of the dangers that I see today—it has been looming for quite a while—lies in men going onto leasehold land with insufficient capital of their own to finance their activities. If they lose their stock they have virtually no assets, and that is a problem that must be investigated. If a man has freehold land with improvements on it, he has real assets; but a man who has only the value of the improvements on leasehold land as his assets will find that financial institutions do not readily lend large sums of money in those circumstances. Young men who go onto the land with a little capital of their own spend most of the money that they borrow on stock, and when the stock go they have nothing left.

If one is seeking a cure for a complaint, it is often wise to have a look at the cause of that complaint. I think that is something that should be looked at in the instance I have mentioned. Although the provisions of the proposed Bill will enable the Treasurer to help a few people, hundreds will not receive any benefit. Therefore, I suggest that both sides of the question must be investigated. If a person on a piece of land is making a fair amount of money for a few years and the land is not his responsibility, he takes what he can out of it. The Commissioner of Taxation then comes into the picture and, in many cases, takes a large slice of what that person earns—in some cases, most of what he earns—and when the lean year comes he has nothing to tide him over. When a position such as that arises, all aspects of the matter must be investigated. Although the complaint may be cured temporarily, there is always a danger that history will repeat itself.

An honest attempt must be made to face up to stark reality. It is not a question of criticising banks or brokers for not lending money. Putting oneself in their position, one would say that a person cannot expect to raise a loan if he has no security to offer.

Many proposals have high-sounding titles—the Farmers' Assistance (Debts Adjustment) Act looks all right—but they do not seem so good when it comes to putting their provisions into operation. I make it clear to the Committee that I am not criticising the introduction of the Bill. I think the Treasurer is being very wise in introducing it, and he should be able to help a few people with the money that will be available to him. But when one looks at the small amount of money and the number of people who are in financial difficulties, the truth is that it will not provide a great deal of assistance.

The financial difficulties should be impressed upon the minds of a number of people who have the urge to go onto the land. It is an interesting calling, at times even a fascinating one; but it must be remembered that hard work is the only means by which a man can succeed in it. He has to take risks; if he survives all the perils associated with life on the land he may find it very rewarding. My experience over a number of years has been that it has taken men who have gone onto the land and reaped their reward probably a lifetime of work to create their assets. Men such as that make a substantial contribution to the welfare of the country. One does not have to go out as far as the heart-break country. People who go onto the land produce the food that we eat and export. They keep our trade balance on the right side and make a contribution to the economy of the country, and we should encourage them in every possible way.

Whilst there is that side to the picture, when one gets down to a real study of the matter, just who is going to do it? It is all right to say that it should be done, but when it comes to the point one must ask, "Am I prepared to do it, or do I ask the other fellow to do it?"

I wandered slightly from the track because I believe we have to go deeper into this problem. Whenever a problem of this kind arises I think we should look at the root cause of the trouble, and not only at the difficulty in which we presently find ourselves. Nevertheless, I commend the Treasurer's action in this matter. At the same time, I feel that we should make no secret of the fact that it will not help everybody. It will help in certain cases, but the Treasurer will have to look for ways of helping every person on the land who is in difficulty and who has a chance of success.

Finally, I believe that there are cases where, in the interests of the landholder himself, it might be advisable to let him go and allow somebody else who is capable of financing the activities to take over. Again I wish the Treasurer success, and I hope that this move will lead to an awakening by the Commonwealth authorities. After all, they have the money bags; they collect all the funds of the country and I think it is very much more their responsibility than it is the State's. State Governments today are little more than glorified local authorities. One could not call them anything else. Money is handed out to them by the Commonwealth, and they have to borrow to finance most of their activities. When people have to call on the State Government to help them with any big problem, it just has not the resources to do it. However, I did not wish to be critical. I commend the Bill and express the hope that it will grow into something bigger.

Mr. O'DONNELL (Barcoo) (4.53 p.m.): After listening to the hon. member for Fassifern I wonder if the Minister should put the

word "deserving" before the word "farmers" in the Bill. He stressed an important point, but surely we are cognisant of the fact that such schemes as this are implemented by any Government for the purpose of helping those who can be helped. I think we have a sensible approach to that. The important aspect, I suppose, from the Government angle, is that we are endeavouring to do something to help the deserving. Of course, this assistance will not be rendered, so far as I know, to anyone who cannot continue in the industry. The person must be able to carry on and, what is more, have some possibility of making a success of his efforts. Nobody would take such a risk with private enterprise.

We expect the Government to be more sympathetic towards private enterprise, but, whilst it might be soft-hearted in matters such as these, it should not be soft-headed as well.

I am glad to see the Minister for Lands here today because he is a man who really worries about people in difficulties. I pay him that tribute. No matter what has happened or where, whether in the brigalow belt or elsewhere, this drought has brought a few wrinkles to his brow. I know he is quite genuine in his concern for people facing difficulties. There are people who feel that such an attitude towards the man on the land can be described as Socialistic. As a matter of fact, the Minister for Industrial Development last night said that this is a Socialist-ridden State and he was talking about the State after 10 years of Country-Liberal Government.

Mr. Campbell: He was speaking in the past tense.

Mr. O'DONNELL: He was not speaking in the past tense. He used the word "is".

Mr. Campbell: He corrected it.

Mr. O'DONNELL: He did not correct it because it has been published. He may have corrected it in his proof later, but that is a little too late. Anybody outside would think that our attitude to the man on the land was socialistic.

I consider that one of the dangers that arises from legislation such as this is that although certain people in other categories of private enterprise, particularly people in a small way in country towns who extend credit to people on the land, feel that in times of disaster, either through flood or drought, they have to give extensive credit, they are not considered by the Government when assistance is given at a time of State calamity.

Mr. Lickiss: They will be covered by this.

Mr. O'DONNELL: I know. I am leading up to that point.

The hon. member for Burnett spoke about oil companies. The oil companies do extensive business with the man on the land.

Those companies are well able to take a period of hard knocks, but not so the small businessman. I know very well that perhaps this is going to be a help to the small businessman. That is why I appreciate the Bill perhaps a little more than some other hon. members.

The Press have been concentrating on drought relief. Possibly some people on the land who have been suffering from the drought, but who have not as yet been given consideration, will suffer from floods in the future. Again, it must be understood, even by those people, that the Government is not going to carry everyone who has bad debts. We know very well that only those who have an opportunity of making a break from their misfortunes will be eligible for assistance.

From time to time the Government has announced various increased drought relief grants to people on the land, but there have been some stumbling blocks. I understand that share-farmers are included in this legislation, and so they should be. One of the biggest problems of the share-farmer has been to obtain guarantors so that he could share in drought relief. Provisions relating to guarantors will have to be included in this legislation. Even if share-farmers have the ability and opportunity to overcome the difficulties that beset them because of drought, they may still fail to obtain assistance because of the absence of guarantors. I stress this point because we must endeavour to overcome the difficulties of the share-farmer. The share-farmer contributes a great deal to development in the Central Highlands and, no doubt, in other parts of Queensland. He has more than doubled the population on the land.

I am sure that everyone read in this morning's Press about the sale of Langton Downs, containing 42,543 acres of freehold land, for the tremendous price of \$1,510,000. If that property were subdivided it would provide more than eight living areas in the district in which it is situated, and each block would support an owner as well as a share-farmer. There would then be at least 16 families living on the property, thanks to the nature of the country.

The opening bid was approximately \$12 an acre and it rose to almost \$36, a phenomenal figure. The inflated price paid by the Australian Stock Breeders Company Ltd. for this land will have repercussions on future sales in the district. Some of the best properties in that area were broken up in 1955 and prices ranging up to £65,000, or \$130,000, could be realised for fully developed areas of about 5,000 acres. I ask hon. members to compare those prices with the inflated sum paid for Langton Downs.

One of the worries facing the man coming on to the land today is the fact that he cannot realise on his investment. The hon. member for Fassifern referred to that matter a few minutes ago.

We know that the Act is being repealed, but we also know that some of its functions will continue. Consequently, money will be coming into the Federal Aid Rehabilitation Fund. I understand, according to the Minister's introduction, that \$1,500,000, is available. Perhaps that sum could form a nucleus for expansion; perhaps something further may be done in time to come. Unfortunately we will be upset by drought again. I appreciate what the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha said about that. It is important to have such a project administered by the Government, particularly in the light of the experiences that we have had.

Various opinions have been canvassed in the Committee today, but there are two points I wish to stress. First, the people who should get assistance are those who have some chance of success. Second, I emphasise that the share-farmer is worthy of help as he will be faced with the stumbling-block of getting guarantors.

I like this type of legislation, as do hon. members who are interested in the misfortunes of the people on the land and who aim at helping them. I sincerely hope that this measure will be implemented wisely and sympathetically.

Within the State there are quite a number of rural holdings. I cannot remember the exact number but I think it is between 40,000 and 50,000. Even if we ignore the pastoral companies, it is apparent that a great number of people are involved in the development of our State. They will not all be in trouble at all times but we can rest assured that in every year some section of an industry, in some part of the State, will need help. It will need sympathetic assistance to overcome its difficulties.

There is one important question with which we are always faced, namely, how far can we go in the economics of an industry? The hon. member for Fassifern dealt with this matter. When we consider all the ramifications of the legislation, its implementation will not be an easy task, and I do not envy the person who has to do it. I appreciate that when an application is made there will be a quick decision based on the person's future prospects, and, although the matter will not be fully considered immediately, at least the applicant will know his future position and will have it clearly in his mind. It will be of benefit if we can remove some of these worries from these people. Every man on the land becomes involved in three ways: with the private business world, with his local authority, and with the Government.

Over the last few months we have heard of drought-relief grants. There is at present a distribution of the \$2,000,000 mentioned by the Treasurer last year. In addition \$1,900,000 was distributed last year, and its distribution was criticised. I criticised the

Premier for not publicising how and when the local authorities should apply. The local authorities had to be prodded by Mr. Behan because they did not know their rights in the matter. Following what I said the councils were advised. In the letters of advice the councils were told that the money was not to be used by them to overcome the backlog in the payment of rates by primary producers. I should like the Minister to tell me exactly how the primary producer will be placed with arrears owing to the local authority and also with his obligations to the Government if he is involved in that direction as well.

The Bill should receive a great deal of publicity. Land matters are not given the wide publicity in the metropolitan Press that they should be given. I stress the point that metropolitan newspapers are circulated throughout the State. The Bill should be widely publicised so that there will be a clear indication of who will benefit, that is, the people on the land and those who service them in the towns throughout the length and breadth of the State, and so that everyone will know who is entitled to assistance under this Bill.

Hon. A. R. FLETCHER (Cunningham—Minister for Lands) (5.10 p.m.): I am deeply concerned, as my friend opposite mentioned a few moments ago, with the development of this idea that is now crystallising, and I should like to speak on my own behalf and also on behalf of my friends in this industry. We are grateful to the Premier and the Treasurer, and all their officers who have during the last year or so been interesting themselves in this matter and who have now brought it to its present stage.

As hon. members can imagine, during the last couple of years, which have been extremely bad ones in Queensland, I have had a great deal to do with banks, stock houses, and graziers who felt that perhaps I could help them, as at times I was able to do. I had frequent discussions with banks (including the trading banks, the Development Bank, and my friends of the Agricultural Bank) and the stock houses who have much to do with the financing of the grazing and farming industries in Queensland.

Arising out of discussion, mainly with Mr. McGuckin and members of the stock houses who were interesting themselves seriously in the matters that were of great concern to all of us, I had a visit from Mr. Campbell, of the Primary Producers Co-operative Association who had hitherto shown a lot of interest in this matter. We discussed what might be done in the way of collective effort for the sake of those who were in great difficulties and whose circumstances, in many cases, he knew. In March 1966 he came to my office and spent two or three hours discussing what we might do and giving me a little of the point of view of the wool houses on the difficulties that were looming.

As a result of that discussion, in April he sent me a letter, as I had requested him to do; I had asked that he be a bit more specific on what he had in mind. This he did, and we were getting closer to crystallising some of our ideas. Mr. Campbell said he had discussed the matter with some of the other stock houses, and they were all interested in doing something sympathetic and practical for an industry that was really taking a very great hiding.

On 12 May I received a letter from Mr. Campbell in response to one of mine in which I told him what I had discussed with the Premier. I always put these matters before the Premier, and he and I discussed Mr. Campbell's preliminary suggestion with the idea of finding something collective that could be attempted. The particulars of cases that were at that stage asked for by the Premier so that he would know with more certainty and in greater detail how the matter was progressing had been put before us, and I took the whole matter, after another interview with Mr. Campbell, to Cabinet. We discussed it in June and again in August, and I subsequently conveyed to Mr. Campbell that Cabinet considered that we should be holding the position by the use of carry-on loans, drought-relief rebates for starving stock, and other familiar measures, till there was a general break in the drought.

I think that that was a reasonable decision, and I subsequently discussed it with Mr. Campbell who, although he spoke mainly for his own organisation, claimed that other wool houses supported his submissions. It was always realised by Cabinet that there would be some cases far beyond permanent relief by such measures as re-stocking loans and carry-on loans. But when the drought had reasonably been broken—I think, luckily, that stage has now been reached—we thought that something more permanent should be embarked upon.

Until that stage, of course, there is no security on which any sort of composition can be carried out. It is not possible to reorganise a person's affairs in the middle of a drought. For instance, a person cannot reorganise his stocking if the drought is not broken; there is nothing he can do. No reorganisation of his general economy can be embarked upon until there is some security for looking forward from the debt on which the composition is made. The difficulties in a drought are absolutely insuperable. They are fairly difficult even now. Even though one may get money, sometimes it will be absolutely impossible to buy stock.

Mr. Muller: Even if you can, the prices are terrifically high.

Mr. FLETCHER: That is what I was about to say. If one can get the money—I am sure that in most instances one could get it—and find where stock were available, the stock coming forward are greatly sought after by

the buyers, who must have stock to earn a living. It must be very difficult to justify advancing money for the purchase of stock at the prices at which they are available.

Mr. Muller: And the risk is tremendous for them.

Mr. FLETCHER: The risk is increased by the price. That is what the general manager of one of the stock houses told me this morning. He said, "We must always consider the fact that the stock will be at such a price that it will be uneconomic to get them, even though a man needs them desperately".

Mr. Muller: That applies today.

Mr. FLETCHER: It applies very acutely today, and I am worried about its applying even more acutely.

The stage has been reached where it is thought that the drought is broken. However, many people are in desperate circumstances, and it could easily be that a great number of them could be ruined by precipitate action on the part of only one of their creditors. If such action is taken, the fat is in the fire and everything is disrupted. The whole property has to be sold—there is a foreclosure, or something of that sort—and there is no way of rehabilitating a person under those circumstances. But if action is taken early to institute a stay of proceedings, there is a possibility of reorganisation and composition, perhaps on the basis that the State will have to make some contribution towards it.

I am sure the Treasurer would be the first to remind industry generally that this is a comparatively small amount of money and there cannot be any question of taking over a very large amount of the debt and capitalising it from State funds. This is only a helping function that the Treasurer is embarking upon, albeit a very valuable one, and probably the best thing the Government has thought of so far. If that little help from the State makes possible a stay of proceedings on the basis that if everybody pulls his weight sympathetically some of these men can be saved, I think the Government will have done well.

There may be many who cannot be helped; I think the hon. member for Fassifern predicted that many people will not get help or cannot be helped. I am not sure that there will not be even more than he thinks; let us hope not. But let us do what we can for those who can be helped—and I know of many who I am sure can be. I have fairly intimate details of many of the cases, and I know that people can come out of this difficulty as long as someone does not kick the props from under them, because there has to be quite a long time for reorganisation. Their stock numbers are down so low that, without further stock—and further stock means further money to buy stock—their earning capacity will not pay the debt and get them out of the situation they are in.

I hope the proposed Bill will not be looked upon as the automatic solution of everyone's problems; I hope that people will not come flocking forward in the hope that this is an easy way to get out of their difficulties. It is not going to be either easy or quick to do that, and in all probability many people will have to be prepared to pull their weight sympathetically.

I might say, as a tribute to the stock houses, apart from Mr. Campbell and his Primary Producers Co-operative, who have taken a leading part in this—as a matter of fact to a degree that sometimes they are not given credit for—that they traditionally have a great deal to do with the primary industries, especially the grazing industries, and many of them are participating as actual owners of land and owners of stock in a practical and sympathetic fashion. I have never failed to find a helpful attitude on the part of the stock houses to which I have gone. This goes also for the banks, although of course, in circumstances such as a drought, in financial circumstances such as are shown up by the figures that I see from time to time, I would be the first to say that the problems of the stock houses and the banks are pretty grim indeed.

I thought that was something I should do—pay a tribute to those who have been instrumental in taking action that is crystallising in what the Premier and the Treasurer are doing by bringing down this Bill, and in a special case say, on behalf of those friends of mine who are graziers and who come to see me expecting some sort of help, how grateful I have been. I am not often able to give very much help, but I say on their behalf that we are very grateful for getting the beginning of such action as I hope will come out of this legislation.

Mr. O'Donnell: Are you going to send them to the Treasurer now when they come to see you?

Mr. FLETCHER: I could not do better than send them to the Treasurer, but I will probably accompany them to the Treasurer as I have accompanied them to the Premier's office on some occasions in the very confident knowledge that if there is anything that either of them can do he will be very willing to do it.

I compliment the Treasurer and, on behalf of those I call my friends in the grazing industry, I hope that as much good will come out of this as I think will result from it.

Mr. PORTER (Toowong) (5.23 p.m.): Quite obviously this legislation is welcomed by everybody. It took a little time to discern the warm welcome in the contribution of the hon. member for Barcoo, but it was there all right.

I was interested to see the Minister for Lands enter this debate. It was, to me, a stimulating experience. This happens to be

the first occasion in my parliamentary experience when I have seen a Minister enter a debate instituted by another Minister. I hope this will become the pattern.

I believe that this is a very courageous and imaginative piece of legislation. It will be useful because it takes an inert, unconscious fund, if I may put it that way, and breathes life back into it. It performs an act of resuscitation which I think will be very valuable. Of course, the legislation has its limitations, as the hon. member for Fassfern pointed out. But it does indeed lend a helping hand in an area where a helping hand, even in a limited capacity, is very necessary.

I cannot see that the problems of guarantors, which were referred to by the hon. member for Barcoo, will be in anyway augmented. In fact, they may well be reduced by the stabilising influence of this Bill; but very important is the stay of proceedings. This is of vital importance in regard to assistance where it is necessary.

To me, of course, the great interest in this Bill—I am certainly not an expert on land matters—is the way in which we see the parliamentary machinery at work. In this case, as we have been told today, the workable machinery for this legislation was initiated by a back-bencher. It was then taken up by the Treasurer and pronounced workable by departmental experts, and it now appears here as a Bill.

Mr. Hanlon: The Minister for Lands seemed to go to some trouble to document dates to try to disprove that claim.

Mr. PORTER: I do not think so. I am simply outlining the circumstances as they arose.

The hon. member for Burnett was perhaps a little less than generous in his remarks. When he thinks over his words I am sure he will realise this. He suggested that the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha, in indicating the part he played in this matter, was being egotistical. I rather think that is out of character for the hon. member for Burnett. After all, if the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha wanted to be egotistical he could have brought this measure in as a private member's Bill. That would have been within his province, but he did not do that. He did the proper thing so that the legislation now comes before us as a Bill carrying the authority of the Treasurer and the Cabinet.

I think that this Parliament and the primary producers will be very grateful to the Government and to the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha for the Bill. It is a good Bill, and I think we can all look forward to its successful operation. It is quite apparent from the comments of a number of hon. members that we all look forward to this fund being replenished in some way from a source which none of us at the moment is prepared to name.

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH (Tablelands) (5.26 p.m.): I agree with previous speakers that the Bill deserves the acclaim of us all. Any measure that will allow the State to assist the primary producer to get out of financial difficulties arising from an act of God should receive nothing but acclaim.

This legislation, of course, differs entirely from the 1935 Act, the purpose of which was to assist the primary producer who was in financial difficulties as the result of the depression. I do not suppose a financial depression could be called an act of God; actually it is an act of man.

The Minister said that he was prepared to administer the legislation in such a way that the greatest help could be given to the greatest number. It appeals to me in every respect because it immediately brings in the smaller farmer. If we are going to do the greatest good for the greatest number I cannot see that the people who have been treated best in every respect—the graziers and big landholders—can be included. I do hope that the small farmer who is heavily in the red at the bank will obtain some assistance as a result of this legislation. I have heard all the stories of the grazing interests in my area and other areas. I know them only too well, although I am not saying that they are not sincere. However, the economy of the State is equally dependent on the work of the small primary producer. The farmer suffering from flood damage can be in far greater difficulties than any other class of primary producer. I might be asked, "Why?" The reason is the loss of the soil that produces his crop.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! There is far too much audible conversation on both sides of the Chamber. If hon. members desire to converse I ask them to leave the Chamber or to talk very quietly.

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH: Those farmers are in danger of losing their topsoil, the very life-blood of their farms. We can do nothing to replace it. It takes a long time to bring the subsoils into production. After deluges such as we have had in the Mareeba district there is, to quote "The Cairns Post" published yesterday, "Extensive Damage in the Tobacco Area". In one instance a farmhouse was destroyed and the tobacco crop stored in the bulk shed was completely washed away. This loss was covered by insurance, which is excellent, but the loss of soil is not covered by insurance. It will now be extremely difficult for that farmer to produce first-grade leaf.

As you know, Mr. Hooper, tobacco soils are very "finicky." Soil surveys have been made throughout the area and many farms that were previously thought to be fertile have been down-graded. The farmers are in a very bad way financially and their outlook for a good season is extremely poor. These

are the people who will need financial assistance, as will their creditors, as well as assistance from the Irrigation Department and the Lands Department to get other areas so that they will have a chance to remain in the industry.

Potato growers in Queensland have been keeping pace with well known growers in Tasmania and Victoria. At one time Victorian and Tasmanian potatoes were dominant but Queensland potatoes and particularly North Queensland potatoes, are now holding their own. Potato land is constantly ploughed and worked and is therefore very susceptible to erosion. Again, it cannot be replaced. In this instance, great difficulty will confront growers who have to buy expensive seed. The hon. member for Fassifern said that the grazier has to pay high prices for his stock, and I point out that these people have to pay high prices for high-grade seed.

The pasture improvement scheme, which has been such an outstanding success in the dairying industry will suffer a little setback in this area because the surface of the virgin soil has been disturbed over large tracts and, once it is disturbed, erosion follows. I drove between Yungaburra and Millaa Millaa weeks prior to the heavy rain. There had been a storm, and I could see signs of erosion damage to the slopes on which the improved pastures were growing.

In discussing this measure, which is designed to help these people, I sound a note of warning. Floods and torrential rain do cause tremendous damage. I hope the Treasurer can assist. I hope he realises how important it is for these people to get finance so that they can make provision for their creditors. Many of them owe large amounts. If the Treasurer can assist them he will be doing exactly what he said he would like to do, namely, bestowing the greatest good on the greatest number.

Maize and peanut growers have suffered to some extent from erosion, but sugar-farmers have been grossly affected by it. Much of the crop has been submerged and it will be covered with mud and slime after the run-off. Little rain has fallen in Ingham, but when the flood waters run off and the hot sun comes out the crops will deteriorate. With the low sugar price overseas and higher costs of production, these people will be in dire straits. Cutting gangs will have to be employed instead of the chopper harvester or mechanical harvester, and that will add to the cost of production. All of this will make it more difficult for the sugar-farmers to meet their commitments. They should be among the small farmers to be considered.

I can find no fault with the details of the Bill as outlined by the Minister. We must not overlook the small farmer when he applies for assistance. We must not think only of graziers and drought relief for them. We

must consider all deserving cases and I hope that small farmers are considered in the same way as graziers and others. I commend the Minister for introducing this Bill which I shall study after it is printed.

Mr. McKECHNIE (Carnarvon) (5.37 p.m.): I congratulate the Treasurer on the introduction of this Bill, which will encourage men who have been seeking this legislation for two years.

Like the hon. member for Fassifern, I do not consider that this is the panacea for all ills. Many people who have had a rough time and are grasping at straws no doubt hope that this will remedy many of their ills. But as the Treasurer pointed out, this measure will be of advantage to men who are in a desperate situation, but who, at the same time, possess sufficient equity in their farms to have a good chance of compounding their debts and surviving, and then making a success of things.

There is an urgent need for long-term, low-interest-rate finance to develop undeveloped country, not so much to improve country that is already developed. That is a rather vague term, because country is never really fully developed. Land that we consider today is fully developed is only the basis for the expenditure of more finance to bring it into greater production. This finance should be used to develop country at a reasonable rate so that the job can be done properly. A farmer provided with such finance can take his time developing his country. The introduction of the Bill was made necessary by the lack of this type of finance and the effects of the drought. Some men have too large a capital involvement and their running expenses, including the servicing of that debt, are higher than those of the man who is in a sound financial position with resources to fight the effects of the drought. The two are complementary to each other as the cause of these problems.

There is then the other matter that was mentioned by the hon. members for Barcoo and Fassifern. People who buy land are inclined to pay too much for it. An unfortunate thing about the financial set-up today is that there are many people who are prepared to pay more than the economic value of land. This is to their financial detriment, particularly when a drought comes. Most people are optimistic and are prepared to pay high prices for land; consequently, when a drought develops they have no reserves from which to meet their difficulties. Inflated values, plus drought and lack of long-term, low-interest finance, are the causes of most troubles today.

As I said earlier, for the last two years many people have been seeking a moratorium. The Bill does not provide that, although it does solve some of the problems encountered along those lines.

In the matter of rehabilitation, I agree with the hon. member for Barcoo on the attitude that must be adopted towards businesses in country towns. Keeping primary producers on a reasonable basis of solvency helps those in the towns to cope with their financial problems.

As the hon. member for Fassifern said, one of the problems of rehabilitation is the high price of restocking. If long-term, low-interest finance was available, graziers would not have to become so deeply involved financially in restocking. I think it is undesirable to restock fully at present prices; it would be much wiser to buy a reasonable number of breeding stock so that the buyer is not too heavily committed.

Mr. O'Donnell: They would not be cheap.

Mr. McKECHNIE: No, they are dear. They are so expensive that I have the feeling that if a man restocked fully at current values he could suffer a minor financial crash, as prices could fall \$20 or \$30 a head and cattle would still be bringing good prices. The risk of fully restocking is therefore too great.

The other solution is to buy a reasonable number of breeding stock and endeavour to get out of trouble by breeding from them. That course of action has two advantages. It means that a landholder does not become too deeply committed and, in a period following a long and destructive drought, the land is lightly stocked and therefore partially spelled. A person could do this only if servicing his debt was within his capacity with light stocking. I really believe that to be the most sensible way of recovering from a drought. It must be realised that the number of stock available is limited, and the paying of higher and higher prices means that those most in need of stock have no chance of obtaining them.

The fruit and vegetable industries also have their problems as the result of drought, decreasing wholesale prices, and rising costs. The hon. member for Logan is well aware of this. Costs of such things as sprays, freight, packaging, and the general working of farms, constitute one of the problems. There are very grave financial problems in the fruit industry associated with the higher cost of sprays and packing, and the rising cost of freights. As the hon. member for Logan said by interjection, there is also the problem of imports sabotaging the efforts being made.

With rising costs and decreasing wholesale prices for fruit and vegetables, I expect that a number of people who are engaged in the fruit and vegetable industries will make use of the provisions of the proposed Bill. I know how many of the small men to whom the hon. member for Tablelands referred are in need of assistance. Most of the smaller industries have been assisted in some

way, and I think that the fruit and vegetable industries ought to be assisted, particularly in the field of processing, if they are prepared to assist themselves.

I am strongly of the opinion that processing should be done at the source of supply; but if it cannot be done there, I suggest that assistance should be given to enable growers to get low-grade fruit and vegetables to a processing plant—to the C.O.D. cannery at Northgate, for example. If a small levy were imposed on the industry as a whole to show that growers were prepared to assist themselves, they could then seek equal assistance from the Treasurer.

I shall refer very briefly to apples. If a levy of 2 cents a bushel were placed on all apples, sufficient finance would be raised to subsidise by 10c a bushel the freight to Northgate to have them processed, and this, plus \$1 for \$1 subsidy, would give the growers 20c a bushel assistance on the low-grade fruit. Indirectly, that would steer them clear of the need for the provisions of the proposed Bill, because a better price can be obtained for the fresh commodity if low-grade fruit and vegetables are taken off the market.

The main point that I make is that there is a definite need in the fruit and vegetable industries for legislation of the type proposed, but there is also a need for freight assistance and long-term finance to overcome the problems of drought.

Mr. E. G. W. WOOD (Logan) (5.49 p.m.): Personally, I give full credit to the Treasurer, and to the Premier, for bringing this measure forward. Claims to the authorship of the proposed Bill have been made by hon. members on both sides of the Chamber. However, when one remembers that, year after year, the Auditor-General brings before the notice of the Treasurer that there is \$1,500,000 in a certain account, it is too ridiculous for anyone to suggest that he reminded the Treasurer of that. The proposed Bill is the Treasurer's and the Government's idea. The Treasurer, as he told the Committee, has had officers in Canberra inquiring into the ramifications of this matter, and, as I said, I give him full credit and my thanks for introducing this measure.

When the Farmers' Assistance (Debts Adjustment) Act was proclaimed years ago, I was working for the Department of Lands in the Cloncurry district and I had a great deal to do with the implementation of its provisions. I know how much assistance it gave to selectors in that area. When I returned to take charge of that district in the 1950's, men who had bank overdrafts and were living on rations when I was there earlier were wealthy and well-established. The Act also played a tremendous part in the rehabilitation of the North after the disastrous years of the depression, which followed the five-year drought in the late 1920's.

The rehabilitation of the West is an extremely complex problem. As previous speakers have pointed out, it will take at least five years to rebuild stock numbers. When the Treasurer set out drought-relief programmes that the Government has already undertaken, he mentioned railway freights for fodder and stock carriage, rehabilitation money, drought-relief money, subsidies on fodder and extension of leases.

This new legislation is another step in these programmes, but let us not take this matter too seriously by regarding it as a major issue in drought relief. A substantial sum of money is involved, but it will not meet the cost of rehabilitation in the West, and, to some extent, rehabilitation of the farming areas and the areas that my colleague just mentioned covering the fruit and vegetable industry. The rehabilitation of the western areas, where I spent many years, is a tremendous task, and, as I said before, this Bill is merely one step. It will require finance of the order of millions of dollars to rehabilitate the West, supplied principally, I hope, by private firms and companies.

I hope the Treasurer is successful in his applications to the Commonwealth Government, but what the West actually needs is an increase in living areas. That is the main requirement there, together with a tremendous amount of finance that is controlled in such a way as to ensure that inflationary prices are not paid for the limited breeding stock left in this State.

I do not go along with the suggestion that water conservation is the answer in the West.

Mr. Sherrington: It is a big help.

Mr. E. G. W. WOOD: It is not a big help. With evaporation and that type of thing, quite frankly, it would be an uneconomic proposition to irrigate the West. It is not economic to irrigate for grazing cattle, to start with, and if we are going to build dams let us build them in the centres of population, in the premier agricultural areas where full benefit can be got from them and where crops for drought relief—lucerne and other crops—can be grown much more cheaply than in the West. Let the West pay freight on those crops.

Crops will grow more cheaply in the coastal areas, with rainfall and subsidiary irrigation. In the West, it would require extensive irrigation to grow them and it would become very expensive. I have confirmation from western people that it would be much cheaper for them to buy their lucerne from the coastal areas and to allow the West to be looked after with finance and additional areas.

That is the whole story, but I again digress for a moment to point out that some of the premier agricultural areas in this State front the Logan and Albert Rivers. I therefore make another plea that consideration be given to the building of the two dams on these streams.

I foresee one difficulty with this legislation. The submission of an application will not ensure that a farmer in difficulties receives assistance. If he applies to have his debt compounded it might have the effect of antagonising his financier, with the result that his limited source of carry-on money is cut off and he is in more difficulty than ever.

In dealing with these financial houses, the Treasurer should make arrangements with them to ensure that when applications are lodged there is no risk that the applicants will antagonise the companies concerned. Then, if the applications are not successful, at least the farmers will have available to them their previous source of finance—limited though it might be—to carry on.

I realise that this is mainly a drought-relief scheme. I agree with the hon. member for Carnarvon that it should extend to the small farms. The sugar areas have had \$19,000,000, and they have asked for more. Because of the difficulties that the sugar industry is facing, I agree that it should be assisted. It is not only the western areas we have to consider but the whole of the rural industries of this State which, incidentally, provide 82 per cent. of the export earnings of the whole of the Commonwealth. Therefore, let us look at this on a broad front. By all means let us rehabilitate the western areas, but let us look after the sugar areas too.

The dairying areas have the pasture scheme, which is quite successful in my district. I have pointed out previously that in the United Kingdom there is an ever-continuing subsidy scheme for dairy farmers to ensure that they carry on. It is essential for the dairying areas of this State that the subsidy does not stop when the present scheme comes to an end. For Queensland's dairying areas to compete successfully under the equalisation scheme with the more favourably situated dairying areas in Victoria and elsewhere, they will have to be subsidised permanently.

This is the first step in drought mitigation for the re-establishment of the farming industries. I do hope that it is not confined solely to drought relief. I make a plea for the fruit and vegetable industry, which is dependent on an open market of supply and demand without any financial assistance whatever, beyond a water scheme on which a great deal of money has not been spent. Unfortunately, that industry operates in competition with overseas imports. To take only one commodity, it is ridiculous to think that locally grown peas for canning have to compete with peas from America, New Zealand and every part of Europe. That is only one item. The Import Procurement Board is gradually strangling the small fruit and vegetable grower.

I again congratulate the Treasurer for bringing down this legislation. From my experience in the far-western areas, I realise that the limited funds available will not go very far. Nevertheless, it is a beginning. It is certainly a step in the right direction, and I congratulate the Treasurer.

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

Mr. BYRNE (Mourilyan) (7.15 p.m.). I am indeed pleased at the introduction of this Bill, which provides that funds being made available by the Commonwealth Government will be used for the benefit of farmers. It would be very difficult to find any body of people who need assistance more than the farmers of Queensland today. Hon. members will recall that I have spoken on several occasions advocating the introduction of a measure similar to this.

I realised the necessity for a Bill such as this two or three years ago. It is a step in the right direction, although I should have preferred it to be introduced at least 12 months ago.

Our primary producers, particularly those in the western parts of Queensland, have suffered terribly from drought. There has also been a collapse in the sugar industry because of the low monetary return. In addition tremendous damage has been caused by the recent floods in the northern parts of Queensland. Associated with all these items of expenditure, damage, difficulty, and so on, the sugar industry expanded so extensively that many farmers are involved in heavy expense from which they will probably be unable to extricate themselves, although this Bill may go a long way towards helping them. Many cane-farmers involved themselves far beyond the realms of prudence.

It will be weeks before the flood damage can be fully assessed, but I should not be surprised if many farmers are so badly hit by flood damage that it will take years for them to recover.

The Bill will provide assistance for those in difficulty. If I understand the position correctly, the difficulty has to arise as the result of an act of God. Drought would be one such act, and flood another. But what is the position with difficulties experienced as a result of expansion, and so on, by men who have thereby incurred tremendous liabilities? I should like the Minister to tell me in his reply where the very fine line will be drawn to decide who is entitled to benefits under the Bill. I should like him to tell us whether assistance will be limited strictly to involvement in difficulty by an act of God.

Assistance will be limited to the sum of \$1,500,000. That is not a very large sum when we assess the damage in the West and the North. The Treasurer will have to augment that sum very quickly by getting further finance from the Commonwealth Government. I should also like him to

assure us that the money that went back into Consolidated Revenue—the hon. member for Baroona referred to it this morning—will be again transferred to the relief fund. I ask the Treasurer to note that we consider that more money is required. As I assess the drought and flood damage in the sugar industry, the amount now available will be far too small.

The Bill provides protection for debtors. That is very good. The difficulty has arisen through no fault of theirs.

The producer must always have a prior right to protection and assistance, because he is the person who builds up the overseas credits that enable importers to take advantage of what is offering in London and elsewhere. The primary producers cannot be expected to live from hand to mouth, facing difficulty after difficulty, with no prospect but to leave the industry and come South to try their luck.

Mr. CAREY: Haven't you any sympathy for the country storekeeper who has extended credit to the extent of probably breaking himself to assist the farmer?

Mr. BYRNE: That is all right, too, but my point is that the primary producer should be put into a better position. With his improvement, obviously the storekeeper and others will benefit.

Mr. CAREY: This is true. I admit that we must have prosperous primary industries, but we must also assist the small storekeeper who has extended credit to these fellows.

Mr. BYRNE: It is not necessary to consider that aspect of it, because obviously if the farmer is put into a good position the rest will follow.

The Bill provides that the debtor may register immediately. I take it that once he registers he will be protected against any action by his creditors who may seek to obtain preferential treatment.

The Bill provides that there shall be no conflict with the Commonwealth Act. The Treasurer has assured the Committee that there is no conflict between that Act and the Bill he is now introducing.

The provisions of the Bill are so numerous and cover such a wide ground that it is impossible to comprehend them fully until we see the Bill.

I hope that the arrangement will be entered into in a spirit of compromise by the creditors as well as the producers. If the creditors and the debtors cannot arrive at an agreement there will be difficulty, because a time limit is set for granting or rejecting an application. A creditor could say, "I am secure. I don't give a damn what you do. I shall accept all the benefits that accrue to me under the mortgage and I don't care how you get on." If the creditors carry on like that we will not get very far.

The provisions of the Bill will not apply to a debtor who is hopelessly involved. Although I can see a good deal of difficulty in the administration of the Bill, I hope it will succeed. One of the important points is that debtors will have to show that they are capable of succeeding if they get the money, and interest charges will have to be reasonable.

I think the Minister said this morning that the Crown will compound part of these debts. It is all very well to draft legislation and put it on the Statute Book; the way it is implemented is the important thing. Poor administration can nullify the object of even the best Act. What I want to see is that everything is done to make the legislation a success, and that everything possible is done to help the producer.

I also ask the Minister to see that submitting an application does not require the filling in of five or six pages of forms and the answering of dozens and dozens of questions that in any case may not be relevant. Too often producers feel that they cannot fill in forms of this type themselves and take them to solicitors for completion. This means further expense and inconvenience for them. I ask the Minister to make the application form as simple as possible so that it can be filled in by the farmers themselves. I do not want to see the application forms filled with unnecessary questions, although I realise that some information has to be furnished.

I should like to see some protective provisions in the legislation against creditors who are owed a certain amount of money and reduce it by half and take further security for the balance. This makes a farce of the Act. Steps should be taken to remedy any unfair transactions of that nature and provide heavy penalties for engaging in them.

Another point worthy of consideration is the publicity to be given to this matter beforehand. If a farmer has no chance of being granted an advance, he should not waste money by going to a solicitor to have an application completed. Who are entitled to benefits under the Bill and who are not should be clearly defined to save producers' time and money. The Commonwealth Government has made available to the sugar industry the sum of \$18,000,000. That is very good, although it is only a loan and has to be repaid. It is only temporary assistance, and it can be called up at any time. Reference was made this afternoon to a grant; there has been no such thing.

In these crises some banks have been calling up the debts of farmers. They say, "We have no further interest in the sugar industry. We have far too much money in it already. We are concerned only with getting it back and we are not going to let any more out." Some banks have been very unreasonable. I should therefore like to see the benefits from this legislation go to those

banks and institutions that have been reasonable in their dealings with producers during times of crisis. I would not be very happy to see any consideration at all given to banks that are interested only in collecting what they have outstanding and not in helping producers any further.

Another point is that, if a creditor is not prepared to compound within a reasonable time, I believe that some provision should be made to enable people to exercise their rights against him.

Although it will be difficult to implement the provisions of the proposed Bill satisfactorily, I think it is an excellent measure and I hope it will achieve the success it deserves. In my opinion, the implementation of its provisions will give a great deal of courage and satisfaction to the farmers concerned.

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer—Treasurer) (7.31 p.m.), in reply: When I introduced the motion this morning I did not expect that the debate on it would continue throughout the day, because, although the provisions of the proposed Bill will have far-reaching effects, they are fairly simple.

The Government is endeavouring to repeal legislation that has been on the Statute book for a considerable time but under which little action has been taken because it was designed to synchronise with Commonwealth legislation and meet the wishes of the Commonwealth Government of the day. Both the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Baroona suggested that action should have been taken earlier under the provisions of the existing Act or that an attempt should have been made to amend it in some way that would have enabled relief to be given from the funds involved. I again point out to them that the Act was based principally on what I might describe as rehabilitation. The Government was conscious of the fact that the funds were held under a particular trust, and it considered that, until there was some evidence of a breaking of the drought, there was no hope of firm arrangements being entered into on the basis, first of all, that it could reasonably be assumed that the farmer, the person concerned, would have a good chance of meeting his commitments. I think it is true to say, therefore, that the Government has been mindful of the situation but has waited for what I might describe as the appropriate time to make the alterations.

Mr. Hanlon: Have you some applications that have been held in abeyance for this time?

Mr. CHALK: A few have come forward under the existing Act, but the persons who made them did not qualify as the provisions stood. After the Bill becomes law the situation will be that those who have applied previously will still have full entitlement to come back again and, as it were, resubmit their cases under the new circumstances, so that no-one will be deprived of anything in that direction.

Many speakers have said that the Bill will not overcome all the problems of the primary producer. That is very true, and I endeavoured to emphasise this morning when introducing the Bill that there was a limit to the amount of finance available in this fund at the present time. I suggested that it would be necessary to handle very carefully whatever applications came forward. I think it was the hon. member for Fassifern who rightly touched upon the point that if this legislation is given State-wide publicity—and I am sure that it will be—there may be some disappointment unless it is made fairly clear that the Government is in a position to do only certain things, and naturally not as much as it desires to do. I tried this morning to emphasise that point. To a degree we will have to be selective, to ensure that those who get benefit from this legislation will be those who are most entitled to it.

In this respect I believe I can rely on my officers, and those who are associated with the Agricultural Bank Board. In discussions I have had with them in preparing the legislation, I have indicated that the Government wants them to make a fair approach to this matter. I know that, from time to time, there is criticism of some of the actions of the Agricultural Bank. I think the hon. member for Burnett raised this issue in his remarks today. In the period I have been Treasurer of this State and responsible for the administration of the Agricultural Bank I have naturally been in close contact with it, and, whilst it is true that on several occasions I have indicated to the previous manager, Mr. McGuckin, and the present manager, Mr. Strutton, in his very brief period of office, that some people feel that the Agricultural Bank is a little bit hard in its dealings, I must say that some of the applications I have seen, some of the requests that have been put forward to the bank, are beyond all reason. It is frequently found, when an application is turned down, that the person feels somewhat aggrieved and goes along to his parliamentary representative in the Opposition and pours out his tale of sorrow. He may have a case similar to that stated by the hon. member for Fassifern. Many people feel so desperate that they take untold risks, in the belief that this is the only basis on which they can possibly survive. But the bank has a responsibility to the State; it has a responsibility also to see that there is fair and equal justice to all persons who apply.

Therefore, while I know that in some cases perhaps some hardship has been created, I feel that, taken by and large, the outlook of the Agricultural Bank and its officers has been such that it has not only carried out its function to protect the funds allocated to it but has also, in many cases provided some protection for those who would otherwise possibly go too deeply into debt.

Let me reply to those hon. members who expanded considerably what I might term the ambit in which I believe assistance can

be given. At this juncture I cannot possibly see how we can bring within the terms that we are considering such matters as assistance in freight. One hon. member mentioned freight costs; we heard discussions on the fruit industry, and we heard discussions on the vegetable industry in the Redland Bay area. I have to be honest and straightforward now and say that with the finance available I cannot see how we could possibly stretch the ambit of assistance in those two directions.

The hon. member for Tablelands told us something about the loss of topsoil in his electorate. I do not think we can go as far as that. I do hope that what we are doing will bring about some relief to those who have been hard hit, particularly in recent times. I am certain that we can help a number of farmers, graziers, or primary producers—however they might be described—so that they may be kept in production. But we cannot go beyond that.

The hon. member for Mourilyan dealt at some length with some of the problems in his electorate. I do not deny that considerable problems face all of us. He was somewhat critical of the amount of money available under this scheme. I will be quite candid and say to him that this morning we did not have at our disposal even \$1,500,000. Do not look a gift horse in the mouth. I hope the circumstances never arise to make it necessary, but if they do and, because of the plight of graziers or farmers, the fund becomes exhausted, we will look to other avenues to see if additional assistance can be provided. As the Commonwealth Act is drawn and as we have had to draw the Bill, we do not get any administrative expenses, so that every cent of the \$1,500,000 will go to the purpose laid down in the legislation.

I am not unmindful of the problems facing the sugar industry. Let me repeat that this Government, acting on the advice of those associated with that industry, approached Canberra and as a result of the argument put up secured \$19,000,000 for the industry. The hon. member for Mourilyan said it was only a loan. That is true but the conditions on which the money is lent offer some relief to the sugar industry. As squarely as possible we have faced up to what has been outlined to us by the industry, to help it to carry on.

I know that, at present, sections of the industry have been hit by floods. I also know of the plight of those persons and the conditions in the flood-stricken areas. I wish to point out tonight that the Premier, other members of the Cabinet, and I have not been sitting idly by in the past few days. We have discussed this matter not once but on four occasions by bringing Government Ministers together. The Premier has been in communication twice, and sometimes three times a day with the North. We have had a complete daily report on

what is taking place. I know from the latest reports coming in that there is considerable damage. We agreed this morning that the Minister for Primary Industries, a man who knows the North extremely well, and the Minister for Mines and Main Roads, should both go north tomorrow and spend some days in Ingham, on the Tablelands, and in and around Cairns and the areas in between. These hon. gentlemen are vitally interested in the position there, particularly the Minister for Mines and Main Roads, as we believe that his department will be one of the hardest hit when the final report is available. Immediately we have some idea of the damage the Premier and I will communicate with Canberra, to indicate that we believe special assistance must be given. In fairness to the Commonwealth Government, I should say that last night the Prime Minister indicated that as soon as a report is available, the Commonwealth Government will give aid for the North. The Federal member for the Townsville area, Mr. Bonnett, is also in the North. I am not favouring any political-party member or any political party.

Mr. Thackeray interjected.

Mr. CHALK: I am not. I am more sincere than the hon. member for Rockhampton North when he laughs in circumstances such as this. These people are in a serious plight but all these the hon. member can do is laugh.

Mr. Thackeray interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Rae): Order! I will not tolerate this nonsense. The hon. member for Rockhampton North cannot go on like that. He knows full well that that type of interjection and behaviour is unparliamentary. I ask him to contain himself and act in accordance with the normal procedures of this Assembly.

Mr. CHALK: As I said, the situation in the north is serious. The Government will do all it can to help. Quite candidly I cannot see that under this Bill money will be available to relieve the conditions up there. If it was used for that purpose the whole intent of the Bill would fade away because much more than \$1,500,000 would be needed. I mention that to indicate that everything possible will be done to help those affected by flood.

We know the position in the sugar industry. The hon. member for Mourilyan raised a matter he is entitled to raise. I believe that ultimately assistance will be forthcoming because I am certain that if those people in North Queensland who have suffered in recent days are to get back into production quickly, and if normal transport activity in those areas is to be resumed, some quick spending will have to be done.

I do not think it is necessary to go through the remarks of each hon. member.

Mr. O'Donnell: I asked you a couple of questions.

Mr. CHALK: The hon. member for Barcoo referred to the position of the small businessman. Each case will be examined on its merits. I do not know the cause of the financial problems facing some of our farming friends. They could have commitments to oil companies or wool houses, or even to small businesses which perhaps could not survive unless given some help. Each case will be looked at and provided the information is available there will be a quick decision. Neither the farmer nor the creditor will gain any advantage by consideration over a lengthy period. We must look at the circumstances quickly and then indicate whether these people will qualify under the scheme.

Reference was made to what constitutes a farmer. Some hon. members referred to share-farmers and asked whether the assistance would be confined to one or two types of farming pursuit. The Bill sets out clearly that a farmer is—

“Any person who, being the owner, lessee, or occupier of land, is engaged, otherwise than as an employee, in farming operations on that land, and includes the owner, lessee, or occupier of any land on which farming operations are being carried on under a share-farming agreement to which he is a party, and the personal representative of a deceased farmer.”

The Bill defines farming operations as—

“Farming, agricultural, horticultural, pastoral, or grazing operations, and, without affecting the generality of the foregoing provisions, includes dairy farming, poultry farming, bee farming . . .”

and other operations. I believe that that is wide enough to cover applications that may come from various sections.

Mr. O'Donnell: You did not answer my question about local authority debts and Crown debts.

Mr. CHALK: I do not think that I have to go fully into all of these points. I said this morning that I should hope that a local authority would take a lenient attitude to any person in its locality if it was seen that the Government was prepared to assist him under this legislation. It is true that on the forms sent out under the Drought Relief to Primary Producers Act, this appears—

“The term does not include payment of existing debts or interest on or servicing of debts, Crown and other rentals, local government rates, telephone or capital expenditure.”

Expenditure envisaged under what has been described as “carry-on assistance” includes fodder and water for the preservation of stock; cost of agistment of breeding stock; operating expenses to enable a farmer to engage men to carry out essential running

repairs to such things as windmills, pumps, etc.; the provision of seed and fertiliser essential for crop production; necessary stock supplies such as tickicides, vaccines, and drugs. They are all things necessary to enable a farmer to carry on.

On the other hand, assistance has been provided on what has been described as the re-stocking side. I read in the Press this morning that the Federal Treasurer, Hon. W. McMahon, referred to sums up to \$10,000 being made available to individual farmers for rehabilitation and re-stocking of properties. I emphasise that that is entirely in reference to what has been described and spoken of in this Chamber earlier as re-stocking loans. Again a set of conditions has been laid down that provides that re-stocking loans up to \$10,000 can be made available through applications to the State, and, if they are approved, the Commonwealth Government will reimburse the State for the amount involved. Those are things that are happening.

All I hope is that the legislation that I now bring before the Committee will provide a measure of assistance to many people. I again repeat that I know that it will not solve all the problems. It will not get what might be called the insolvent person out of his difficulties. But if it can keep a number of farmers actively engaged and ensure that they are able to overcome their difficulties as time goes on, it will have achieved quite a lot and brought about what I desired when I recommended to Cabinet that we proceed along these lines.

Motion (Mr. Chalk) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

FIREARMS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. J. C. A. PIZZEY (Isis—Minister for Education) (8.1 p.m.): I move—

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

It may be of advantage to hon. members if I once again outline briefly the provisions of the Bill, which were well received by hon. members on both sides of the House at the introductory stage. It provides new definitions for "Firearm" and "Concealable firearm". It proposes also to alter some of the conditions governing pistol clubs and the membership of such clubs. Firstly, the minimum age for membership of a club is reduced from 25 years to 17 years. However, a 17-year-old member will not be able to own a pistol or obtain a licence for a concealable firearm. He will have to wait until he is 18 before he can do that. As you know, Mr. Speaker—you have taken a personal interest in the matter—those provisions are

designed to assist pistol clubs to look after their younger members, and I know you are pleased that the Bill is now before the House.

The Bill also makes it an offence to alter a concealable-firearm permit or licence, or to fail to comply with the conditions of a permit, licence, or certificate, and other provisions cover controls on the movement of concealable firearms used for pistol shooting and the maintenance of pistol-club ranges.

At the introductory stage I informed the Leader of the Opposition that a pistol-club member held a licence for a concealable firearm for the duration of his club membership. I wish to correct that statement. Licences for all concealable firearms, whether held by pistol-club members or other persons, are renewable annually, so hon. members will see that there is a fairly tight control by the police on the owners of such firearms. They have to apply to the police within 30 days for a renewal of their licence.

The Leader of the Opposition asked me how many pistol clubs there were in Queensland. There are now 18 such clubs, with a total membership of 989, and two further clubs are in the process of formation.

I think that covers the main points that were raised. The hon. member for Baroona asked me how many gunshot deaths of any sort there would be in any given period. I have had some figures taken out for the years 1964, 1965, and 1966, and he is welcome to look at them.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) (8.4 p.m.): The Opposition has no reason to oppose the Bill, and I cannot see any need to repeat what the Minister said. Hon. members on this side of the Chamber approve of the tightening of controls and have no objection to the reduction in age.

As far as I am aware, pistol clubs are well conducted. A new pistol club has been formed in Maryborough, and it is well administered and well supported. I believe that the various changes in the rules will be approved by all the clubs. The permission for members to use a pistol without having a licence is one. That rule has replaced the previous one, which provided that each member of a pistol club must have his own licence to use a pistol. Now, the pistol is licensed and can be used by any member of the club, as long as he holds a permit.

The Opposition approves of the Bill. I am certain that the alterations to the rules and the general tightening up will be approved by pistol clubs generally.

Mr. BROMLEY (Norman) (8.6 p.m.): As was previously stated, we are in favour of the Bill. However, I want to make a few comments on it. To my way of thinking,

this Bill could perhaps go a little further in that certain other missiles, if I might call them such, such as detonators, could be included in the definition of "missile". A detonator can cause considerable damage. I have a friend in the country who unfortunately had in his possession a detonator. He fell off a vehicle, landed on a brick, and the detonator exploded. Therefore, we might consider this to be a missile and perhaps include it under the Bill.

Mr. Campbell: Would you consider a hand grenade similarly?

Mr. BROMLEY: Yes, but hand grenades would not normally be used, whereas detonators and that sort of thing are. Something should be included in the Bill to cover these things.

I know the Minister will not agree with this, but I think that at the present time firearms are far too easy to buy, whether a person has a licence or whether he has not. I have here a cutting from yesterday's "Telegraph" headed "Guns for Sale to Criminals." It deals with the case of a person who had concealable weapons in his possession. He had bought a number of firearms, including sub-machine guns, for sale to criminals. He was sent to gaol for only 10 months. He could well have been a potential murderer, so I believe the sentence of 10 months was not severe enough. In my opinion, it should have been extended.

There are some other weaknesses that I have noticed in the Bill. Nowhere in the definition of "firearms" is there anything that would relate to cartridges. I think it should be an offence for a person to have cartridges in his possession, whether on his person or in his home, without first having a licence to carry a concealable weapon. People have been found with cartridges in their possession that they have had since the war; the cartridges have been found in dumps and have been kept as so-called souvenirs. These things can be dangerous to human life, and something should have been included in the Bill to cover them.

I think we have to consider the responsible man on the land in relation to the issuing of certificates for concealable weapons and rifles in general. To a great extent, without some type of rifle he would be at a loss. But, I think that those people who have cartridges in their possession should be protected against themselves. Concealable weapons that have been rendered harmless by the removal of the bolt or the trigger can be made thoroughly workable in a few moments by anyone who knows anything about firearms. They can be made workable enough to be used for criminal purposes, with the possibility of harm being done to some person. Of course, there is provision in the Bill to cover this. However, I do believe that at the present time it is too easy for people to purchase firearms.

One point I had in mind earlier concerned licences for young people in pistol clubs. At the time of the introduction of the Bill I understood that licences were renewed annually. I am glad that the Minister cleared that point up. I was going to challenge him on it, but apparently he made a slight mistake which has now been corrected.

There are some good points in the Bill. Hardware shops and other places that sell firearms should be policed very strictly. Every place where there is an opportunity for people to buy firearms should be widely policed.

Mr. HANSON (Port Curtis) (8.11 p.m.): In the Minister's introductory remarks he said that there would be a very careful scrutiny of people who form pistol clubs. I venture to say that only very responsible people should be allowed to form a club. When an application is made to the police inspector at the Criminal Investigation Branch for the formation of a pistol club, reference should be made to the relevant local authority, or appropriate Government department in the area. People who live in a centre or locality usually have far greater local knowledge than a person who lives beyond its boundaries. That may be disputed, or not recognised, by many people who should recognise it.

It can be very disturbing to a local authority, for instance, if a rifle range which was established years ago when the area was sparsely inhabited now occupies land that would be very suitable for select home sites if it was subdivided by the Queensland Housing Commission or private subdividers. We have an instance of this with the rifle range area in the township of Gladstone. The Department of the Interior, through the Department of the Army, was very reluctant to relinquish a very choice piece of land that was acquired many years ago for the formation of a rifle range. Despite the fact that the land had not been used for this purpose for many years, the Federal authorities were very much to the fore in demanding their pound of flesh from the local authority.

If a rifle range or a pistol club is to be formed in any community, consultation with the local authority is essential to ensure that the club's activities are sufficiently distant from the residents of the area that no harm is likely to come to them. I throw that suggestion into the ring.

I mention the appropriate Government department because sometimes within the sphere of a local authority considerable local jealousy creeps in. The council does not mind where it puts something as long as it annoys somebody—perhaps someone who is opposed to the council's interests. It is essential that a careful scrutiny be made of the siting of pistol clubs and rifle clubs.

Wherever there are pistol clubs or rifle clubs there should be some form of eyesight test. That may seem a somewhat strange statement, but when a motorist reaches a certain stage in life he is asked to call in and have his eyesight checked before his driving licence will be renewed. I am a particularly competent marksman, but members of the Government have shown by recent events that if they were on the rifle range and had two shots they would hit the marker twice.

I was taught, when handling a gun of any sort—whether a pistol or a rifle—always to regard it as loaded. Even though the bullet may have been taken out of it years previously and it had been lying in the family chest or cupboard, I was always instructed to regard it as loaded. People who have had anything to do with firearms—and I dare say many hon. members have—have been taught always to handle them as though they are loaded. That was the first lesson that was drummed into me.

I should also like to throw into the ring a suggestion concerning pistol clubs. I believe that any person who is proceeding to and from a pistol club should have his pistol in a closed case. This may not appear to be of great significance, but we are reducing the age limit from 25 to 18. We should hope that people of 18 will be responsible when they become members of these clubs, but when we look around in the community we see that it contains a number of "lairds". When a club member is proceeding to club outings in a bus, or in any other conveyance, or when he is travelling interstate, his pistol should be enclosed in a case. Whilst that may not afford much protection in the case of people who intend to engage in any form of criminal activity—they can easily release the lock and take the pistol from the case—nevertheless there is a psychological benefit in that the general public will not see the firearms carelessly and openly displayed when marksmen are travelling to a pistol or rifle shoot.

By interjection at the introductory stage I asked a question about armed personnel travelling on airways. A considerable number of them travel on air services throughout the State. In his reply the Minister may possibly wish to enlighten us on regulations that govern these people when they travel on commercial airlines. We read stories, see pictures, and hear of comments expressed in all parts of the world about people going berserk on board planes—about them grabbing pistols and causing considerable inconvenience and anxiety to fellow passengers. I hope that the laws in this regard are very stringent.

Mr. HUGHES (Kurilpa) (8.20 p.m.): I support the measure and commend the Minister for introducing it because too many of our laws remain on the Statute Book without being amended and brought up

to date for the protection of the people in our community. If, as the years go by, there is a decline in the sense of responsibility exhibited by people, we as a Parliament should take note of this and tighten up our legislation and increase the penalties for offences so that they act as a very thorough deterrent to miscreants who might otherwise flout the law. Then it should not be allowed to remain simply as a statute; it should be thoroughly policed.

Queensland is a clean State by comparison with other States of Australia and the rest of the world, and it is a credit to the Minister and the Police Force. They are being assisted in this way to keep this State free from criminals and those who carry firearms and can cause bodily harm. By spelling out those things that can cause bodily harm as distinct from concealable weapons, the Minister shows that he is cognisant of the needs of modern times. Bodily harm is done not only by a missile fired from a rifle, but also by many other means.

In the United States of America this is a tremendous problem confronting the police and the community. Strangely enough it is the existence of rifle clubs which keeps the situation as dangerous and untenable as it is and does not help the law-enforcement agencies. I do not know whether it is because of the political power of rifle clubs, but in the United States rifles and other firearms can be purchased even through the post. It is a big mail-order business on the West Coast of America. I hope that position never applies here.

By taking note of the needs and bringing some of these statutes up to date, by spelling out provisions and making penalties heavier, we will help the Police Force to maintain order in our society and work against degenerating influences.

As the Bill lowers the minimum age for membership of a gun club so greatly, I wonder whether we should even consider a provision to ensure that only a responsible person, thoroughly checked out, who needs to have a firearm to protect his person or his interests has the firearm. We could even go to the extent of fingerprinting applicants. I know that many people would object to this and I do not suggest that we should fingerprint everybody. But in some countries the fingerprints are taken of all applicants for liquor licences. I suggest it is little enough to ask applicants for firearms in cases such as this to submit to fingerprinting. I feel that this is only the start of even more ways to prevent the situation degenerating.

As many young people today are not fully acquainted with the law governing the ownership and use of firearms, I think it would be a good thing if the Minister or the law-enforcement agency gave full publicity to the conditions under which people can own and use firearms. This could include information

on where in Brisbane, for example, firearms can be used, types of rifles, and calibres of weapons from the pea-rifle upwards. I have had experience of cases in which young people who have had rifles confiscated have been completely ignorant of the laws by which they have to abide. I believe that this is something that should receive a full measure of publicity, if not entirely in the metropolitan and country Press then by means of the distribution of pamphlets to schools and other places at which there are numbers of young people at an age at which they take an interest in firearms. This should be part of their education. Children at school should be taught not only how to read and write but how to live, and one of their responsibilities as citizens is to know something about the possession and use of firearms. I hope that something can be done by the Minister's department or the law-enforcement agency to distribute circulars, particularly at high schools, so that young people become not only acquainted with what is required of them in the use and possession of firearms but also a little more responsible in their general outlook and attitude.

In other respects, I commend the Minister heartily for the introduction of the measure, which I am sure will continue to meet the needs of society and assist the police.

Mr. DEAN (Sandgate) (8.27 p.m.): I agree with the Bill, although I feel that it could have gone a little further in the protection that it affords the community. Speakers in the debate seem to place the accent on pistols. I feel that a pea-rifle is a more lethal weapon than a pistol, because it is easy to obtain. Pistols and revolvers can be obtained only under licence, yet anyone can walk up the road and buy any number of rifles. Preparing a rifle for concealment is merely a matter of cutting off the barrel with a hacksaw. Sooner or later Parliament will have to consider widening the range of firearms for which licences are necessary.

I am also concerned about war souvenirs that some people collect. Mention has been made of a hand grenade. I was once in a home in which a grenade was on the sideboard. I had no great knowledge of grenades and could not tell whether this one was live, so I suggested that it be taken to the military authorities for examination. When that was done, it was found that it was live and therefore dangerous. I feel that the Minister should call on those in the community who have such souvenirs, and want to retain them, to have them examined by the military authorities. If they are not dangerous, they will be able to keep them in their homes.

I think that the ease with which pea-rifles can be purchased should be given a little more consideration. The hon. member for Norman referred to one case the other day;

I have the newspaper cutting relating to it in front of me. When one looks at all the things that this person was able to buy in the community, it makes one think that the time has come to extend licensing to an all-embracing range of articles that could be used dangerously in the community. I do not think that any line of demarcation should be drawn relative to pistols; all firearms should be licensed.

Mr. HANLON (Baroona) (8.30 p.m.): I endorse the concern expressed by hon. members generally about the ready availability of firearms, but I acknowledge the difficulty, mentioned by the Minister at the introductory stage, of administering or policing any real restrictions on them.

I rise principally to thank the Minister for taking out figures relative to deaths by gunshot in recent years. Although I sought that information informally by interjection, the Minister was good enough to take out the figures for me. I raised the point because from memory and from reading reports from time to time of gunshot deaths, it seemed to me that they were reaching a level at which they would have to be treated as seriously as deaths caused by motor vehicles, and so on. The figures provided by the Minister certainly give cause for alarm, but they indicate that the great majority of gunshot deaths in the last three years, 1964, 1965, and 1966, were suicides with firearms, not accidental deaths resulting from the use of firearms or deaths resulting from the use of firearms in the commission of crimes. The figures for suicides are—

| | | | | | |
|------|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1964 | .. | .. | .. | .. | 46 |
| 1965 | .. | .. | .. | .. | 44 |
| 1966 | .. | .. | .. | .. | 38 |

In all, there were 128 over the last three years, and although the accessibility of firearms may have some significance, I do not think it is necessarily true to say that a firearm was the cause of the suicide. In many cases that unfortunate event would have taken place by some other means if a firearm had not been available.

Deaths caused accidentally by firearms were—

| | | | | | |
|------|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1964 | .. | .. | .. | .. | 14 |
| 1965 | .. | .. | .. | .. | 5 |
| 1966 | .. | .. | .. | .. | 8 |

or 27 in three years, as against 128 suicides. The number of deaths involving the use of firearms in the commission of crimes were—

| | | | | | |
|------|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1964 | .. | .. | .. | .. | 15 |
| 1965 | .. | .. | .. | .. | 9 |
| 1966 | .. | .. | .. | .. | 17 |

or 41 in those three years.

I do not wish to delay the House, but I think those figures indicate, as the Minister pointed out, that the situation does not warrant, particularly in country areas, the imposition of very severe restrictions on the

sale of firearms generally, as against concealable firearms, with all the difficulties of administration and policing involved. However, I believe that some restrictions could be imposed in a city the size of Brisbane.

As other hon. members have mentioned, the Minister said at the introductory stage that the principal protection lies in the power of the police to put a prohibition on a person whom they believe to be irresponsible in the use of a firearm and ensure that he does not possess one. I think it would be of assistance to the police if the public accepted some responsibility in this matter. Usually the police would become aware that a person was irresponsible only if they were investigating the misuse of a firearm. They would not know that from their own observation of the conduct of the particular person, because he would probably take care not to reveal himself before the police as being irresponsible in the use of firearms. While nobody wishes to act as a pimp in matters of this sort—I certainly would not encourage people to do so—if danger of accidental death arises from the careless or irresponsible use of firearms, particularly by young people, I think there is an obligation on citizens to notify the police.

I again thank the Minister for giving me these figures. I admit that they are not as high as I thought they would be, but they are certainly quite alarming.

Hon. J. C. A. PIZZEY (Isis—Minister for Education) (8.35 p.m.), in reply: The hon. member for Norman brought up the question of hand grenades, and somebody else—I think it was the hon. member for Sandgate—mentioned something about machine guns and sub-machine guns. There is a strict and general prohibition that no person shall use, discharge, carry, or have in his possession any machine gun, sub-machine gun, or hand grenade, and the term “hand grenade” in the definition, which I will not read, covers almost anything approaching a hand grenade in its use.

Even though there is a prohibition, it will not stop criminals getting possession of them and it is the job of the police to detect those offences and of the court to deal adequately with the offenders when they are brought before it.

The question of licenses was raised by one or two hon. members. I think we pointed out at the introductory stage that the Government felt that no useful purpose would be served by licensing. Several hundred thousand licences would be applied for each year. Out of, say, 200,000—and that is the estimate of the figure—which ones would we reject? There would probably be 199,990 to whom we would give licences. There would be no reason for rejecting their application, but amongst those would be the ones who suicide, who accidentally trip over fences, and who are careless with firearms. They do

not treat firearms in the same way as the hon. member for Port Curtis, always with suspicion and caution. He said, he assumes that every firearm is loaded until it is proved otherwise.

Mr. Hanson: They tell you that in the services.

Mr. PIZZEY: The first thing I was told in Parliament was that any suggestion put up by the Opposition should be treated as loaded until it was proved otherwise. However, his point is well taken.

The co-operation with local authorities was mentioned and I think that generally our inspectors of police would co-operate but I will pass on the suggestion to the Commissioner when he is promulgating the regulations under the Bill. I suggest that they would liaise.

The hon. member for Bulimba brought up the question of safety. Very useful pamphlets are available. If any member would like to look at one, I have one here. It would be very useful to any person buying a firearm, and I hope that an adequate number is available for distribution to people who buy firearms. Some, of course, would keep it and not read it, but it is there for them.

On the question of souvenirs, the obligation is on the individual to take his souvenir to the nearest police station to have it deloused, if I might use such a term, and obtain a permit to keep it before he can then take it home and keep it as a souvenir. Many members of this House, I should think, would have wartime souvenirs that have been rendered ineffective by the C.I.B., and for which they would have obtained special souvenir licences.

The hon. member for Port Curtis mentioned the control of firearms on aeroplanes. Very rigid control is provided by Commonwealth legislation as the hon. member for Port Curtis would know. I think the Treasurer was in the plane at the time a man went a little bit beserk and caused a few anxious moments to the passengers.

The Commonwealth then strengthened its legislation and today the carrying of firearms in aeroplanes is subject to rigid control. But that is Commonwealth legislation, not State.

I think the Bill has been generally well received.

Motion (Mr. Pizzezy) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

(Mr. Rae, Gregory, in the chair)

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

Bill reported, without amendment.

MINING ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Main Roads) (8.41 p.m.): I move—

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

When I introduced this Bill I outlined its contents and its purposes. Although the Bill is short, I believe it will accomplish some very desirable procedures.

It provides power, firstly, for the holder of more than one special lease to amalgamate the labour and expenditure conditions and, secondly, for fixing appropriate Wardens' Courts for the hearing of lease applications.

In the first case, I point out that there is no easing of the manning and expenditure conditions. They must be met fully. However, to allow of orderly and proper development the Minister and the Governor in Council have power to approve that such may be concentrated in one area so that progress may be continuous and efficient.

Mr. Hanson: On the whole aggregation of the mining lease, is there still a way that the lessee can apply for exemption from later conditions?

Mr. CAMM: Yes.

For instance, in the case of beach sand mining on our islands, it would be unreal to expect simultaneous working by the dredging of large numbers of leases. We would get only a number of half-hearted, disjointed operations which would leave in the ground for ever significant quantities of highly strategic minerals which are a great stimulus to our national economy.

However, I point out that this does not mean that new amalgamated titles will be given. It merely means that power will now be given for conditioning for large projects. The grouping will be contained in particular localities, and will not be State-wide.

In the matter of fixing appropriate Wardens' Courts for hearing, I point out that at the introductory stage I explained this matter rather fully. The amendment is designed for the convenience of the public, and to give improved service. It removes the necessity in certain cases of having a lease application heard in the court that is the nearest as the crow flies. The court might prove to be very inconvenient and comparatively inaccessible. Certain leases could be partly within a number of court areas. A reasonable and helpful view can now be applied. Courts will be more accessible, both for applicants and for any objectors that there may be.

That summarises briefly the entire contents of the Bill. No other matters are dealt with or are affected. I feel that the provisions of

the Bill are desirable and helpful both to the public and to the industry. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. SHERRINGTON (Salisbury) (8.45 p.m.): The Minister has been very brief in summarising the provisions of the Bill at the second-reading stage. As the Opposition has no real objection to the principles contained in the measure, I feel that I should be fairly brief in summing up our attitude to it.

The provision dealing with simplifying the whole set-up of the Warden's Court throughout the State should earn the approbation of most right-thinking people. In effect, we are streamlining the procedure of the courts as to their availability to determine any matter of contention that may be placed before them, and also to deal with lease applications.

I think I would be recreant to my trust if I did not dwell briefly on a matter that concerns me and, I believe, many people throughout the State; that is, the wholesale mining of beaches right along our coastline and, in some cases, on our major islands. I referred to this subject at the introductory stage and said that I felt there was a grave aspect to beach mining in the form of possible erosion. I will never be entirely satisfied that we can tear down the natural erosion barriers created over the centuries and be sure that there will be no erosion problems in the future merely because we re-fill the land and re-plant the area. I do not want it to be thought that I wish to retard progress in any way, but I believe that erosion is bound up with beach mining. I cannot be satisfied with the tidying up of an area and the planting of a few trees and tufts of grass. I may be exaggerating, but that is what it amounts to in the long run. I do not believe that that effectively prevents erosion. I firmly believe that where beach mining is carried out we should at least attempt to re-create the contour of the beachfront so that it is the same as it was before being mined.

Throughout the State we have set up national parks, to preserve for posterity a portion of the land in its natural state for the centuries to come, but, I do not believe that any of our national parks preserve the coastline in its natural state. I am subject to correction on that but, in my discussions with people interested in the preservation of national parks, I have not been able to glean any information to indicate that one part of our coastline is being preserved as a national park.

Mr. Nicklin: There is one at Noosa.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I imagine that the Premier is referring to the famous Teewah coloured sands.

Mr. Nicklin: No. I am referring to the Noosa National Park, south of the Noosa River.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I said that I was open to correction. I do not doubt that that is correct and I do not wish to score off this. I am personally interested in it and feel that I speak on behalf of many people.

Mr. Nicklin: You have a good point there.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I do not think that this aspect has been considered. A national park does not have to be picturesque; it must be a true representation of what the State is like. I offer this suggestion to the Minister for Mines and I hope that, as the Minister controlling beach mining, he will confer with the Minister for Local Government and Conservation to ensure that in our desire to stimulate our economy we do not overlook the wise precaution of ensuring that we preserve some of our coastline as a national park. It is easy to be caught up in a desire to stimulate the economy when there is such a demand for rutile, ilmenite, and monazite, etc.

I am disturbed at the contents of a newspaper article written by Mr. Arthur Richards in 1960. It reads—

“Sand Coast’ Boom Yields £6m.

“Ever feel sorry that you were born too late to make a fortune in the old gold rushes? You needn’t. The ground is still full of nice, folding money.

“A Brisbane citizen recently took out a mining lease to three acres of Gold Coast foreshore, down south of Surfers’ Paradise.

“He didn’t put a shovel to it himself. Just sold the mining rights to one of the big mineral sands companies then sat back and waited.

“In four weeks the company had ‘dug’ the area with suction pumps, extracted the mineral sands, replaced the surface, tidied the place up—and handed over the cheque.

“The Brisbaneite received just £5,600 for this four weeks’ wait.”

We must take every opportunity to provide avenues of employment and we must also stimulate the economy. But in our desire to make a quick “quid” we must not destroy for all time many of our outstanding scenic areas, which, as tourist attractions, would be just as lucrative to the State in the long run. That is why I make this plea. Let us set aside more of our coastline as national park land so that it will be retained for posterity.

The legislation contains a principle concerning expenditure and labour. As the Minister said, it is unrealistic to insist on those conditions when they prevent the economic working of several small mining leases and consequently have the effect of leaving many minerals in the ground.

This leads me to consider whether thought should be given to concentrating on the off-shore mining of minerals now taken from beaches. Most are washed onto our shores by the sea, and I am wondering whether it might be wise to have surveys carried out

to ascertain the extent of deposits off shore and whether it is possible to mine them off shore instead of by the present methods which result in the destruction of beaches. I feel that once we destroy what nature has made, it is lost for all time.

Reference has been made to the preservation of the famous coloured sands on the North Coast. I feel that but for the dedication of certain people in the community, these sands could have been destroyed. I am not, of course, suggesting that the Government would be so unwise as to allow mining of the coloured sands themselves. However, thinking people, and those who have made a study of this area, are concerned because it is an unstable area, and mining activities in the vicinity could well endanger the coloured sands by setting up a chain reaction. I hope the Minister can reassure the House that a mining lease adjacent to this area was granted only after expert advice that it would not interfere with this unstable area and cause serious repercussions.

I have spoken longer than I intended to. The Opposition has no serious objection to the measure; indeed, we are happy to support it. I hope that, as a result of this little effort tonight, Queensland will be enriched by the declaration of part of its coastline as a national park.

Mr. E. G. W. WOOD (Logan) (8.59 p.m.): At the introductory stage of the Bill I spoke at some length about sand-mining in the areas that I am acquainted with. I thank the Minister for the assistance that he has given me, as chairman of the Redland Shire Council, in protecting those areas. I point out that the leases there run into thousands of acres. Our geologist, who is a very able man and probably one of the best hydrologists in Australia (he is a Bachelor of Engineering and a lecturer at the University), has informed me that it will take hundreds of years, or a thousand years—I accept “hundreds”—to mine completely the whole of Stradbroke Island.

It worries me that the consolidation of the leases is under consideration while negotiations between the companies and local authorities are in a state of flux. I suggest to the Minister that the negotiations between the shire that I represent—I speak for the Redland Shire now—and the companies on Stradbroke Island should be brought to fruition before the leases are signed.

I have been informed by the companies that the percentage yield from the mineral sands is not high and that they have to go through a considerable amount of sand to get payable quantities. Therefore, the loss of small areas for township purposes on the 18-mile Beach, together with access roads along the beach, will not have very much effect on their ultimate profits. I should say that the 18-mile Beach on Stradbroke Island is probably one of the best beaches in the Commonwealth. It certainly is remote, and

I must be very fair and say that only the mining companies have constructed the access roads to it. There is now a bitumen road right across to the beach, and although there is a swampy area, there is access from the other side. Thanks to the Department of Lands, a special lease on that road was kept open. It is from the mining company that we want Glenogilvie township site on this beautiful beach, and it is for this public requirement that I make my request. I ask the Minister to ensure that the requirements of the shire are met and that from these large areas, which will take generations to mine, public areas are provided for the local authority before the die is finally cast.

As I pointed out in this House in an earlier debate, the Public Works Land Resumption Act does not operate under the Mining Act to make provision for public areas in a place such as this. Consequently, if provision is not made now on behalf of the local authority, the opportunity will be lost for all time.

The development of Stradbroke Island has been dependent largely on the companies, and the Redland Shire is thankful to have them there. The Redland Shire Council wishes to work in conjunction with them and the Department of Mines, because it is well aware that the economy of the State depends to some extent on the winning of these minerals.

This is the space age; these are the minerals that win dollars from the United States of America. If these sands are to be made over to the beach mining companies, let us ensure that the public requirements are met before it is too late.

I have complete faith in the Minister. He and his department have assisted me to protect the interests of the local authority, and I ask him again not to close the gate before negotiations have been completed.

Mr. HANSON (Port Curtis) (9.4 p.m.): I do not wish to add very much to the comments I made at the introductory stage.

The hon. members for Logan, who has just resumed his seat, referred to space-age minerals, and several other hon. members and I mentioned them during the earlier debate. The derivative titanium that comes from Queensland beach sands is universally recognised as the space-age mineral. Incidentally, it is in very short supply in the world today and it is very significant that it is mentioned in the legislation that has been introduced.

In regard to this legislation in particular, and Government policy generally, I hope we are not reaching the stage we have reached in other industries where we in this State are not receiving the benefit that we should. Mere holes in the ground, in many instances, are a very poor recompense for the price of the Crown estate.

As I said, when we see that titanium oxide, which is a derivative of these mineral sands, is in short supply in the world today, we should put ourselves into a position of bargaining so that this State and this country may derive the benefit it should from the commodity. I understand that a vast organisation in the United States of America, the Dupont organisation, and many other large organisations, have in recent years been able to extract the pigmentation for paint from many of our mineral sands, and I should like to see this industry itself undertake such research projects. After all, we have the raw materials and we have the process for extracting the rutile and ilmenite from our vast areas of mineral sands.

If we are able to process them to that stage, I think we should go a stage further. The Government, through the Department of Industrial Development, should encourage these people to see that every avenue is explored in an endeavour to establish the tertiary stage here. I hope I never witness here what happened in Western Australia, where the sulphide process at Laporte was injurious to many of the surrounding waters.

Here, in anticipation of the ilmenite works, that are shortly to be built in Central Queensland, I hope the chloride process will be introduced as it will be less injurious than the sulphide process. The attention of the Department of Mines and the other relevant Government departments should be directed towards seeing that there is no destruction, and that any industry engaged in producing a particular mineral from our sands is not a nuisance and does not cause anxiety to residents or be a detriment to the State or the country.

The Minister mentioned the amalgamation of leases. Perhaps I could have asked a question by interjection, but in his reply I should like him to tell me whether this means simply that the amalgamation of these leases will not be granted to everybody but will be dependent upon the amount of money that will be expended or the capital that will be employed, possibly in the creation of secondary industry or some form of industry associated with the sands. I think that is very important and very pertinent to this legislation, and, if possible, I should like to have certain assurances from the Minister.

At the introductory stage the hon. member for Ipswich East referred to royalties. Because of my temporary absence from the Chamber I did not catch the Minister's reply, but something was said about the royalties being charged to a certain company on the basis of its balance sheet or profit and loss account. I should like the Minister to put me right on that point. Although it is not altogether pertinent to the Bill, this is a matter that I should like some information about, as I am sure some other hon. members would.

I wish the Minister well with this piece of legislation. I trust that it will be of benefit to the State and that it will be conducive to

an increase in the numbers employed in the mining industry. It is important to us that it should be a creator of employment. We also hope that the conditions of employment will be such that those working in the industry can share in the benefits that will flow to the owners of the mineral leases. After all, mineral leases are part of the Crown estate. They belong to you, Mr. Speaker, to me, and to everybody else in the State.

This is a sort of prerogative given by the Government to the lessee. In our political philosophy we believe that every man, woman and child has some equity in the State's natural resources. We cannot deny the profit motive, because we live in that kind of a society, but we maintain that the working people should have an equity in what is being produced. If, as a result of the passage of this legislation the mining industry is able to pay attractive wages so that workers in the industry can adequately meet their family responsibilities, the Bill will receive sincere blessings from us.

The early development of many parts of this State was founded on the discovery of minerals in those areas. In the last 15 years great emphasis has been placed on the importance of mineral sands. The hon. member for Salisbury has brought forward important matters that are exercising the minds of a considerable number of people. I have seen the very fine methods adopted by a mining company on a certain lease in the north of New South Wales. It has certainly lived up to its responsibilities, and has left the beach in a very attractive condition. Only time will prove whether those responsible for granting the lease acted in the public interest, but at the present time it is a much better area than the wilderness that existed there some years ago.

I am fully in accord with many of the Minister's comments. I hope that he will reply to the questions I have raised. I suggest to him now, as I did initially, that he should impress upon the Government at all times the importance of the wonderful minerals that are being won from the earth in our State and are eventually finding their way not only into secondary fields but also into tertiary fields.

Mr. DONALD (Ipswich East) (9.15 p.m.): In introducing this Bill and in replying to the contributions of hon. members at the introductory stage, the Minister gave us food for thought. We also derived some satisfaction from the fact that the Bill was being introduced mainly to deal with the mining of our mineral sands, and that it had nothing to do with metalliferous mining or coal-mining, or working conditions and safety regulations in those mines. He gave us a very comprehensive idea of what was in the measure and, when we saw the Bill, we found that what he told us was very helpful. The Bill contained nothing that he had not informed us about.

The staff of the Mines Department, and particularly Mr. Healy, the Under-Secretary for Mines, a highly valued public servant, do a very good job. Mr. Healy has made a good contribution to the coal-mining industry and the mining industry generally in Queensland. I have been associated with him over the years and I know the value of the work he has done. He deserves a tribute. I am sure that the Minister would not deny that for a moment; he would not even think of doing so.

We must be very zealous in protecting our beaches to ensure that they are not destroyed in any way. They must not be destroyed from a scenic or utility point of view in the hunt for dollars. I am confident that the Mines Department will take every precaution to see that they are maintained in a safe condition. If in mineral-sand mining there is excavation of foreshores to considerable depths, we must ensure that they are restored, filled and solidified to prevent erosion that must occur at some time.

As the hon. member for Logan told us, and as we all know, a considerable amount of mineral-sand mining has occurred on the South Coast. Everyone was fearful of the excavations on the foreshores. We had justification for being apprehensive. As the hon. member said, there is evidence that our fears were unfounded but during his speech he caused me a little apprehension. While he spoke of the work done by the mineral-sand mining companies, and how they had restored as far as humanly possible any disruption or interference with our sea front, he seemed to me to be still fearful—I hope I misinterpreted him—about what might happen. Every precaution should be taken to protect the beauties of our lovely beaches. It would be a shame to see them destroyed or lose their attractiveness for recreation and natural beauty. I hope that nothing will ever be done to destroy our shores.

The hon. member for Salisbury expressed some apprehension about what might happen to our coloured sands. There was a good deal of discussion on this matter at the introductory stage. The Minister replied that precautions had been taken and that nothing would be allowed to interfere with the rare beauty of the natural sands on our North Coast. Let us hope that that is so; in fact, let us take the necessary steps to protect their natural beauty and usefulness.

The Warden's Court plays an important part in any mining community, whether it be a coal-mining, a metalliferous-mining, or mineral-sand-mining community. Anything that the legislation of this State can do to improve the efficiency of the Warden's Court by making it more accessible to mining people is to be applauded. The Minister, in his second-reading speech, confirmed what he said in his introductory speech in that direction, and I see no reason to doubt that what he said will come about. If it does, it will

be an improvement for all concerned with the mining industry. I realise that I should be confining my remarks to mineral-sand mining and not dealing with the mining industry generally. But the Warden's Court cannot be improved to suit only the mineral-sand mining industry, because it deals with other mining.

I commend the hon. member for Port Curtis. He made a plea in his speech at the introductory stage that the protection and non-exploitation of the potential of his district should be paramount over the winning of dollars by way of royalty, export, and production of the rare mineral sands that abound in his locality. He made that plea not only for Gladstone but for Queensland as a whole because, while we know that a part cannot be greater than the whole, if we neglect too many parts, we will end up with a very fragile whole. Therefore we should take notice of his remarks, and I feel that the Minister will do so.

I said enough about royalties in my earlier speech to let the Minister know my feelings about them. Some part of the royalty should be set aside to improve the conditions of the people who live and work in the district in which the industry is carried on. In Queensland quite a large amount of royalty is paid to people who happen to hold the land from which the minerals are won. Where such royalty is paid to the Crown for minerals that are won, irrespective of whether they are metaliferous, coal, or mineral sands, some part of the royalty should be earmarked for the benefit of the people employed in the industry and for the benefit of Queenslanders generally.

The chairman of the Mines Committee has stated, as did the hon. member for Port Curtis, that there is nothing to fear in the Bill. I share that thought and hope that we are not making a mistake. I have sufficient confidence in the Minister to know that he would not deliberately do anything harmful to the State, to the industry, or to those engaged in it.

The hon. member for Salisbury did not exactly give the Bill his blessing, but almost so. Members of the Opposition can see that the Bill will be beneficial. Because it will be beneficial to the industry in one place, it must be generally beneficial to the industry throughout the State. There is therefore no need for further elaboration, and we certainly have no intention of opposing the legislation.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Main Roads) (9.25 p.m.), in reply: First of all, I should like to thank all the members who have made contributions to the debate. From their utterances I am quite sure that the Mines Department will receive some benefit.

I feel that I should reply to the hon. member for Salisbury. I think he exaggerated a little when he referred to the

wholesale mining of beaches along the entire coastline. I would love to think that he was right; it would be wonderful if there were mineral deposits to be mined along the entire coastline.

Mr. Sherrington: I think you are misconstruing what I said. I said that this is what will happen. I do not say it is going on now.

Mr. CAMM: Mineral sands are only in isolated pockets, on promontories or islands, and fairly close to New South Wales. It is from the ranges in New South Wales that mineral sands have been washed over the centuries. Whilst I join with other members in their anxiety about erosion following beach mining, it must be borne in mind that, without erosion and the washing away of soil over the centuries, there would be no mineral sands on the beaches at all. I can assure hon. members that all beach-mining leases have adequate provisions for rehabilitation and revegetation of the land that has been mined.

I agree with the hon. member for Salisbury when he advocates the reservation of some of the shoreline as a national park. If he travels a little farther north, he will find that in my area alone 25 miles of coastline have been declared a national park. The Conway National Park is the second largest national park in Queensland; the Eungella National Park, which adjoins it but does not reach the coast, is the largest.

Mr. Sherrington: You must agree that that is only a drop in the bucket compared with the length of coastline.

Mr. CAMM: That is right, but there is a stretch of coastline 25 miles long that will never be disturbed. Actually, when one considers the indentations in the coastline, it would be more than 25 miles. Nearly every island in the Whitsunday group is a national park, and some have beautiful beaches. Some exceed 10,000 acres in area. Much of the Queensland coastline is therefore protected as a national park.

If anyone wants to see ample evidence of good beach rehabilitation, let him go to where beach mining is carried on by Queensland Titanium Mines Pty. Ltd. in the vicinity of Inskip Point. By the use of plastic netting and brush fences, the beach front is in far better condition following the recent cyclone than it has been for many years.

Mr. Sherrington: Where is that?

Mr. CAMM: At Inskip Point, which is east of Gympie and north of the coloured sands.

Mr. Davies: Tin Can Bay.

Mr. CAMM: Yes, it is in the Tin Can Bay area.

Mr. Sherrington: In that area the company have attempted to reproduce something like the original contours, I understand.

Mr. CAMM: Yes, and they have been very successful.

Mr. Nicklin: They have planted trees.

Mr. CAMM: They have planted trees, and they have done a very good job.

Mr. Sherrington: I have no quarrel with that. I was complaining about the levelling that has been going on in many places.

Mr. CAMM: I think the hon. member will notice that mining companies are not allowed to level sand dunes that extend right to the water's edge; the levelling takes place just behind the dunes fronting the beach.

I assure hon. members that no-one in this Chamber appreciates more than I do the value to the tourist industry of national parks and beaches. I grew up amongst islands off the coast long before anyone established a tourist industry in the area, and I have watched the industry grow over the last 35 or 40 years. As a result, I fully appreciate the value of beach-fronts and national parks to the tourist industry.

Mention was made of giving consideration to the off-shore mining of minerals. Prospecting authorities are held for the mining of minerals off shore, and a small drill is operating off the coast of South Queensland at present, carrying out tests of the sea-bed to see whether it contains minerals. The department is confident that minerals will be found off shore, more especially beach-sand minerals such as rutile, zircon, and ilmenite.

The hon. member for Logan agreed with me that the people of Stradbroke Island appreciate the work of the mining companies in building roads and providing amenities. Similar work is being carried out at Tin Can Bay, where the mining company has built a very good bitumen road to Inskip Point and the coloured sands.

The hon. member for Port Curtis is well aware that a beach mining company is establishing a plant in his electorate to beneficiate some of the beach sands minerals to a higher grade. Recently I had the privilege of visiting the plant of a company mining beach sands at Southport and being shown many of the products that are being manufactured there. Some of the finest lens-grinding powder in the world is now being manufactured from Queensland beach sands.

The hon. member asked some questions about leases. I assure him that the amalgamation of leases will not lead to any relaxation in the manning or expenditure conditions. In an aggregation of leases the total acreage is taken into consideration when the mining and expenditure conditions are fixed, and the provisions of the Bill will allow those conditions to be allotted to one area or one part of the lease.

The hon. member for Port Curtis asked also whether royalties are collected as a percentage of profits. In the case of some companies in Queensland, royalties are collected as a percentage of profits. One notable example is Mount Isa Mines Limited, and other gold-mining and copper-mining companies in Queensland pay royalties on the same basis. On the other hand, some companies pay a fixed amount in royalties. For instance, the royalty on rutile is \$1.50 a ton, on coal 5 cents a ton, and on bauxite 5 cents a ton on what will be processed at Gladstone and 10 cents a ton on the quantity exported overseas in a raw state.

I thank the hon. member for Ipswich East for his contribution to the debate and his remarks relative to the staff of the Department of Mines. I can assure him that we all appreciate the work that these public servants in the Department of Mines are doing. I again assure him, as I assured the hon. member for Salisbury, that the provisions contained in the conditions applying to all leases will ensure the rehabilitation, restoration and re-vegetation of the land after it has been mined.

The hon. member mentioned that royalties on private land should be used for the benefit of the district. It is a good thought. Some privately owned minerals are being mined in Queensland. A notable example, of course, is in his own area, on the coal-fields around Ipswich. I refer to coal in lands that were freeholded prior to 1910. On any land that has been freeholded since that date, the coal belongs to the Crown. As I said, it applies to the coal-mining areas in his own district. I think there is a mineral freehold at present held that has possibilities in the production of copper, but by and large there are no very extensive areas in Queensland held as mineral freeholds.

I am very pleased with the acceptance of the Bill by members on both sides of the House. I assure hon. members that the amendments provided in the Bill will do nothing but good for the mining industry in Queensland.

Motion (Mr. Camm) 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.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

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

“That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until Tuesday, 21 March, 1967.”

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 9.39 p.m.