Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 1967

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

QUESTIONS

Facilities for Container Ships in Port of Brisbane

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

(1) What is the anticipated maximum tonnage size of container cargo vessels that will berth in Brisbane when it becomes the principal port for trans-Pacific container shipping?

(2) What is the largest tonnage of cargo vessel or liner which can now traverse the Brisbane River?

(3) Has any investigation been made towards re-locating the proposed container port facilities in another portion of Moreton Bay with a view to the accommodation of anticipated larger container cargo vessels? If not, will he have an investigation made?

Answers:—

(1) "The Farrell Line has indicated it will call at Brisbane on its trans-Pacific container shipping service. I expect other shipping lines to decide to call. Details of the design of the Farrell Line container ships have not been announced but I am advised that their loaded draft in Brisbane is unlikely to exceed 30 to 31 feet."

(2) "Ships having a draft of 31 feet can navigate the Brisbane River to Hamilton Reach on any tide of the year. I would expect this depth to improve as the trade of the Port further develops. The cost of this further deepening would not be prohibitive. Bulk oil carriers drawing up to 39 feet are, of course, regularly calling at the crude oil terminals at the river mouth."

(3) "Whilst I can see no immediate need to relocate the proposed facilities, I would advise the Honourable Member that, subject to dredging within tolerable cost limits, the Lytton Reach of the Brisbane River could accommodate vessels of 35 feet draft. The maximum loaded draft of United Kingdom container ships being built for the Sydney-Melbourne trade is 34 feet."

Housing Commission Houses in Cattle, Sheep and Sugar-growing Areas

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

Further to his Answer to my Question on October 20 giving the total of State rental houses provided for the cattle, sheep and sugar industries——

(1) Where are the houses situated?

(2) Who are the employers involved?

Answers:—

(1) "Biloela, Emerald, Giru, Murgon, Pentland, Proserpine and Roma."

(2) "Amagraze Limited; A. W. Anderson Pty. Ltd.; Haughton Sugar Company Limited; Proserpine Co-operative Sugar Milling Association Limited; Roma Meatworks Pty. Ltd.; South Burnett Meatworks Co-operative Association Limited; Smorgons Overseas Pty. Ltd.; Tancred Bros. Pty. Ltd."

Preparation and Printing of Departmental Reports

(*a*) **Mr. Houston,** pursuant to notice, asked The Premier,—

(1) On what date did he receive the annual report of the Public Service Commissioner for 1966-67?

(2) On what date was it sent to the printer?

(3) Who was the printer and when was the printing completed?

(4) When was the report tabled in Parliament?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) "I am not aware of the motive behind the series of Questions asked by the Leader of the Opposition and other Honourable Members of the Opposition in respect of the furnishing of Departmental annual reports. It is certain, however, that the Questions have been 'inspired' and are not meant to achieve any useful purpose. As every Honourable Member of this House knows, it is the Government's policy to have the annual reports of Departments tabled prior to discussion on the Estimates. Generally, this is accomplished and it certainly is in so far as the Departments whose Estimates have been determined for debate are concerned. As a consequence of what I have said, Questions (1) and (2) hereof really have no substance. With regard to Question (3), every Honourable Member should know that the annual reports of Departments are printed as Parliamentary Papers and, as a result, cannot be printed by anyone else other than the Government Printer. Surely it is not being inferred that anyone other than the Government Printer should do so. With regard to Question (4), Honourable Members who studiously undertake their duties should know the date on which a report is tabled in Parliament."

(*b*) **Mr. O'Donnell,** pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Primary Industries,—

(1) On what date did he receive the annual report of the Director-General and Under Secretary of Primary Industries for 1966-67?

(2) On what date was it sent to the printer?

(3) Who was the printer and when was the printing completed?

(4) When was it tabled in Parliament?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) "I refer the Honourable Member to the Answer given by the Honourable the Premier to Question No. 3 on today's Business Paper."

(*c*) **Mr. O'Donnell,** pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Lands,—

(1) On what date did he receive the annual report of the Land Administration Commission for 1966-67?

(2) On what date was it sent to the printer?

(3) Who was the printer and when was the printing completed?

(4) When was the report tabled in Parliament?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) "I refer the Honourable Member to the Answer given by the Honourable the Premier to Question No. 3 on today's Business Paper."

(*d*) **Mr. Tucker,** pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Works,—

(1) On what date did he receive the annual report of the Under Secretary of the Department of Works for 1966-67?

(2) On what date was it sent to the printer?

(3) Who was the printer and when was the printing completed?

(4) When was it tabled in Parliament?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) "I refer the Honourable Member to the Answer given by the Honourable the Premier to Question No. 3 on today's Business Paper."

(*e*) **Mr. Tucker,** pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Local Government,—

(1) On what date did he receive the annual report of the Conservator of Forests for 1966-67?

(2) On what date was it sent to the printer?

(3) Who was the printer and when was the printing completed?

(4) When was it tabled in Parliament?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) "I refer the Honourable Member to the Answer given by the Honourable the Premier to Question No. 3 on today's Business Paper."

(*f*) **Mr Sherrington,** pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Transport,—

(1) When did he receive the annual report of the Commissioner for Railways for 1966-67?

(2) On what date was it sent to the printer?

(3) Who was the printer and when was the printing completed?

(4) When was the report tabled in Parliament?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) "I refer the Honourable Member to the Answer given by the Honourable the Premier to Question No. 3 on today's Business Paper."

(*g*) **Mr. Sherrington,** pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Mines,—

(1) When did he receive the annual report of the Under Secretary, Department of Mines for 1966-67?

(2) On what date was it sent to the printer?

(3) Who was the printer and when was the printing completed?

(4) When was the report tabled in Parliament?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) "I refer the Honourable Member to the Answer given by the Honourable the Premier to Question No. 3 on today's Business Paper."

(*h*) **Mr. Melloy,** pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

(1) When was the annual report for 1966-67 received from the Director-General of Health and Medical Services?

(2) On what date was it forwarded to the printer?

(3) Who was the printer and when was the printing completed?

(4) When was the report tabled in Parliament?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) "I refer the Honourable Member to the Answer given by the Honourable the Premier to Question No. 3 on today's Business Paper."

(*i*) **Mr. Melloy**, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

Concerning his annual report to Parliament for 1966-67——

(1) On what date did he receive the report of the Director-General of Education, the statistical tables and other reports usually incorporated in the report?

(2) On what date was the material sent to the printer?

(3) Who was the printer and when was the printing completed?

(4) When was the report tabled in Parliament?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) "I refer the Honourable Member to the Answer given by the Honourable the Premier to Question No. 3 on today's Business Paper."

(*j*) **Mr. Hanlon,** pursuant to notice, asked The Treasurer,—

(1) On what date did he receive the annual report of the Director of the Harbours and Marine Department for 1966-67?

(2) On what date was it sent to the printer?

(3) Who was the printer and when was the printing completed?

(4) When was it tabled in Parliament?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) "I refer the Honourable Member to the Answer given by the Honourable the Premier to Question No. 3 on today's Business Paper."

(*k*) **Mr. Hanlon,** pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Justice,—

(1) When were the financial statements of the Public Curator and the annual report for 1966-67 received by the Under Secretary, Department of Justice?

(2) On what date was it forwarded to the printer?

(3) Who was the printer and when was the printing completed?

(4) When was the report tabled in Parliament?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) "I refer the Honourable Member to the Answer given by the Honourable the Premier to Question No. 3 on today's Business Paper."

(*l*) **Mr. Bromley,** pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Industrial Development,—

(1) When did he receive the annual report of the Director of Industrial Development for 1966-67?

(2) On what date was it sent to the printer?

(3) Who was the printer and when was the printing completed?

(4) When was the report tabled in Parliament?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) "I refer the Honourable Member to the Answer given by the Honourable the Premier to Question No. 3 on today's Business Paper."

(*m*) **Mr. Bromley,** pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Labour and Tourism,—

(1) When did he receive the annual report for 1966-67 of the Director, Department of Children's Services?

(2) On what date was it forwarded to the printer?

(3) Who was the printer and when was the printing completed?

(4) When was the report tabled in Parliament?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) "I refer the Honourable Member to the Answer given by the Honourable the Premier to Question No. 3 on today's Business Paper."

Queensland Associated Cattlemen's Co-operative Ltd.

Mr. O'Donnell, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Justice,—

(1) What are the functions of the Queensland Associated Cattlemen's Co-operative Ltd. as (*a*) an entity and (*b*) a controller of co-operative groups?

(2) Are the members of this association and of the groups under its control actively engaged in primary production?

(3) What benefits do its members receive?

(4) Are the benefits to primary producers from the activities of the association greater than those from any other co-operative? If so, how?

Answers:—

(1) "(*a*) The principal objects of the Queensland Associated Cattlemen's Co-operative Ltd. according to its rules are to carry on the business of merchandising trading agents, valuers, merchants, wholesalers, retailers and contractors and to do

all such things, matters, &c., as are incidental or conducive to the successful attainment of these objects or are calculated to promote the economic interest of the members of the society in relation to these objects. (*b*) There is no evidence on the file at the Co-operative Registry indicating that this Society is a controller of co-operative groups."

(2) "The occupation of members of the Society, so far as is known from official records, are graziers excepting one director who is described as a company representative."

(3) "Official records do not indicate the benefits received by members."

(4) "See Answer to (3)."

MUSICAL EDUCATION IN STATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS, TOWNSVILLE

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

(1) What provision is made for the musical education of primary school pupils in Townsville and how many music teachers are employed?

(2) How often are primary schools visited by the music teachers and how many hours' instruction in music is given, per week, to each pupil?

Answers:—

(1) "During their course at the Teachers' College all students being prepared for service in primary schools are trained and tested in the teaching of music. As a general rule class teachers, under arrangements made by the head teacher, teach this subject in accordance with the requirements of the syllabus. In Townsville, an itinerant teacher of music visits the schools and assists in the teaching of this subject."

(2) "Primary schools make provision for one hour's instruction in music per week. In Townsville the visiting specialist in music spends from a half-day to one and a half days per fortnight at each school, according to its size. His instruction extends to all pupils in Grade III and above in each school visited."

LUNCH-ROOM FACILITIES FOR STATE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS, TOWNSVILLE

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

At what primary schools in Townsville are rooms provided to enable teachers to partake of lunch, morning tea, &c., and does his Department supply the tea-pot, sugar basin, cups and saucers, spoons, plates and other table gear necessary, as is done in other industries? If not, why not?

Answer:—

"Teachers' staff rooms are provided at the following State Primary Schools in Townsville:—Belgian Gardens, Currajong, Garbutt, Townsville Central, Aitkenvale, Hermit Park, Hermit Park Infants, Mundingburra, Oonoonba, Railway Estate, Stuart, Townsville South, Townsville West, Townsville Opportunity, Wulguru. At a State primary school where a teachers' staff room has been provided, either an electric urn or an electric jug will be supplied (according to the size of the school) upon receipt of a request from the head teacher, and providing electric current has been connected to the school. Other items are not supplied by my Department, as they are regarded as personal equipment to be provided by each individual teacher to conform to his or her own particular requirements."

DELAY IN DISTRICT COURT HEARINGS

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

(1) Further to his Answer to my Question on September 14, has his attention been drawn to an article in *The Courier-Mail* of October 21, headed "Big Court Backlog—Judge Scathing", wherein it was reported that the Minister had stated—"You could call it a complete review and rewrite. If this had not been the desire of interested parties, we could have increased the number of Judges in the March Sitting"?

(2) Who were the interested parties desiring the review and rewrite?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes."

(2) "Those persons who are closely associated with the work in those Courts."

FUNDS FOR PROMOTION OF ROAD SAFETY

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

(1) In the last year for which figures are available, what funds, if any, were made available to this State by the Commonwealth for use in the promotion of road safety?

(2) For the same year, what funds, other than any indicated in his Answer to Question (1), were provided for the Queensland Road Safety Council?

(3) Of the total funds provided, what amounts were used for (*a*) salaries, wages and administration, (*b*) purchase of equipment (*c*) advertising and (*d*) other purposes?

Answers:—

(1) "$21,460."

(2) "$71,307."

(3) "(*a*) $44,534; (*b*) $4,675; (*c*) $23,624; (*d*) $19,723."

Control of Barrier Reef Beyond Three-mile Limit

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

Has the Government any control over those parts of the Great Barrier Reef outside the three-mile limit? If so, is he aware that the reef is being systematically denuded of giant clam shells by Japanese fishermen?

Answer:—

"The Question raises certain matters of international law at present under consideration by the Solicitor-General. Whilst I am not aware of the substance of the allegation made by the Honourable Member, I suggest that he let me have detailed information in support of his claim. If he does so and the claim has substance, I will certainly see that representations are made to have the alleged practice stopped."

Statement by Professor Clark on Sugar Industry

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

In view of the alarming statements in the Press attributed to Professor Colin Clark, a world-renowned economist, formerly of Brisbane, concerning the future of the Queensland sugar industry, is he prepared to comment on these statements in view of their tremendous importance to the sugar industry and the State?

Answer:—

"Professor Clark's statements have been adequately answered by the sugar industry in the daily Press and I do not feel there is any need for further comment."

Issue of Motor Vehicle Drivers' Licences to Epileptics

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

(1) Is it the practice of the Department to allow people who suffer from epileptic fits to retain a driver's licence?

(2) If so, what are the names of those who have been refused for this reason?

Answers:—

(1) "When a person makes an application for a driver's licence he is required to state on his application whether he is at the time suffering from or has at any time suffered from epilepsy. If the answer is yes a licence will not be issued until such person has been examined by a medical practitioner who is treating or has treated the applicant for the illness and such practitioner has certified that, having regard to the safety of the public generally the applicant may be issued with a driver's licence. The currency of any licence issued is not greater than 12 months. At the time of application for renewal of licence, a further examination of the party concerned is made before the licence is renewed. Any licence issued does not authorise the driving of a public vehicle whilst passengers are being carried thereon. The procedure adopted in Queensland is, generally speaking, based on the recommendation of the National Health and Medical Research Council (a Commonwealth body) except that that Council recommended production of medical certificates on a three year basis whilst in Queensland they are to be produced on a yearly basis. If it came to the notice of the Police Department for the first time that the holder of a driver's licence was suffering from epilepsy, action would immediately be taken with a view to his being medically examined to enable a determination to be made as to whether or not he or she should continue to hold a driver's licence."

(2) "The names of persons who have been refused a driver's licence on account of epilepsy are not statistically recorded and consequently are not available."

Second-hand Dealers' Licences

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

(1) How many persons in Queensland have been issued with a second-hand dealer's licence?

(2) How many of the licensees have convictions?

(3) How many of them had convictions before receiving a licence?

Answers:—

(1) "During the year ended August, 1967, second-hand dealer's licences totalling 981 were issued. This figure includes original licences and renewals of licences and in some instances persons and companies depending upon the premises at which they are carrying on business are the holders of more than one licence."

(2) "A total of 89 second-hand dealers licensed in the year ended August, 1967, has incurred convictions for other than minor offences such as breaches of the Traffic Regulations and the like."

(3) "Fifty-nine persons who held such licences in the year ended August, 1967, had one or more convictions prior to the issue to them of their original second-hand dealer's licence, such convictions ranging back to 1913."

WITHDRAWAL OF STEALING CHARGE AGAINST AMERICAN SERVICEMAN

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

(1) Has his attention been drawn to a recent report in *The Townsville Bulletin* that a stealing charge against an American serviceman was withdrawn in the Townsville Magistrates Court and that the Court was told the Police Commissioner had ordered that no evidence be offered?

(2) Did he see the report and, if so, did the proceedings take place?

(3) Is there now to be one law in Queensland for Queenslanders and another for American servicemen?

(4) What authority has the Commissioner to order that no evidence be offered when an offence has been discovered by his officers and suitably investigated?

(5) How often does the Commissioner direct that no evidence be offered when an offence has been committed in this State?

(6) What principle does the Commissioner act on when issuing these instructions and what is the reasoning on which he acts?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes."

(2) "Yes."

(3) "No. The right to prosecute this charge under Queensland law was waived under the provisions of the "*Defence (Visiting Forces) Act* 1963" following upon advice received as a result of discussions between the State and Commonwealth legal authorities."

(4) "The Commissioner's instructions were issued following upon receipt by him of the advice referred to in (3)."

(5 and 6) "See Answer to (4)."

NEW WING, COORPAROO STATE HIGH SCHOOL

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

What is the size of the proposed new wing to be built at Coorparoo State High School, how many students will it accommodate, when will its construction commence and when will it be completed?

Answer:—

"The proposed new wing to be built at the Coorparoo State High School is a three storey 'L' shaped building approximately 69 feet by 41 feet and 52 feet by 26 feet. The ground floor is to be a recreation area. A science laboratory, a science store room and a science preparation room are to be provided on each of the upper floors. There will be two locker rooms and a rest room on the intermediate floor and a staff common room on the top floor. The science rooms will accommodate sixty-four students. The areas for general usage will be available for an indefinite number of students and teachers. It is anticipated that construction will be commenced early in 1968 and that the building will be completed by the middle of the year."

REPRINT OF AUCTIONEERS, REAL ESTATE AGENTS, DEBT COLLECTORS AND MOTOR DEALERS ACTS

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

As copies of the Auctioneers, Real Estate Agents, Debt Collectors and Motor Dealers Acts are not available from the Government Printing Office because they are out of print, will he have them reprinted so that they may be available to the public?

Answer:—

"Arrangements have been made with the Government Printer to have copies of the Acts mentioned by the Honourable Member reprinted as soon as possible."

CONTROL OF CHIMNEY EMISSIONS IN SUGAR MILLS

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

Further to his Answer to my Question on September 7 concerning the nuisance resulting from the burning of bagasse at far northern sugar mills, has any investigation or report been made by the Director of Air Pollution Control or the Sugar Research Institute as to the installation of and an estimate of the cost of electro-static precipitators in sugar milling boilers in order to arrest bagasse emission and damage?

Answer:—

"I am advised that the Sugar Research Institute has carried out preliminary investigations into the cost of installing electro-static equipment for the control of chimney emissions in sugar mills. At present there is no precise information available in regard to the efficacy of this particular type of equipment in reducing bagasse emission. The subject of emission standards is currently being discussed between the Director of Air Pollution Control and the Director, Sugar Research Institute."

PROVISION OF TRAM LINES ON NEW VICTORIA BRIDGE, BRISBANE

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

(1) Has Brisbane City Council indicated to the appropriate governmental authority whether or not tram lines are to be provided for in the construction of the new Victoria Bridge?

(2) If not, will any delay be caused in the planning or construction of the bridge?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes."

(2) "See Answer to (1)."

PAPERS

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

Report of the Department of Harbours and Marine for the year 1966-67.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Orders in Council under—

The Irrigation Acts, 1922 to 1965.

The River Improvement Trust Acts, 1940 to 1965.

BRIGALOW AND OTHER LANDS DEVELOPMENT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION

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

"That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider introducing a Bill to approve a further agreement between the Commonwealth and the State and to amend the Brigalow and Other Lands Development Acts, 1962 to 1965, in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

PETROLEUM (SUBMERGED LANDS) BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Main Roads) (11.33 a.m.): I move—

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

I thank hon. members on both sides of the House for the very generous and appreciative manner in which they received the introduction of this legislation on 18 October—just one week ago. Hon. members will have noted from Press reports that similar legislation was also well received in other places.

I should like first to comment on the remarks made at the introductory stage and then to enlarge on significant aspects of the Bill.

Hon. members on both sides of the House laid particular emphasis on the Great Barrier Reef, which we all acknowledge is a unique formation, without parallel anywhere in the world. I pointed out in my reply at the introductory stage that I am as much concerned with this matter as any other hon. member is, because my electorate embraces a great part of the reef and I know the importance of preserving its natural wonders for posterity. I stress that Article 5 of the Convention on the Continental Shelf provides specifically that the exploration for and the exploitation of the natural resources of the continental shelf must not result in unjustifiable interference with the conservation of the living resources of the sea. This provision, as hon. members will note, is reiterated in clause 124 of the Bill.

Various hon. members referred to the meeting of the Australiain Conservation Foundation which was held on 15 October at the University of Queensland when a paper was presented by the Director of the Foundation, Dr. McMichael, on the subject of conservation of the Barrier Reef. Several of my officers were present at this meeting and made observations on the paper and discussed it subsequently with Dr. McMichael.

Dr. McMichael, who is an eminent zoologist, emphasised the point that as the area of the Barrier Reef is so great, totalling some 80,000 square miles, it is illogical to consider that it can be completely protected. In fact, as a dedicated conservationist he said that in his view substantial areas should be exploited for their natural resources, provided that appropriate areas were preserved for marine national parks. My officers, in commenting on some resolutions of the Australian Conservation Foundation following on Dr. McMichael's paper, emphasised the importance of the reef as a resource that, under appropriate conditions and limitations, could be exploited for the benefit of Queensland. In this regard I point out that leading conservationists of the United States take the view that the method of conservation is a joint exploitation and preservation of the natural resources of the world for the good of the citizens of the world.

Mr. Tucker: When you speak of exploiting, what do you mean?

Mr. CAMM: If there is any benefit to be derived from the reef it should be made use of. It should be exploited as a tourist attraction, and it should be exploited as intended in this Bill.

Mr. Tucker: Even for cement?

Mr. CAMM: Yes. Does the hon. member think that the cement works at Darra should be closed down if we can no longer get dead coral from Moreton Bay?

Several hon. members showed concern at the possibility that if petroleum is discovered in the Great Barrier Reef area, pipelines will have to be constructed from that area. I draw the attention of those hon. members to the provisions of clause 70 of the Bill, wherein it is provided that only the designated authority, in this case the Minister for Mines, can grant a pipeline licence, under conditions he considers appropriate. Further, the designated authority, under the provisions of clauses 64 and 65, can ensure that the location of the pipeline is to his satisfaction.

In this regard I also draw the attention of members to clause 97, which provides that a pipeline licensee shall properly safeguard his pipeline to prevent any possible escape of petroleum.

Problems of long pipelines in coral reef areas have already been encountered in the Persian Gulf, and so far as I am aware there have never been any cases of significant reef destruction nor have the pipelines caused any trouble.

As I advised hon. members previously, the reef is not a continuous barrier. There are literally dozens of channels through which a pipeline could pass without causing damage to the existing reefs. Further, immediately to the east of the reef, throughout the greater part of its length there is a considerable deep in the ocean. It would seem unlikely that petroleum will be drilled for in this deep in the foreseeable future.

Consequently, the pipelines in the main, if they do exist, will be from the reef towards the coast. For the greater part of its length the reef is so far distant from the coast that, if petroleum is found in the reef area, it will be a question of economics whether a major pipeline is built towards the coast. It is more likely that a terminal station would be established at a suitable point and petroleum loaded into tankers at that point. Such a point could even be located on one of the many islands between the reef and the mainland.

In addition to their concern regarding the traversing of the reef area by pipelines, hon. members also were desirous of knowing that proper precautions would be taken in the drilling for petroleum to ensure both the safety of the natural resources of the reef and also the safety of personnel engaged, and, finally, to ensure that there was no pollution.

I again draw the attention of hon. members to the provisions of the legislation concerning these matters, in particular, clauses 97, 98, 101, 102 and 159. These clauses provide firstly for very high standards of work practices, secondly that the Minister for Mines may give directions to ensure safe and workable methods, and thirdly that the operators shall take every possible step to avoid pollution. As I have already indicated, it is our intention to collaborate with industry in preparing regulations that will ensure that these aspects are fully covered. I can assure hon. members that those of my officers who will be associated with this matter will pay particular attention to the problems of pollution and the protection of the Barrier Reef.

In regard to pollution, I refer to the 1954 Convention on Oil Pollution of the Seas, the findings of which were ratified in 1966 when the Federal Parliament passed the Pollution of the Seas by Oil Act. Under that Act, effective from May of this year, new regulations have been promulgated, and individual Governments have been asked to impose harsher penalties for breaches of regulations. However, it is appreciated that legislation and international agreement are only half the battle. Policing of the oceans is a constant task.

Hon. members have expressed some concern at the possible effects that drilling both production wells and wild-cat wells, and pipelining in an off-shore area, will have on marine life, particularly fishes, including shellfish. On his official study tour of North America last year, I directed the State Mining Engineer, Mr. Morley, to inquire into this matter. The Gulf of Mexico, particularly near the mouth of the Mississippi River, is one of the world's great fishing areas, abounding in shrimps and large, succulent fish. The States of Louisiana and Texas, particularly the cities of New Orleans and Galveston, are famous for their seafoods. Along the Louisiana–Texas coast is also the greatest concentration in the world of off-shore seismic, drilling, production and pipelining activities in the search and production of oil and gas. The production in the area exceeds 3,000,000 barrels of oil per day. At this stage let me mention that the whole production to date from the Moonie field would be about 9,000,000 barrels. In fact, the total recoverable oil left in the Moonie field is now less than 20,000,000 barrels. Notwithstanding the very great petroleum activity off the Louisiana–Texas coast, no problems of pollution or wanton destruction of marine life have occurred, thanks primarily to the rigid pollution measures enforced by the various State authorities. The State Mining Engineer informs me that the off-shore area near the mouth of the Mississippi has thousands of wells, hundreds of drilling production structures and hundreds of miles of pipeline. In fact, some of the best line-fishing is now found adjacent to the many off-shore structures.

Hon. members have also very rightly raised the problems that have arisen following the sinking of the "Torrey Canyon" adjacent to the coast of Cornwall early this year. It is of interest to note, as advised by Dr. McMichael, that the greater part of the problems relative to the saving of marine and bird life following the oil pollution in that instance resulted from the use of detergents. At the Australian Conservation Foundation last Sunday week, Dr. McMichael expressed the view that if

it was only crude oil that marine and other organisms had to deal with they could, under normal circumstances, survive; the oil would disperse.

At this point I draw the attention of hon. members to the possible significance of the Barrier Reef area as a prospective petroleum area. Throughout the world, notably in East Texas and in Alberta, major petroleum production has come from ancient reefs. In fact, it has been stated that the discoveries in the last 18 months in the Keg River area of Alberta are possibly as important as all discoveries in the last 20 years. We do not yet know what is the potential of our reef area which, of course, is very recent geologically, but is comparable with the reefs of Alberta and East Texas. Consequently, its exploration is well justified.

As to the concern of hon. members about drilling in the reef area in view of the possible hazards and problems involved, I draw their attention to the hazards that exist in drilling in the middle of down-town Los Angeles, where only last year the State Mining Engineer, while on the overseas study tour that I directed him to make, examined drilling in city blocks amid office and residential areas. It is possible in these places to take precautions to ensure that there is no danger to life and property from either subsidence or any other cause. Further, the surrounding buildings are not adversely affected as the drilling operations are completely sound-proofed.

At the same time, the State Mining Engineer was able to see the operations on the off-shore East Wilmington field. The group known as Thums was commencing to exploit this 3,000-million-barrel oil field, which was referred to by one hon. member. In this case the City of Long Beach and the State of California had imposed particularly rigid conditions on the exploitation work. The authorities in that area are very conscious of the dangers that could be involved, since earlier petroleum production operations had resulted in subsidence and other hazards. Consequently, in this case, water injection is required to ensure that there is no subsidence or other change in the surrounding area.

I now refer to the remarks of hon. members concerning royalty rates. In the case of the field to which I have just referred the area is owned by the city and the State, and the operators are exploiting it for a very small percentage of the profits that will accrue. In this instance the potential had been thoroughly tested and was precisely known. This is a unique set of circumstances. It is also immediately adjacent to the refineries situated in that area, which are designed to treat the type of crude oil that is being obtained. With the diminution of other supplies to these refineries, it was very attractive to this group of companies to operate on these exceptional terms. Nowhere else in the world to my knowledge do such circumstances exist.

With only the Moonie, Barrow Island and Bass Strait discoveries, Australia is not a significant petroleum-producing country, and consequently, in competition with oil-rich countries such as those in the Middle East, we have to offer attractive conditions of royalties to interest the tremendous amount of risk capital involved. A standard rate of royalty of 10 per cent. is common throughout Australia and Ministers of Mines throughout the Commonwealth, after many years of discussion, regard it as a fair and equitable rate.

In Canada, in off-shore areas, royalty is at 5 per cent. for the first five years and thereafter at 10 per cent.; in Italy it is 8 per cent. for oil and 5 per cent. for gas; in Nigeria it is 10 per cent. out to the 10-fathom line and 8 per cent. in outer areas; in Norway it is 10 per cent.; in the United Kingdom it is 12½ per cent.; in the Netherlands a sliding scale rises to a maximum of 16 per cent., and in federally-controlled areas in the United States it is 16⅔ per cent.

In Australia a 10 per cent. royalty on petroleum has been the generally accepted standard for many years. In considering what rate of royalty should apply off shore, the Governments took note of the widely diverging royalty rates that applied overseas and also of the circumstances which exist in Australia today in relation to the size of our potential home market, the difficulties of exploration, and so on. It was decided that retention of 10 per cent. as a standard rate was reasonable, but that should operators wish to obtain additional areas from within their location, some further payment was justified. It will be noted that there is a floor of 1 per cent. to this override, while the upper limit of 2½ per cent. would bring the royalty rate to the same level as that imposed by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sherrington: Why the ceiling of 2½ per cent.?

Mr. CAMM: It was agreed that that would be the ceiling of percentage paid on off-shore petroleum if the operators applied for another block in their area.

Mr. Houston: They might want to give you 15 per cent.

Mr. CAMM: Do you think so?

Mr. Houston: Yes.

Mr. CAMM: That is the most naive statement I have heard for a long time.

I shall now turn to some more detailed observations on significant clauses in the Bill. In respect of clause 20 it will be noted that blocks must be gazetted as available before application for a permit can be lodged. It does not follow that blocks will be so gazetted only when a company makes a request for a block. When a gazettal is made in response to a request from a company, neither the fact that a request has been made nor the name of the company making a request will be disclosed.

This question was discussed thoroughly and the conclusion was that a competitive deal would offer the best result to the State and would be fair to the companies. Of course, it is provided that if no applications are received within the specified period, future applications may then be dealt with over the counter.

This practice is followed in many countries. In the first instance the United Kingdom did not make all its North Sea potential area available for application. Similarly, in the United States, off-shore areas are only made available from time to time at the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior.

In regard to areas which have not previously been the subject of permits, or areas which have been relinquished from a permit, application for permits will be called initially by advertisement in the "Government Gazette". This is to ensure that all interested parties have the opportunity of lodging an application and having it considered. However, if no application acceptable to the designated authority is received he will be free to negotiate over the counter the grant of permits in respect of such areas.

In general, there will be no provision for the payment of a cash premium in respect of blocks advertised as available for permit. An exception is made in the case of blocks which become available through the surrender or cancellation of a licence, or through the excision from a permit of blocks which were in a location. In such cases provision will be made as set out in clause 23 for applicants to specify an amount which they are prepared to pay if they are granted a permit in respect of an area for which they are applying.

A discovery of petroleum is to be notified immediately to the designated authority, and, as provided in clause 35, the permittee may be required by the designated authority to take steps to evaluate the discovery.

In the event of petroleum being discovered, the permittee will have a preferential right to a licence for production. This is an important feature of the Australian off-shore legislation in that off-shore companies are given exclusive rights to search in a special area and, in the event of discovery, have a preferred right to a production title or titles.

Clause 36 provides that following a discovery of petroleum a permittee may, or may be directed by the designated authority to, nominate a block to become the centre of a group of nine blocks, which in the interests of simplicity is known as a location. Each side of the location will be three blocks in length, or, put another way, a location will consist of the nominated block and the eight blocks that immediately surround the nominated block. The block in which the discovery of petroleum is made must be included in the location but need not necessarily be the centre of the location.

Mr. Houston: How many blocks will constitute a parcel when it is first given?

Mr. CAMM: With a prospecting permit, 400 blocks. A permittee will be offered nine blocks in a location.

Mr. Houston: You said you were going to invite, through the "Government Gazette", applications for permits to search for oil. What areas are you going to allot?

Mr. CAMM: 10,000 square miles.

Mr. Houston: For each one?

Mr. CAMM: Yes, for prospecting areas.

Any graticular blocks not taken up by the permittee either as a primary licence or a secondary licence will, at the conclusion of the application period, be automatically excised from the permit area and will revert to the Crown. The designated authority is empowered under clause 47 to advertise such blocks as being available and he may call for bids on a cash basis for additional royalty bids, or for the payment of a cash reserve fixed by the designated authority plus additional royalty bids. The designated authority will have discretion as to when to offer such blocks, and whether to offer them as permit or licensed areas. The former permittee will be perfectly free to bid for these blocks should he so desire.

In order that companies may have an opportunity to evaluate these areas and submit realistic bids, provision is made in clause 111 for the granting of short-term special prospecting authorities. These special prospecting authorities would permit all exploration operations short of actual drilling, and are designed to enable a potential operator to evaluate blocks that are on offer.

Mr. Houston: What about those who already have permits?

Mr. CAMM: If those with prospecting permits find oil, they ask for production licences and will be offered areas of nine blocks.

Mr. Houston: At present some have more than that.

Mr. CAMM: That is only a prospecting area, an authority to prospect. When they find oil, they apply for a production title and then drill for the oil.

Mr. Houston: They will then come under the Act? At present you are not going to allot their areas?

Mr. CAMM: No, but they will come under this legislation. Even with only a prospecting permit, they will still come under it.

Mr. Houston: How many new ones will you have available when the Bill becomes law?

Mr. CAMM: I cannot say off-hand how many applications we have for prospecting permits.

Mr. Houston: How many areas?

Mr. CAMM: Quite a number, although I cannot state that off-hand, either. There have been many applications for prospecting permits offshore right out to the coral islands. I can ascertain the exact number if the Leader of the Opposition desires it.

If, as a result of calling in the "Government Gazette" for applications for blocks, the designated authority does not receive an acceptable tender, he will be free to re-advertise the blocks either as permits or licences, or to dispose of the blocks over the counter.

Clause 52 provides that a licence, while it remains in force, authorises the licensee to carry on operations for the recovery of petroleum in the licence area, to explore for petroleum in the licence area, and to carry on such operations and execute such works in the licence area as are necessary for these purposes. It is important to note that the second-stage title—that is the licence—authorises both exploration and exploitation. A petroleum pool having been discovered, an operator will naturally be looking to recover that petroleum, but, equally importantly, he will wish to explore the whole of his licence area thoroughly in the hope that other petroleum-bearing structures may be discovered.

A further point to be noted is that offshore operations involve the use of equipment of a highly sophisticated nature which cannot be obtained simply by going down the street and buying it off the shelf. It is quite possible that a company could be making every effort to obtain the appropriate drilling rig or production platform but that these are not available in a particular year. In cases such as this, provision is made in subclause (4) of clause 57 for the designated authority, provided he is satisfied that special justification exists, to exempt the licensee from his work expenditure in any particular year. Any exemption will be subject to such conditions as the designated authority thinks fit.

Clause 58 of the Bill empowers the designated authority to issue directions regarding the recovery of petroleum. For instance, when petroleum is not being recovered from a licence area and the designated authority is satisfied that there is recoverable petroleum in that area, the licensee may be directed to take all necessary and practicable steps to recover that petroleum. In a case where petroleum is being recovered, the licensee may be directed to increase or reduce the rate of recovery to a certain specified level. That latter contingency—directing a reduction in the rate of recovery—looks some little distance into the future, but in some areas of the world the problem is a very real one. For instance, in the Gulf of Mexico, production from oil fields is restricted in order to regulate the total volume of petroleum produced and so avoid over-production.

Unit development of a petroleum pool means the co-ordination of operations for the recovery of petroleum from a pool that is situated partly in one licence area and partly in one or more other licence areas. This is a very important aspect of good oil field practice and is designed to ensure that the most effective recovery of petroleum is made in the most economic manner possible. Further, unless there was some provision enabling the recovery of petroleum to be co-ordinated, severe injustices might be caused to one licensee by the actions of another licensee who could recover petroleum from the pool unfairly. To deal with these situations, all the licensees who hold different parts of the same geological structure may be required to co-ordinate their operations. Clause 59 deals with this matter and should be read in conjunction with clause 16 of the Commonwealth-State agreement.

The reason for adopting the special system of registration fees in lieu of State stamp duty is that titles, transfers and the like under this joint Commonwealth and State legislation will be registered in a register constituted under both Commonwealth and State Acts. It is clear that instruments registered under Commonwealth legislation that makes provision for their effective registration, transfer, and assignment, could not be made dutiable under State law. There was also the point that the rates of stamp duty in the States vary considerably; hence, the system of uniform registration fees has been adopted and is included in both the Commonwealth and the State legislation. Under clause 9, companies will be liable to pay registration fees under one law only.

Earlier, when dealing with blocks from locations that revert to the Crown as a result of their not having been taken up by a permittee, I mentioned a temporary prospecting title called a special prospecting authority. Details of this are set out in clause 111. Clause 112 deals with another temporary title, namely, an access authority. The basic propositions of the Bill are that nobody shall explore for petroleum other than in pursuance of an exploration permit, a production licence, or a special prospecting authority. The first two titles are exclusive, in that they give the holder sole and specific rights to operate within his title areas. However, there could well be circumstances in which it is desirable that operators should be able to gain limited access to nearby areas that are outside their own title area. For instance, an operator may need to be able to tie his own geophysical work in to some known control. This may involve access over another title-holder's area or access over a part of the continental shelf over which no title exists.

Clause 112 provides for the grant of access authorities in such circumstances for short periods. Without this provision a title-holder going outside his own title area could be in breach of the law.

The States and the Commonwealth are anxious that there should be a systematic build-up of general knowledge of the geology and mineral resources of the continental shelf. This knowledge will be useful not only in the search for petroleum but also in the discovery of other minerals which it is confidently expected will be found in the sea-bed. Under the Commonwealth's Petroleum Search Subsidy Act, information obtained by companies as a result of subsidised operations is made available to the Commonwealth and published six months after the completion of any particular operation. Cores and cuttings are properly stored and available for inspection. In the view of the several Governments, this has been particularly valuable. Indeed, the value of this procedure has been strikingly illustrated by the fact that the examination of cores from subsidised petroleum wells, held by the Department of Mines and the Bureau of Mineral Resources, was instrumental in leading to the discovery of the very extensive phosphate deposits near Duchess, in North Queensland.

Clause 118 of the Bill provides for the release of information of non-subsidised operations. This Government believes that the provisions of this clause relative to the release of information strike a reasonable balance between the public interest and that of individual companies whose efforts result in obtaining geological information in respect of the areas in which they are working.

In clause 152, members will note that there is provision for the reduction of royalty in certain cases. This would be in the circumstances where the rate of recovery of petroleum has become so reduced that further recovery might be uneconomic in the absence of some relief. It has been suggested that consideration should be given to reducing the rate of royalty in the case of new finds which appear to offer only marginal profits. However, it is considered that there is no relationship between the circumstances of declining production from a field, which would become uneconomic at normal rates, and those of an unknown field that appears on first testing to be uneconomic. In the latter case the permittee, prior to becoming a licensee, has every opportunity to test the field to determine whether it would become economic.

This question of reducing royalty for new fields was also discussed thoroughly. It was considered unwise at this stage to encourage uneconomic or marginal fields. It was felt also that the designated authority would be subject to very intense pressures if such provision were made. If a field cannot become economic at the current very low royalty rates imposed in Australia, it is probably not worth working.

I again say how I appreciate the views of hon. members, and I would be pleased to have their further comments on this very significant legislation.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba—Leader of the Opposition) (12.9 p.m.): As I indicated at the introductory stage, one great problem with this type of legislation is that the Opposition has no opportunity to amend it. The decision has to be whether to approve and adopt the legislation or to defer it. This, to my mind, is not in the interests of good parliamentary government. I grant that the Government of the day has a mandate from the people to carry out the normal functions of government within its policy as announced at election-time, but I do not think this gives a Government the right to speak on behalf of Parliament on matters that were not covered at election-time—in other words, matters that were not known to the public at that particular time and on which the Government can justly claim to have some sort of mandate.

On this occasion the Premier has apparently spoken on behalf of the State at the various conferences that were held on this matter. As the Minister indicated at the introductory stage, the negotiations extended over a period of two or three years, including several meetings with experts in their own field from the Mines Department and legal sections of the various Governments. The final signature, of course, was that of the Premier. The terms of the agreement naturally would be to the liking of the Government, through the Premier, but that does not mean that they are necessarily to the liking of the Opposition or the members of the Government parties.

Mr. Lee: You are not in favour of it?

Mr. HOUSTON: I suggest that the hon. member go back to sleep. His interjections never have any relevance. Like many others on that side he is a complete Yes-man. Whatever the Premier says, he is quite prepared to say "Yes" to it. We had an indication of that this morning when the Premier——

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. gentleman will please discuss the Bill.

Mr. HOUSTON: I am discussing the Bill before the House. I said at the outset that the Opposition has been asked either to endorse or reject it. We are not in a position to amend it in any way. That is what I am objecting to. We had a case in point this morning. Because the Premier did not know the purpose of a question, he would not answer it. How ridiculous can we get on that point alone? Following the Premier, Minister after Minister, knowing full well that the circumstances in each department were different, and that they had each received their departmental reports on different dates——

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HOUSTON: On this occasion the Premier of the State went south, where he met other Premiers and the Prime Minister

in conference. Following his return to Queensland he said, "On 16 October this year we signed an agreement relative to a certain matter. That agreement contains a clause which provides that each State will bring down similar legislation." Two or three days after that the legislation was printed, indicating that the legislation was framed at the same time as the agreement was drawn up. We are now asked to say whether or not we like it.

I feel that at least during the course of negotiations such as these the Premier or the Minister for Mines—or the appropriate Minister in other cases—should report to Parliament on the matter to obtain its views. Perhaps it could be argued that there is no appropriate time to do this. If the Standing Orders do not allow for such a ministerial statement or a ministerial request for a debate on a matter of importance that is being dealt with on a Commonwealth-State basis, I believe that they should be amended to make provision for such an eventuality. After all, it is this Parliament that should make the decisions on any matter concerning the State.

I raise that point because I believe the pattern adopted in this case will be cited as the pattern to be followed in other matters. I can envisage many circumstances where, because of the Commonwealth Constitution, it is not possible for the Commonwealth Government to deal with certain matters on which it is desirable for the States and the Commonwealth to come to some common agreement and later legislate on. When that happens, I believe it is the Government's responsibility to bring the proposal before Parliament well in advance of the signing of an agreement.

In this case, what would have been wrong if the Minister for Mines had indicated the various principles contained in the documents six months ago, or three months ago, so as to get parliament's views on them? We might then have suggested many safeguards that we wanted included in the legislation and perhaps suggested different wording for certain clauses. On many occasions, both Government and Opposition members have suggested amendments to legislation that have not been accepted at the time, but, after a short period, an amending Bill has been introduced including the principle contained in the suggested amendment.

No-one can tell me that this legislation is perfect, and I have no doubt that as time passes it will have to be amended. In fact, the agreement itself stipulates certain procedures to be adopted.

Mr. Lee: What amendment would you like?

Mr. HOUSTON: Is the hon. member suggesting that there will be no possible amendments to this legislation or the agreement? If so, why bother including a clause that establishes the procedure to be followed in such an eventuality?

I say quite definitely that amendments to the agreement and the legislation will follow. Would it not be far better to have the views of all people—all men and women elected to this Parliament and other Parliaments—prior to the signing of the agreement instead of waiting for it to be signed and for the legislation to be drawn up, when all we can do is either accept it or delay it? This is the whole crux of my objection to the procedure that has been adopted. I can visualise many other Bills, in respect of which the same method could be adopted.

That brings me to the point that at times Ministers introduce Bills with which they are not fully conversant. I was certainly given a document setting out the notes on off-shore petroleum legislation, which I appreciate. It is helpful, and I do not suggest otherwise. But it only puts into layman's terms what the legislation says in legal terms. It does not tell us what the position is today. I had hoped that the Minister would supply us with a map of Queensland showing the exact area to be covered by this legislation. It is all very well to talk about the continental shelf.

Mr. Camm: As a matter of fact, the agreement contains a map showing the area.

Mr. HOUSTON: I am glad the Minister mentioned the agreement. If he compares the lines in the map of Australia in the agreement with those in the map of Queensland, he will find that they are not identical.

We do not know how many private companies already hold permits to prospect, nor do we know what areas they hold. I asked the Minister a question yesterday hoping to get this information. I find that many of these points are difficult to distinguish on the information given by the Minister. He gave me the total off-shore area and the length of coast affected. I had that information from maps previously available, the latest one I have being for 1966. It shows an area in the vicinity of Cooktown that is not covered by a permit. I do not know the areas of the other permits, or what areas are available for future permits. By interjection I asked the Minister how many other areas would be available. He said he did not know at this stage but that he would find out for me.

Mr. Camm: No-one could give you that information off the cuff.

Mr. HOUSTON: I do not expect the Minister to know it off the cuff. However, I do expect him, when presenting this legislation—after all, he has had months or years to prepare it—to be able to tell us these things. It is important to know how many companies are operating. We would like to know whether they are companies of some substance.

Mr. Camm: In answer to your question I listed the companies that hold authorities to prospect.

Mr. HOUSTON: That is so, and from that information I was able to discover something else. But this information should have been given during the presentation of this Bill. We also want to know whether they are Australian or overseas companies. We should know all of these things before we debate legislation such as this.

I suggest that the Minister have a look at page 15 of the agreement. The lines on the map on that page include an area which I imagine would be outside the line of the continental shelf. I do not know whether that area is included in this legislation. That line does not appear on the map of Queensland on page 18. It makes a difference if that area is included, because it contains water of a greater depth than the water on the continental shelf.

This Bill has a major bearing on existing legislation. I do not want to deliberately misrepresent what the Minister said, so he can correct me if I am wrong. I believe that under existing Queensland legislation the Minister for Mines can give companies a right to prospect in territorial waters. This legislation places those waters under joint State-Commonwealth control. This is one principle of the Bill to which we could have objected. We could say that our territorial waters should remain a State responsibility and that the State should receive all royalties paid in that area. Under this legislation, territorial waters and the waters of the continental shelf are being combined and we are losing half of our royalties.

These matters should have been debated. What we say now cannot have any practical effect on the Bill. If the Opposition tried to throw this legislation out, the Government, because of its numbers, could counter such a move. I do not say we oppose the principle of this arrangement, but Parliament should have had a greater opportunity to debate it.

The two main factors in the Bill are firstly, the issuing of licences and the method of doing so, and secondly, royalties. By interjection I asked the Minister why 12½ per cent. was to be the top level. So far as I am concerned, he has not explained why that figure was selected. He said, I think, that it was because Great Britain applied 12½ per cent.

Mr. Camm: I did not say that. I said that, after a lot of consultation between Ministers, that was considered a reasonable rate.

Mr. HOUSTON: But surely the Minister should be able to tell the House the basic reason for selecting 12½ per cent. The Minister said that the minimum rate was to be 10 per cent., and the suggestion was made by interjection by the hon. member for Salisbury that it need not be limited to 12½ per cent. If it is said that it should be somewhere between 10 per cent. and 12½ per cent., why limit it to 12½ per cent.? If these areas prove of great value, some companies may be quite willing to pay to the Commonwealth and State amounts in excess of 12½ per cent.

Mr. Davies: Why shouldn't we have some say in the discussions on it beforehand? As it is, we might as well not be here.

Mr. HOUSTON: That is quite true. These things were determined before being brought before Parliament. Even at this late stage I should like the Minister to say why it was decided that 12½ per cent. should be the greatest amount to be charged in royalties.

As I, and many others, indicated at the introductory stage, there is a great deal of difference between the consideration of this legislation in the Queensland Parliament and its consideration in any other Parliament. The reason for that is the existence of the Great Barrier Reef off the Queensland coast. I know that on the introduction of the Bill the Minister gave us an assurance that nothing would go wrong to cause damage to the reef. I am not suggesting that he did not say that in complete good faith. Indeed, I believe that he did, and that only a fool would suggest that he is not interested in the area from the point of view of the State, and also as one who, in this Parliament, represents part of that specific area. What I do say, however, is that the Minister was really in no position to give such an undertaking. After all, no action open to him can prevent accidents happening. I think the Minister will admit that.

Mr. Camm: That is so.

Mr. HOUSTON: Therefore, his undertaking that nothing would go wrong——

Mr. Camm: I do not remember saying that. I did not say that nothing would go wrong. I said that all precautions would be taken.

Mr. HOUSTON: I am sorry if I misunderstood the Minister. I take it, then, that the Minister is aware that something could go wrong.

Mr. Camm: Certainly, but it should not.

Mr. HOUSTON: The Great Barrier Reef is at present worth millions of dollars a year to Queensland.

Mr. Tucker: You cannot put a value on it.

Mr. HOUSTON: As has been pointed out by the hon. member for Townsville North and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, a value cannot be placed upon it. When I first entered this House quite a lot of propaganda was being poured out by the

Government parties concerning the development of the tourist industry. I can remember Mr. Morris, now Senator Morris, saying here——

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

Mr. HOUSTON: Surely the tourist industry is tied up with this legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Anyone who attempted to argue that in this matter Queensland's position is exactly the same as that of other States would be completely off the beam. The great difference between our attitude to this legislation and that of other States is the Great Barrier Reef.

Purely from a geographical point of view, the Great Barrier Reef can be regarded in two ways. In the first place, on the debit side, it is a hazard to shipping. In the second place, on the credit side, it provides safe waters inside the reef. But the Great Barrier Reef is more than that; it is the greatest tourist attraction in this State and, indeed, in the Commonwealth. In literature prepared for distribution overseas we proclaim the Great Barrier Reef to be one of the great wonders and tourist attractions of the world. Anyone who allows the reef and its potential to be jeopardised should not call himself a true Queenslander. Anything that might interfere with it and, in turn, affect the tourist industry carries with it the possibility of a great disaster for the State.

I do not know how many millions of dollars are tied up in the tourist industry; I do not know how many people are employed in that industry, or how much money comes to the State as a result of their employment. But it is obvious that the whole of North Queensland, particularly the coastal area, is greatly dependent on the tourist industry. The hon. member for Cairns could tell the House—I am sure he will at the appropriate time—the effect that a decrease in the tourist trade had in Cairns recently. When bad weather made it impossible for people to get through to the area by road, both the spending power and the welfare of the people living there were affected adversely. Similar difficulties could arise in any other tourist area.

Hon. members must keep two points in mind when considering the Bill. The first is the advantage that will flow to the State from the production of oil and its by-products and in royalties; the second is the possible loss of income to the tourist industry and the adverse effect on the welfare of the people. That is the basis on which the big decision must be made.

I know that the Bill contains a clause that allows the Minister to hold back the allocation of blocks. The Opposition welcomes that provision; no hon. member on this side of the Chamber objects to it. However, I ask the Minister to give the House a clearer indication in this debate of the areas that will be held back. I hope they will be not only areas on the Barrier Reef but also areas that require protection against currents and other movements of water.

It has been suggested that there is not any great likelihood of damage to the reef from either a well-head or a pipeline. History shows that that suggestion is incorrect. I remember an incident that occurred in Brisbane about two or three years ago—perhaps not as long ago as that. The Moonie oil pipeline was considered to be a very remarkable piece of construction, and hon. members will remember how quickly and easily it was completed. It came through from Wynnum Road to the oil refinery, and the trench in which it lay was very shallow. It was known, too, that there were no big obstacles likely to cause any hazards to the pipeline. In spite of that, a leak developed overnight and acres of ground in my electorate were covered with an oily mess. It took days to discover the point where the leak had occurred, and in the meantime much discomfort was caused to quite a number of people. Discomfort, however, is nothing compared with the possibility of oil getting onto the reef and destroying fish and other marine life.

The Minister has referred to the view of experts that it was the detergents, not the oil, that caused the trouble in the recent disaster overseas. I am not prepared to accept one person's opinion that that is so. My information is that oil will cause damage to the reef, particularly to the live coral, if it gets onto it.

Mr. Sherrington: And to the bird life.

Mr. HOUSTON: Yes, and to the bird life. I know that the hon. member for Salisbury will have much more to say on that subject later.

The leak that occurred in the Moonie oil pipeline shows that the possibility is always there, and there have already been five major disasters involving drilling rigs. On each of those occasions we know that there was an explosion after oil was found, and a resulting fire. Surely the Minister cannot guarantee that this could not happen here, particularly in view of the fact that our experience in off-shore drilling work, at this point of time anyway, is very limited. The two Bass Strait fields, Barracouta and Marlin, were discovered quite recently and it is hoped to have them in operation early in 1969, but we know that in August 1966, the vessel carrying the rig "Glomar III" was in difficulties and that, after gas was struck, further problems were encountered. There was a gas leak for 10 days before it was found. In that case no harm resulted from the leak, but what if the same thing happened on the reef? I hope the Minister can give us some information on the effect of

having large quantities of petroleum gas pumped into the waters of the reef at any point of time.

These are things that I think we should know something about and be cautious with. Knowing that these things happen, let us take precautions. I am not convinced that there is such a great demand and need for oil from off the coast that we should take any great risks of losing the reef and its tourist industry. We know that the estimated known petroleum supplies existing throughout the world at the present time are sufficient to last for 33 years. Admittedly that is not very much when we consider our needs for the future, but I think it allows sufficient time for some investigation work to be done in places where there is no risk of damage to coastline or industry.

Over recent years there have been spectacular developments in drilling rigs. We know that in earlier days operators were lucky to be able to drill to depths of up to 45 feet. Submersible-type rigs were later brought into use, and this enabled operators to go to 175 feet. Eventually, the jack-up type drill enabled them to go to 300 feet. Now, of course, with the floating-type rig it is possible to drill in water depths of up to 1,000 feet. As time goes on these improved techniques are introduced, but in every case where there has been a major change or breakthrough in deep-water drilling, before the breakthrough major problems have been encountered and the experts have been forced to look for the answer. I have no doubt that eventually we will be able to pinpoint likely drilling places, and I am sure that if there are any problems they can be quickly overcome without any dire effects. However, I am not convinced—certainly not on the information supplied by the Minister—that at this point of time we can do this.

In addition, in North Queensland other problems are encountered. The Minister suggested that in America there were thousands of leases being drilled overnight, but the conditions there are vastly different from those that exist on our northern coastline. Year after year cyclones, to which various female names are given, are experienced off the Queensland coast. They all develop in the area to the north-east of the Great Barrier Reef. Year after year they travel down the coast and hit at various points. Surely they present a hazard in this respect. One can imagine what would happen if, prior to final sealing off or capping, a rig that had struck oil was hit by a cyclone. It would be no good squealing then and suggesting that something had gone wrong. It would be far too late for that.

As hon. members know, even here in Brisbane where, I should imagine, weather forecasting is as good as it is anywhere else in Australia, overnight or within hours the weather can change unexpectedly. My colleagues from North Queensland know full well that in their areas calm-weather conditions can change dramatically into cyclonic conditions.

These are all things that the Minister should be taking into consideration. He should be able to give us an assurance that, when the whole matter was debated in the South, Queensland's peculiar position was made known so that, if necessary, a quick change could be made to the agreement.

I believe that, generally, I have covered our fears and the warnings we want to give the Government on this matter. Although there is a great desire to find oil in this State and the surrounding areas, on no account do we want to do or countenance anything that will jeopardise the Great Barrier Reef, with its huge potential for the State and its people.

Mr. SHERRINGTON (Salisbury) (12.42 p.m.): At the outset, let me say that I agree wholeheartedly with the many points enunciated by the Leader of the Opposition. Like him, I believe that the circumstances surrounding the introduction of this measure in this Parliament amount to a negation of the democratic principles of parliamentary debate. The Minister made it quite clear at the introductory stage that there would be no opportunity to move any amendments. In my opinion, it is a complete negation of the principles of parliamentary procedure when, on the introduction of legislation dealing with such an important subject as the exploitation of petroleum resources in submerged lands, no opportunity is afforded the Opposition to move amendments.

We might accept the fact that the Government has an obligation to enter into agreements with individual companies, such as we witnessed recently with Austral-Pacific Fertilizers Ltd., but I think hon. members will agree that what we are now debating is something entirely different. It is legislation dealing with the exploitation of the natural resources of the whole of the Commonwealth and, in this particular instance, Queensland is faced with the problem that such exploitation could well endanger one of the world's unique features of marine life. In matters of such great public importance, I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that a statement on this measure should have been made prior to its introduction. Indeed, I go further and suggest that a model Bill should have been introduced into this Parliament to afford the Opposition an opportunity to submit its arguments.

If that step had been taken in each State of the Commonwealth, the various Mines Ministers and those responsible for the agreement in its final form would have been better equipped to introduce into their respective Parliaments a Bill reflecting the

mature considerations not only of the Government parties but also of the Opposition parties. That procedure was not adopted, so that the Opposition parties in every Parliament in the Commonwealth can merely argue a case that can have no substantial effect on the eventual outcome.

I suggest at this late stage that, following the discussions in the various Parliaments of the Commonwealth, it is vital to hold a conference of all the State Mines Ministers. The debates on the legislation should be studied and the opinions expressed by all Opposition parties thoroughly examined in case there is a need to strengthen the Bill—and I have no doubt that it will have to be strengthened. Experience has shown that when we embark on a legislative programme that has not been attempted previously, the passage of time discloses the need for amendment. I suggest to the Minister that he would do this Parliament, as well as Australia, a service by insisting that following the passage of this legislation in the various States an immediate conference of Mines Ministers throughout the Commonwealth be convened to discuss this matter.

In his speech today the Minister referred to the fact that several hon. members had drawn the attention of Parliament to the great dangers and threats presented by this legislation to the Great Barrier Reef. It cannot be denied that when the area under review is disturbed there is a grave possibility that the reef will deteriorate. The Minister referred to the fact that the exploitation of the Great Barrier Reef had been discussed at the recent Australian Conservation Foundation symposium. He quoted as his authority Dr. McMichael, who in my opinion is one of Australia's leading marine biologists. He referred to Dr. McMichael's paper in an attempt to support the argument that the Barrier Reef could be exploited so that use could be made of the materials it contains. I might say that only two members of this Parliament attended the symposium—the hon. member for Sandgate and myself. We are both members of the Australian Conservation Foundation. I listened carefully to Dr. McMichael, and I felt that he made a very sensible and logical approach to the subject of the Great Barrier Reef. On my interpretation of his speech, I do not think that at any stage he intended to convey the impression that we should exploit the Barrier Reef at this point of time. He pointed out—as I said during the introductory stage of this Bill—that sooner or later, with the passage of time there will be a demand for the exploitation of the lime deposits of the Great Barrier Reef. I think Dr. McMichael would agree that at no stage did he intend to convey the impression that at this point of time we should even consider the exploitation of the coral deposits of the Great Barrier Reef.

Mr. Dewar: Did he make any reference to oil and its effect on the reef?

Mr. SHERRINGTON: Yes, he did. I am making this speech. If the hon. member for Wavell wishes to, he can get up later and try to correct me. I am dealing with what Dr. McMichael said, and the hon. member for Wavell is not going to——

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Will the hon. member for Salisbury please continue with his speech?

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I am entitled to reply to the hon. member's interjection.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is obliged to address the Chair.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I shall do so. At no other time do I attempt to do otherwise.

As any sensible conversationist would say, the reef must be preserved for posterity. It must be exploited only when every other avenue has been exploited and when the lime deposits on the mainland are diminishing. Then, and only then, should we consider exploiting the reef.

Dr. McMichael said that at this point of time it was essential to make a marine biology study of the reef to determine its content, and also to determine which areas must be set aside as a national park, for commercial fishing, for recreational fishing, and so on. I do not think that at any stage did he suggest that we should do anything to endanger the reef. The exploitation of the petroleum resources that may or may not exist in the area adjacent to the continental shelf must be handled in such a way that nothing we do in the way of exploration or exploitation will endanger it.

Already pressures have been exerted for the mining of reef coral. The Wild Life Preservation Society has been very vocal in its opposition to an application lodged to mine the Ellison Reef, 18 miles from Mourilyan Harbour, and had it not been for the society's objection in the Warden's Court, the application could have been granted.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I am allowing the hon. gentleman quite a deal of latitude. This Bill deals with only one subject, namely, petroleum. It has nothing to do with coral or anything else on the reef.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I do not want to disagree with you, Mr. Speaker, but the Minister made quite a long and detailed reference to this subject in moving the second reading of the Bill. I am drawing this parallel, because I hope the occasion does not arise when the Wild Life——

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member should not be making an initiatory speech. The Bill is limited to one natural resource, namely, petroleum.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I consider I am entitled to draw this parallel and say that I hope we never see the day when, because of decisions made on the exploration for petroleum, organisations like the Queensland Wild Life Preservation Society will, in the public interest, be forced to protest. I envisage that this will happen.

That is one of the failings of our mining legislation at present. Unless there are public-spirited citizens and bodies to lodge protests where and when necessary, particularly in relation to the granting of permits for exploration for petroleum, some decisions made by Ministers could react against the preservation of this wonderful and unique asset of ours. I therefore say that it is very pertinent to observe that, although the Bill lays down in general terms the proposition that the Minister shall determine the areas that may or may not be leased for either exploration or exploitation, no safeguards are provided for the preservation of assets of natural and national interest.

Mr. Nicklin: The mining laws contain pretty definite safeguards against damage.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: If the Premier wants to refer to the mining laws, I instance the Mining Act to show how weak it is in the protection afforded to assets of national importance. Only a couple of days ago I raised in the House the matter of the mineral lease at the Cooloola Sands and suggested that it be revoked. What did the Minister for Mines say? He said that that would be a repudiation. I cannot accept that nothing should be done to protect our national heritage merely because it would be a repudiation. If work being carried out adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef endangered it, I would not accept that, because it would be a repudiation, the lease could not be revoked. The Government would indeed become quite ineffectual if it would not revoke a lease where doing so was necessary in the national interest. Although not one cent has been spent on the lease at Cooloola Sands, the Government claims that revoking it would be a repudiation, even though a national asset in that area is threatened.

Mr. Nicklin: Now get back to the Barrier Reef.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I think the Premier will be quite happy if I do that, because he came off second-best in that little clash.

I shall be dealing with the main basis of my argument at the Committee stage. After all, the Bill contains 160 clauses, and I do not think any member could do justice to them in 40 minutes. Some of them I query, and some I disagree with.

(Leave to continue speech tomorrow granted.)

The House adjourned at 1 p.m.