Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 9 OCTOBER 1970

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY; MINISTER FOR CONSERVATION, MARINE AND ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah-Premier) (11.1 a.m.): I desire to inform the House that in connection with the overseas visit of the Minister for Conservation, Marine and Aboriginal Affairs, His Excellency the Governor has, by virtue of the provisions of the Officials in Parliament Act 1896–1969, authorised and empowered the Honourable Allen Maxwell Hodges, Minister for Works and Housing, to perform and exercise all or any of the duties, powers, and authorities imposed or conferred upon the Honourable the Minister for Conservation, Marine and Aboriginal Affairs by any Act, rule, practice, or ordinance, on and from 8 October, 1970, and until the return to Queensland of the Honourable Neville Thomas Eric Hewitt.

I lay upon the table of the House a copy of the Queensland Government Gazette Extraordinary of 8 October, 1970, notifying this arrangement.

Whereupon the hon. gentleman laid the Government Gazette Extraordinary upon the table.

PAPER

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

Report of the Beach Protection Authority for the year 1969–70.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

POLICE LECTURES TO SCHOOL-CHILDREN ON ROAD SAFETY

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

Does the Police Department still detail officers to lecture school children in the metropolitan area and the rest of Queensland on road safety? If not, what is the reason for discontinuing what appeared to be a very desirable public service?

Answer:—

"Yes."

EXTENSION OF CLEAN AIR ACT TO TOWNSVILLE

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

(1) In view of complaints of air pollution from certain industrial undertakings in Townsville and Stuart, when will Townsville and environs come under the provisions of the Clean Air Act?

(2) Have any recent surveys been made by his Department in regard to air pollution in Townsville?

Answers:—

(1) "By proclamation published in the *Government Gazette* of September 26, 1970, the Clean Air Act came into operation in all areas in the State of Queensland. The Division of Air Pollution Control is now taking the necessary steps to ensure that premises subject to the Act in the newly declared areas register with the Division."

(2) "While no detailed surveys have been carried out, the Director of the Division of Air Pollution Control has visited Townsville, discussed local problems with the Townsville City Council, and made a general assessment of industries that would come under the Clean Air Act."

VINCENT STATE PRIMARY SCHOOL, TOWNSVILLE

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

(1) As there are already two demountable classrooms at the Vincent State Primary School, Townsville, and the overwhelming statistical evidence produced to him and his departmental officers showed conclusively that at least 125 additional children will join the school in 1971, why was no provision made in the recent budget for a new wing of at least six classrooms?

(2) Is he aware that 82·7 per cent. of the children attending the school come from Army families and that many of the bread-winners of these families are fighting in Vietnam?

(3) As such children are already under stress and strain, will he ensure that this is not added to by over-crowding at school?

Answers:—

(1) "At no time has my Department been unaware of the possibility of rapid growth of school population at the Vincent State School. Plans for a new wing of five classrooms were approved in September, 1969, and the project was placed on the draft loan works program for the 1970-71 financial year. However, it became apparent that the plans that had been prepared would not meet fully the growing needs of the school. This year has been one of experiment and change in primary school design. I am sure that the Honourable Member will agree that the postponement of permanent construction is justified when the purpose is to provide modern accommodation that will be more comfortable and educationally viable."

(2) "Yes."

(3) "There is no overcrowding at Vincent. The enrolment as reported in the last return was 607 divided into 18 class groups, an average of 33 per class. A total of 22 rooms, including four additional demountable rooms, will be available for the anticipated 1971 opening enrolment of 720, and the class average will remain at 33. The type of modern permanent accommodation it is hoped to provide for Vincent will allow teachers to cater more readily for the individual needs of the children of Army personnel, whose special problems are appreciated."

ALLEGED FORCIBLE ENTRY OF RESIDENCE BY POLICE, HOLLOWAYS BEACH

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

Further to his Answer to my Question on September 22 regarding police investigations at Holloways Beach, what are the contents of the report submitted in relation thereto and has any action been taken against the police for misconduct in this matter?

Answer:—

"I do not intend to disclose the contents of the report. No action for Police misconduct in this matter has been taken."

HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATION

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

(1) Has he read the article entitled "Hospitals need big Shake-up" which appeared in *The Courier-Mail* on October 1?

(2) Is his Department prepared to accept the advice of Professor Eric Saint, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Queensland, that hospitals need the biggest shake-up in history and that revolutionary administrative changes should be made?

(3) Are the medical profession and health services moving towards greater fragmentation in Queensland?

(4) Is there in Queensland a hospital administration muddle which could not be more messy?

(5) Why do house doctors no longer drink coffee with the sister around the stove or in her parlour?

(6) Do the public hospitals in this State retain large files of abusive letters from general practitioners enquiring about the condition of patients and their whereabouts?

(7) Is he prepared to seek the services of Professor Eric Saint in an endeavour to help in the big shake-up that is needed?

Answer:—

(1 to 7) "While I recognise that there is an air of waggish jocularity about the Honourable Member's question I intend to treat it seriously. I have read the news item to which the Honourable Member refers. Indeed, I have read the learned paper upon which it was based and of which it gives a very sketchy and distorted version. Professor Eric Saint, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in the University of Queensland, delivered his address in Sydney recently to the International Hospital Federation Conference, attended by more than 800 distinguished delegates from all parts of the world. In this situation he took a wide-ranging view of the conference theme 'The Hospital in the Community' and made comments and suggestions which have relevance to most communities in the more affluent parts of the world. In so far as they relate to the Australian scene, I have the Professor's authority to say that they were not directed specifically at Queensland, but rather towards the more complex and difficult situations which obtain in the great centres of the population in the southern States. Professor Saint is concerned that amongst other things, the costly sophisticated services and equipment of the modern hospital should be put to the best possible use and that the criteria for admission to such hospitals should be raised. He advocates rationalisation of services and intelligent efforts to treat in less costly situations the great volume of chronic and non-urgent morbidity which flows, for want of other services, through so many of the acute hospitals. He directs special attention to the Community Health Centres which are currently being developed in Great Britain. Let me advise the Honourable Member that Queensland's health policy and thinking are to a large extent in tune with Professor Saint's views. We are taking steps to prevent any unnecessary duplication of high cost specialist services such as renal dialysis and transplantation, cardiac surgery and radio-therapy. As opportunity offers, centralised services are being established or maintained, the most obvious example of this being the Manufacturing Dispensary through which most drugs and kindred items are provided to hospitals throughout the State. This is unique in Australia. The recently established Community Home Care Service in which we have Commonwealth assistance and participation is a major step towards meeting several of the needs enumerated by Professor Saint. Community Health Centres were the subject of special investigation by my officers and me, during our recent study tour overseas and I hope to have an early opportunity of further discussions about them with Professor Saint and also with Professor Douglas Gordon, the Professor of Social Medicine in the University of Queensland—both of whom have directed our attention to the possibility of integrating them into the Queensland systems. The Honourable Member may rest assured that in thinking and planning the Queensland Health Department is abreast of world opinion; and is also as far advanced in the application of such modern concepts as are appropriate to our circumstances and are within our professional and financial resources."

OVERCROWDING AT BRISBANE PRISON

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

(1) Has he read the article in the *Sunday Mail* of September 27 headed "Jail Terror for Young Prisoner"?

(2) As homosexuality and overcrowding are concomitant facts of prison life and as the Brisbane Prison is grossly overcrowded, what does he propose to do about the matter?

(3) Until adequate accommodation is provided at the prison, can an intimation be given to courts that no young men should be sent to prison for short-term sentences under the Traffic Acts, as obviously, because of conditions in the gaol, such sentences are more harmful than helpful?

Answers:—

(1) "I have seen the article referred to by the Honourable Member. When the matter was brought to my attention I had separate investigations carried out by the Superintendent, H.M. Prison, Brisbane, and the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate. Neither of these reports substantiated the allegations made."

(2) "Overcrowding has been a problem, particularly at Brisbane Prison, for some years but is gradually being relieved. The present difficult position would not have occurred if appropriate steps had been taken before the present government took office. New prisons have been built at Wacol and Rockhampton, the prisons at Brisbane and Townsville have been extended with a consequent increase in accommodation for 402 prisoners, and a new prison is planned for Woodford. The overall programme will no doubt relieve this acute problem. Allegations of homosexuality in prisons are made from time to time but many of these allegations are without foundation. All known or suspected cases are referred to the Police for investigation and, where evidence is

available, public prosecution. Every effort is made to keep the public informed and no attempt is made to cover up any such incident. Prosecutions have occurred from time to time."

(3) "I am surprised that a member of the legal profession should suggest that any court be given any intimation regarding the penalty to be imposed on any offender as any such intimation or other euphemistically described communication could only be regarded as an attempt to interfere with the course of justice."

PROSECUTIONS FOR STEALING AND ILLEGALLY USING MOTOR VEHICLES

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

For the period August 3, 1969, to September 1, 1970, how many prosecutions were made for the offences of stealing and illegally using motor vehicles?

Answer:—

"871."

MONEYS PAYABLE TO RAILWAY EMPLOYEES ON CEASING DUTY

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

Further to his Answer to my Question on October 7 concerning payment to an employee who resigned from the service, what are the facilities which could have been availed of, why were they not implemented and why was Mr. Ehrlich not paid on his cessation of duty on September 18?

Answer:—

"A Petty Cash Account to the extent of $400 is held at Toowoomba for the very purpose of meeting emergency payments. There is also provision for the Chief Accountant, Brisbane, to be telephoned and arrangements made by that Officer for money to be quickly transmitted to Toowoomba in such situations. Advantage was not taken by the staff concerned at Toowoomba of either of these means and appropriate instructions have been issued to guard against a similar happening."

ILLEGAL DUMPING OF LITTER AND RUBBISH

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

How many prosecutions were taken out by the Police Department in the metropolitan area for the illegal dumping of litter and rubbish for the years 1967, 1968 and 1969?

Answer:—

"The only prosecutions coming within this category which could be taken out by the Police Department are depositing by a person on foot or in a vehicle of any matter on a road which is likely to cause injury, damage, or danger to any person, vehicle, etc., or casting or throwing of anything from a moving vehicle so as to injure or be likely to injure any person or animal, etc. Statistics are not available for the first-mentioned offence, but in respect of the last-mentioned offence, four Traffic Offence Notices were issued by the Police Department in 1967, six in 1968 and eight in 1969."

REMOVAL OF TRAM LINES, BRISBANE

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

As trams have been eliminated in the metropolitan area, what action is being taken by the Main Roads Department to have the tram lines removed or covered on roads under its control?

Answer:—

"The need for this work on declared roads has to be considered along with the other road needs and will be carried out when funds are available."

MEAT EXPORTS THROUGH PORT ALMA

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

In view of a statement appearing in *The Morning Bulletin* of September 30 attributed to the Mayor of Rockhampton, Alderman R. B. J. Pilbeam and the Chairman of the Rockhampton Harbour Board, Mr. M. Hinchliff, that deputations would be made to the Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Transport regarding moves to retain the meat export trade at Port Alma, has any progress been made from these deputations on the matter?

Answer:—

"Unfortunately, it has not been possible for the Honourable the Treasurer or myself to receive the gentleman mentioned. However, I would refer the Honourable Member to the Answer given by the Honourable the Minister for Transport on October 7 to a Question without Notice from the Honourable Member for Callide regarding the export of meat from Central Queensland."

ILLEGAL EXPORT OF NATIVE BIRDS

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

(1) In view of the increasing incidence of native birds being traded and smuggled from Australia, has he or his Department

been approached by the Commonwealth Department of Customs and Excise for advice or assistance in detecting and apprehending smugglers who move into northern areas and isolated parts of Queensland and, if not, has the Department itself taken action?

(2) As honorary fauna officers have only limited powers, facilities and time to devote to such duties, will he now appoint full-time, paid fauna officers to enforce laws against the illegal export of birds, e.g. the unique golden-shouldered parrot (*Psepotus Chrysopterygius*) found only in parts of Cape York Peninsula, which is said to bring a black-market price of $10,000 a pair?

Answers:—

(1) "No. See Answer to (2)."

(2) "Provision has been made on Departmental Estimates for the current year for two new positions of full-time fauna rangers."

LIBRARIES, STATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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

(1) What reorganisation is taking place in relation to libraries at State primary schools?

(2) In any new arrangement, to what extent will parents and citizens' associations be involved?

(3) To what extent will Commonwealth funds be involved and to what extent will Commonwealth participation influence the control and/or the provision of libraries?

Answers:—

(1) "A good deal of consideration has been given to various ways in which primary school libraries might be further developed but owing to the financial position it has not been found possible to embark on any general scheme of reorganisation during the current financial period. The School Library Service has been expanded in order to advise teachers on the organisation of existing libraries. Careful consideration is being given to the design of library facilities for new schools and it has been approved that an initial library grant be given to new schools for the purchase of library books."

(2) "It is not possible, at this juncture, to indicate to what extent parents and citizens will be involved in any new arrangement. For the present the existing subsidy scheme will continue."

(3) "At the present time the Commonwealth is giving no assistance for primary school libraries."

INVESTIGATION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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

(1) Has a departmental inquiry been undertaken in the office of the Children's Services Department?

(2) Was the inquiry conducted by officers of the Public Service Board?

(3) What action has been taken following the inquiry?

Answers:—

(1 and 2) "An investigation by Officers of the Public Service Board into the staffing requirements of the Department of Children's Services has recently been concluded."

(3) "So much of the recommendations as may be financed from funds currently available, is being implemented."

PROPOSED HOSPITAL, MOURA

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

(1) Has his attention been drawn to the statement in *The Callide-Dawson News* of September 30 in relation to the proposed four-bed hospital for Moura?

(2) Will he be requesting the Banana Hospitals Board to prepare plans for a full hospital on the present 3½-acre site thus allowing the new reserve to lapse?

(3) Did his letter to the Moura committee indicate that the Banana Hospitals Board in its submission to him was opposed to a full hospital at Moura at present and that he considered a four-bed hospital was all that was needed at this time?

(4) Does he consider that an investigation into a full hospital at Moura is not necessary now and that an investigation will only be made when the need arises, as the Banana Hospitals Board advises?

(5) If he is of the opinion that the Banana Hospitals Board, because of its own vested interests, is putting every obstacle in the way of a hospital for Moura, will he consider taking Moura out of the control of the Board?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes."

(2 and 3) "The Banana Hospitals Board has been given approval to plan for an extension to the present outpatient centre to provide four holding beds and accommodation for a resident Matron. That Board has requested that consideration be given to transferring the present centre to another site before the extension is constructed and its request is presently under consideration."

(4 and 5) "I have every confidence in the Banana Hospitals Board who have given full and careful consideration to the hospital needs of the area and of all representations made in respect of same. I am sure that the Hospitals Board will keep the matter under constant review and make recommendations to my Department as the need develops for the provision of full hospital facilities."

ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL BOXING COMMISSION

Mr. O'Donnell, pursuant to notice, asked The Premier,—

Has his Government considered the establishing of a boxing commission in order to protect the health interests of participants in the sport, particularly in the professional field, as there has been an upsurge of activity due to TV promotion and there is obviously over-matching both in ability and in the number of bouts?

Answer:—

"The formation of a National Boxing Commission has been considered both by a Health Ministers' Conference and the National Health and Medical Research Council. In November, 1969, the Public Health Advisory Committee of the Council made the following statement:—'The Committee noted the detailed information which had been supplied by the Secretariat in relation to the supervision of boxing from the medical standpoint. The control of amateur boxing through the various sporting organisations in each State appeared to be adequate. Whilst professional boxing was in general less closely supervised there appeared to be no need for control to be established on a national basis at present.' In Queensland, of course, there are a number of safeguards which are insisted upon by the persons conducting the boxing contests and the Police Department, to ensure that contestants are evenly matched and that the contests do not degenerate into prize fights. I understand that the boxing regularly seen on television here takes place at either Sydney or Melbourne, where it is recorded."

TOBACCO FARMS, MAREEBA–DIMBULAH IRRIGATION AREA

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

(1) How many tobacco farms, served by irrigation water, are lying idle awaiting the issue of tobacco quotas?

(2) How many new farms have been opened in the irrigation area during each of the years 1965 to 1970 inclusive?

Answers:—

(1) "The number of tobacco farms in the Mareeba–Dimbulah Irrigation Area available for opening when the tobacco quotas are available is 31."

(2) "1965, Nil; 1966, Nil; 1967, six Pasture farms totalling 4,045 acres and containing 2,032 acres of irrigable land; 1968, one Tobacco farm of 131 acres containing 104 acres of irrigable land; 1969, two Pasture farms totalling 2,201 acres and containing 974 acres of irrigable land; 1970, six Tobacco farms totalling 683 acres and containing 486 acres of irrigable land."

PASTURE FARMS, MAREEBA–DIMBULAH IRRIGATION AREA

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

(1) How many pasture farms have been opened for selection in the Mareeba–Dimbulah irrigation area?

(2) What is the total area of the farms?

(3) What area suitable for pasture farms remains?

(4) Is it intended to open new pasture farms and, if so, when will they be made available?

(5) What area will be available for cattle fattening?

Answers:—

(1) "Eleven individual portions. Since opening, seven of these have been amalgamated into three holdings giving a current total of seven holdings."

(2) "The total gross area of these farms is 7,312 acres, and the irrigable area 3,651 acres."

(3) "There is more than 25,000 acres of land in the Mareeba–Dimbulah Irrigation Area and which could be commanded by the channel system and which is suitable for irrigated pasture. This area exceeds the area that could be irrigated if all water supply from Tinaroo Falls Dam were made available for irrigation."

(4) "Apart from 31 new tobacco farms available for opening when tobacco quotas are available, for which water is reserved, no further farms can be opened in the Mareeba–Dimbulah area while current commitments for power generation at Bowen Falls Hydro-Electric Station continue. Discussions are in progress to determine the possibility of reducing this commitment and making more water available for irrigation. If this is found feasible new farms can be opened to the extent that water is made available."

(5) "The ultimate extent of new farm openings for pasture production will depend on the quantity of water released from power generation for irrigation."

CLOSURE OF SEED ESTABLISHMENT AND CALF-RAISING VENTURE

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

Is he aware of the closure of Anderson's seed factory and Tritton's calf-rearing farm, both situated at Walkamin and, if so, what are the reasons for the failure of these two projects?

Answer:—

"I understand that Anderson's Seeds Ltd. have for financial reasons completely severed their involvement in tropical pasture seeds and have reverted to their previous role as merchants in vegetable seeds. I was not aware that Mr. Tritton's calf-raising venture had ceased to operate permanently. It was my understanding that following severe losses due to sickness all remaining calves had been removed to Richmond earlier in the year."

SUBSIDY FOR Q.A.T.B.

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

In view of the enormous amount of work performed by the Brisbane Ambulance Brigade in the nature of transporting pensioners and inter-hospital cases on behalf of the Government without financial recompense, namely geriatric work, 135,705 miles and Radium Institute work, 63,140 miles for the year 1969-70, will he consider making an allocation to this centre as a reimbursement for the loss of revenue? If not, what is the reason for his decision?

Answer:—

"No. It has always been considered that the subsidy paid by the Government to Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade Committees covers inter-hospital transports of public hospital patients. I would inform the Honourable Member that I have recently approved that the ambulance vehicle donated to the Brisbane Committee by this Department in 1961 for the transport of inmates of Eventide, Sandgate be replaced by a similar type vehicle. Any Ambulance Committee which considers itself to be financially embarrassed may seek financial assistance from the State Council of the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade by way of a grant from a special allocation made available annually by the State."

CANVASSING OF PUBLIC SERVANTS BY Q.A.T.B.

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

Is he aware that the Ambulance Brigade is debarred from soliciting new subscribers from State Government Departments? If so, will he have this disadvantage rectified in view of a suggestion that the Brigade should canvass private industries for new subscribers and to allow deductions to be made by their pay offices?

Answer:—

"In accordance with Cabinet's policy, collecting and canvassing are not permitted in State Government Offices."

BOAT HARBOURS, BARRON RIVER AND YORKEYS KNOB

Mr. B. Wood, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Conservation,—

When will boat harbours be constructed in the Barron River and at Yorkeys Knob and how large will they be?

Answer:—

"There are no plans at this time to develop public boat harbours in the Barron River or at Yorkeys Knob."

BRUISING OF CATTLE

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

(1) Is he aware of a very serious problem confronting the graziers of the central district in regard to the bruising of cattle?

(2) Has he noted the remarks made by Mr. R. H. Christensen, divisional veterinary officer, at a recent seminar on the beef industry, that there was not a great deal of liaison between the parties associated with this problem and that more co-operation was necessary?

(3) What remedial measures have been taken by him or his Department to assist in this problem and what co-operation has he offered to effect a solution?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) "I am aware of the reports of industry representatives who have investigated bruising of cattle in recent months. I have also read reports of discussions at a seminar at which this matter was raised. Bruising has come under discussion on previous occasions. It is not a matter which can be readily resolved because there are so many points at which it can arise. It has always been recognised that bruising can take place during transport. Some years ago my Department undertook some preliminary experiments with padded rail wagons in an attempt to minimise bruising. Industry reaction to this was that the padding reduced the number of stock which could be loaded into a wagon. Bruising may take place from the time that cattle are put in hand so the first steps to reduce its incidence must be taken on the property. Quiet cattle, carefully handled through well designed yards

and properly finished crushes will all assist in reducing the incidence. Members are perhaps not aware that some years ago the Australian Meat Board carried out an investigation to ascertain as much factual information as possible on causes, location, severity, incidence and loss due to bruising. The findings were published in a small but comprehensive brochure and if the recommendations were followed they would represent a useful contribution to reduction of the problem. The survey did not bring to light any new facts not already known to cattlemen but the simple fact of looking at the various aspects of the problem pointed the way to improvement."

CLOSURE OF PETROL SERVICE STATIONS

Mr. Hanson, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Labour and Tourism,—

(1) How many service stations have closed in the last twelve months?

(2) What reasons can be advanced for their closing?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) "This information is not held in my Department."

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

RECEIPT DUTY

Mr. CHINCHEN: I direct a question to the Treasurer: In view of the decisions made in Canberra yesterday, does receipt duty no longer apply in this State?

Mr. CHALK: The Prime Minister yesterday indicated to the Premiers of the various States that legislation would be brought down by the Commonwealth which he was certain would be passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate and under which receipt duty would not apply in Australia after midnight on 30 September. This means that, from 1 October onwards, receipt duty as we know it, will no longer apply in this or any other State. This legislation will also validate the receipt duty that was applicable in any State at the rate applying within that State up to 30 September. In relation to Queensland, any receipt duty that was due up to 30 September is, and will be, valid. As from 1 October, no receipt duty whatever will apply.

I make it clear that there is a difference between receipt duty and stamp duty. Stamp duty is the charge imposed on legal documents, etc. Receipt duty is usually the adhesive type of stamp that is applied to a receipt for money paid. In some instances, of course, it is paid in large sums by firms rather than by affixing individual stamps.

I propose to make a full statement on this matter later in the day.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I feel I must remark that in my view question time is already short enough without questions such as this. I had no indication, of course, whether this was an inspired question or not. I feel Ministers should be reminded that they have an opportunity to make such statements under privilege of a ministerial statement. I believe it is much better to do it that way. If the Treasurer intends to make a further statement on this matter later in the day, I appreciate that also. This is an important matter for the State and I realise that every opportunity must be taken to deliver a statement on it. However, as I have previously said in relation to questions, it is much better to have such information delivered in the form of a ministerial statement than in the form of an answer to a Dorothy Dix question.

BRISBANE TOWN PLAN

Mr. NEWTON: I ask the Minister for Local Government: In view of the position that there are a number of problems associated with the town plan for Brisbane, has his department engaged any outside planners to review the whole plan or the contentious amendments that are causing concern?

Mr. RAE: I am still giving detailed consideration to submissions on the town plan that are being placed before me almost daily. As soon as I am in a position to acquaint the hon. member with just what we propose to do, I will be very happy to do so.

GRAIN RAIL FREIGHTS

Mr. HUNGERFORD: I direct the following question to the Premier: If the report in this morning's "Courier-Mail" about the great financial success story that he and the Treasurer were able to negotiate yesterday with the Prime Minister in Canberra on behalf of Queensland is correct, will the Government now give consideration to a reduction in rail freights on grain?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: The Press statement is largely correct. However, the report from Beckingsale Management Services Pty. Ltd. is still awaited by the Government. On the other hand, now that the receipts tax position has been clarified, I shall consider the granting of certain assistance in particular areas. I have already discussed this matter with the Treasurer.

POLICE LECTURES TO SCHOOL-CHILDREN ON ROAD SAFETY

Mr. TUCKER: I ask the Minister for Works and Housing: Further to his answer to my question upon notice this morning, the Superintendent of Traffic in Townsville, Sub-Inspector Martin, in a letter dated 21 July, said—

"Due to ever-increasing demands on Police services, the previous practice of lecturing school children on road safety can no longer be given the same attention as in the past."

If this is so, and if it is still Government policy to have police lecture children, could the Minister have the position restored to the original concept by giving police more assistance in this regard?

Mr. HODGES: My reply this morning indicated that it is the policy of the department to lecture school-children on traffic matters where police are available to do so. The hon. member is fully aware that Townsville has been in the extraordinary situation lately of having to deploy police in the investigation into the tragic double murder in that area.

Mr. Tucker: But this letter is dated 21 July.

Mr. HODGES: That does not matter. It is the policy of the Government to give these lectures. The sub-inspector will be questioned on his letter. There must be some reason for it, because that is the policy that is pursued.

VANDALISM AT TOOWONG CEMETERY

Mr. MILLER: I ask the Minister for Works and Housing: What assurance can be given that the police will maintain night patrols adequate to prevent any repetition of the disgusting and perverted practices, including wholesale vandalism, at Toowong Cemetery, which has caused so much distress to relatives of those who should be at rest?

Mr. HODGES: Nightly patrols are maintained by the Police Department on all occasions. However, police officers are not advised by the element who carry out this desecration, so that they do not know where to be on any particular occasion. However, the Police Force will continue these nightly patrols in a sufficient manner. As to the Toowong Cemetery, the police have already apprehended 13 youths, and prosecutions are pending.

VISIT TO PALM ISLAND BY ABSCHOL REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. P. WOOD: I ask the Minister for Works and Housing, who is representing the Minister for Conservation, Marine and Aboriginal Affairs: With reference to the refusal of permission for Abschol committee members to visit Palm Island, will he, as Acting Minister, authorise the visit by this worth-while organisation?

Mr. HODGES: I would prefer the hon. member to put the question on notice.

GOLD COAST CITY COUNCIL

Mr. HINZE: I ask the Minister for Local Government: Is it correct that officers of his department attended the Gold Coast City Council special meeting yesterday afternoon? If so, have they made a report to him, and is he in a position to make a statement to the House?

Mr. RAE: I did have two of my officers go to the Gold Coast yesterday. I did so because I had read in the Press the previous morning that some concern had been expressed by the council generally about the over-spending of an amount of, I believe, $56,000 on some 26 engineering projects. I wanted my officers to attend the meeting and report to me, which they have done. I understand that the Gold Coast City Council now proposes to call in outside consultants to make a thorough investigation of some aspects of its administration, and I am also to be given a detailed report by the engineer. When I have received that, I will be able to negotiate further with the council.

FIRE-FIGHTING EQUIPMENT, NATIONAL HOTEL, BRISBANE

Mr. HUGHES: I ask the Minister for Justice: Referring to my question on 30 July relative to the National Hotel, did he reply on that date stating that orders relating to fire-fighting equipment, fire escapes and other items were issued on the hotel on 10 September, 1969, and that such work was to be completed by 10 January, 1970? These orders not having been carried out at the time a fire occurred on the premises, did the Licensing Commission contact the owner-company concerning the urgency of carrying them-out?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HUGHES: Can he now advise——

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The question sounds very involved for a question without notice. I suggest to the hon. member that he place it on notice.

Mr. HUGHES: I direct a question to the Minister for Justice: Does he recall having made a statement to the House in answer to a question relating to matters concerning fire escapes and fire-fighting equipment at the National Hotel, Queen Street, Brisbane? Further to that statement, can he advise the House whether, three months later, any progress has been made in complying with the Licensing Commission's orders?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: I will procure the necessary advices for the hon. member.

Mr. SPEAKER: That reply only confirms that the question would have been much better on notice.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS BILL

INITIATION

Hon. J. D. HERBERT (Sherwood—Minister for Labour and Tourism): I move—

"That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider introducing a Bill to constitute a Consumer Affairs Council and to provide for its functions and powers and the conduct of its affairs; to provide for the establishment of a Consumer Affairs Bureau and the appointment of a Commissioner

for Consumer Affairs; to provide with respect to the description and advertising of goods, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION

Hon. J. D. HERBERT (Sherwood—Minister for Labour and Tourism): I move—

"That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider introducing a Bill to amend the Factories and Shops Act 1960–1968 in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNOR'S SALARY ACT AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier) (11.44 a.m.): I move—

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

As I said in my introductory speech, the Bill, subject to Her Majesty's pleasure, increases the rate of salary payable to His Excellency the Governor so that an appropriate margin will be preserved between that salary and the salary of the Chief Justice of Queensland.

I was very pleased to have the Opposition's recognition of the need for such an adjustment, and I appreciated the comments that were made by the various hon. members who took part in the debate at the introductory stage about the splendid manner in which Sir Alan Mansfield is carrying out the duties of his very responsible position. This State has indeed been fortunate in having men of the calibre of Sir Alan and his predecessors to undertake the many, and sometimes onerous, duties of the vice-regal office.

I do not think that there is anything further that I can add to the remarks already made. Therefore, I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba—Leader of the Opposition) (11.45 a.m.): The Opposition has nothing further to add to what was said at the introductory stage.

Motion (Mr. Bjelke-Petersen) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

AUDIT ACT AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier) (11.46 a.m.): I move—

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

As I said during my introductory speech, this is a simple Bill increasing the salary payable to the Auditor-General by adjusting it in accordance with the increases given senior Government officials since this Act was last amended.

The Leader of the Opposition has indicated that he is in accord with the Bill's provisions increasing the salary of the present Auditor-General and recognises that the remuneration of the Auditor-General is based on relativity with that of senior public servants.

I do not think any further comment is required.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba—Leader of the Opposition) (11.47 a.m.): When we consider the salary of a member of the Public Service we naturally have to consider also the duties he performs in carrying out his office and also whether or not from time to time the remuneration offered for the particular position is warranted. I have no hesitation in saying that this officer is entitled to the salary he receives, relative to our times and the structure of Public Service salaries generally.

However, I intend to repeat something that I have frequently said in the past, that is, that in the interests of this Parliament and the State ways and means must be found of getting the Auditor-General's report before Parliament much earlier than at present. I think it is a very great anomaly that the Budget is debated here without either Opposition or Government members having the opportunity to consider in detail the Auditor-General's report to the Parliament.

The Treasurer brings down a Budget and presents to Parliament what he believes has been the spending for the previous year and also details of what he believes is required for the coming year. That is his normal duty, but how can anyone endeavour to analyse the position without having the full facts available? Surely it will not be said that the Treasurer and his officials do not have in their hands the Auditor-General's report, or at least the information to be contained in it, when they draw up the Budget.

I do not want to labour the point, but I cannot stress sufficiently the necessity for Parliament to have full information on the finances of the State in order to analyse accurately the Treasurer's statements and thus guard against being given wrong information.

I repeat that it is essential that the Auditor-General's report be made available to both Opposition and Government members much earlier than it is at present. We support

the proposed salary increase, but I should like to have my remarks considered by the Government.

Motion (Mr. Bjelke-Petersen) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 to 3, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

EVIDENCE (REPRODUCTIONS) BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. P. R. DELAMOTHE (Bowen—Minister for Justice) (11.52 a.m.): I move—

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

This Bill, which deals with matters of both a legal and technical nature, will facilitate the use of reproductions of documents as evidence in legal proceedings and will permit a reduction, in certain cases, of the period for which documents are at present required by law to be preserved.

The technical nature of the Bill relates to that part of the science of photography that deals with the technique of microfilming. In recent years major changes have taken place in the microfilm field, and the new equipment now being manufactured produces better quality microfilm with lower costs of operation. In addition, the film now being manufactured is designed so that, if properly processed and stored, it will last longer than good quality paper. These improvements will lead to a greater use of microfilming both by the business organisations and by Government departments.

In my introductory speech I referred to the approval that has been granted for the establishment of a Microfilm Service Bureau in the Main Roads Department. Initially the work of the Titles Office and the Department of Main Roads will be given priority at the Service Bureau, but as numerous other Government departments have intimated that they will use the Bureau it is anticipated that the practice of microfilming documents in Government departments will grow dramatically in the near future.

The advantage of microfilming documents and destroying the originals is that a tremendous saving can be made in the amount of space that is required for storage purposes. File bulk can be reduced by up to 96 per cent. if the contents of documents are preserved in this manner instead of by the present method of filing the original documents in storage space, which, in many cases, could be used for more practical purposes.

Mr. Tucker: What would be done with the originals?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: They would be destroyed.

Although microfilming is used at present by many business organisations, it has been discovered that a great saving of space has not always been achieved, owing to the original document also having to be retained by law. At present many organisations are reluctant to destroy the original documents, as there is always a possibility that they may one day be required to be produced in legal proceedings. This need can arise when the photographer is not available to give evidence as to the circumstances surrounding the taking of the photograph and the contents of the reproduction. The Bill will overcome these difficulties, as it will remove the need for such supporting evidence to be given by the photographer in person when a document, which has been processed in accordance with the provisions of the Bill, is tendered.

A reproduction of a document for the purposes of the Bill may be a machine-copy of the document or a print made from a transparency of the document. In the case of Government or official documents, a reproduction of a document bearing an appropriate certificate signed by an approved person who is the holder of a designated office is admissible in evidence, without further proof, as if it were the original document. I need hardly stress the inconvenience to the general public under the present law when official records are unavailable for search because they have been subpoenaed for tendering in a legal proceeding.

In the case of commercial organisations, a reproduction of a document is admissible in evidence upon proof that it is a reproduction made in good faith and that the document is destroyed or lost, or that it is not reasonably practicable to produce the document or to secure its production.

As applied to microfilming, for example, the processor would complete a form of affidavit or declaration for each spool of microfilm. Special provisions of the Bill facilitate the making of the affidavit or declaration by permitting a general description of the contents of the spool and allowing the affidavit or declaration to be photographed as part of the spool. Where the reproduction is made on an approved machine, it will be admissible whether the document reproduced is still in existence or not.

For general purposes, the Bill requires that the document reproduced should have been in existence for not less than 12 months after the document was made before it can be reproduced for the purposes of the Bill. In other words, 12 months has to elapse after the original was made.

A most important provision permits destruction of documents required by any Act, law or duty to be preserved for longer than three years. Under the Bill, it will

be a sufficient compliance with that duty to preserve or keep the document if a reproduction of the document three years old is made on an approved machine in conformity with the requirements of the Bill.

Additional safeguards against fraud are contained in the Bill in that—

(1) the court may order a further reproduction to be made from the transparency in the presence of a person appointed by the court for that purpose; and

(2) the court may, in determining the admissibility of a reproduction, draw any reasonable inference from the nature of the reproduction, the machine or process used, or any other circumstances, and the court may reject the reproduction, if for any reason it appears inexpedient in the interests of justice that the reproduction should be admitted in evidence; and

(3) in any case where the person making an affidavit or declaration covering the making of a reproduction is not called as a witness, the court, in determining the weight to be given to the reproduction as evidence of the facts it contains, is to have regard to all the circumstances from which any inference can reasonably be drawn, including the necessity for making the reproduction, or for destroying or parting with the document, the accuracy or otherwise of the reproduction, and any incentive to tamper with the document or to misrepresent the reproduction.

The Bill, which follows a uniform measure approved by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General, should provide an immense saving not only on the part of Government departments, banks and insurance offices, but also on the part of other commercial firms, solicitors, accountants, and others whose business or profession requires that their documentary records be preserved.

Mr. HANLON (Baroona) (11.59 a.m.): The Minister told us at the introductory stage that paper has been the main means of recording man's deeds since the Chinese invented it in 105 A.D. I suppose most of us have reason to think that, ever since, we have been sinking steadily under the mass of it, particularly official forms. This action to be taken by the various States on a uniform basis is designed to meet the impracticability of storing the huge volume of documents required for business or official purposes. I think it should be welcomed by all who have to comply with storage requirements.

It is clear that there is a distinction between official documents and business documents. Whilst we might sometimes accuse Government instrumentalities of buck-passing, generally speaking it is much easier to determine responsibility for documentation and reproduction at governmental or public level than it is in business concerns that are a little further from the point of control.

We looked through the Bill for anything that could cause trouble. However, the Minister, in his outline this morning, covered all the matters we examined to ascertain whether there could be some unintentional drawbacks in this attempt to effect an improvement. For example, the Minister pointed out that the court had the right to order a further print, of its own volition, if it was not satisfied with the print presented. This can also be done on the application of a party to a legal proceeding who challenges the authenticity of the print produced in court.

A desirable provision is that relating to reciprocity with other States and Territories of the Commonwealth if the Minister can identify them as having procedures identical to those in this Bill. In this way our courts could have the benefit of a document from a source outside Queensland.

The Minister referred to the Main Roads Department and the Titles Office. They are examples where this legislation will be of advantage at the public level. The number of motor vehicles on the road is increasing, and there have been recent complaints of delays in sending out registration certificates where application has been made through the post. The updating of Main Roads Department procedures will enable that department to unclutter its records and alter many of the steps that have bogged it down and hampered its operation in sending material to the public, and will reduce the amount of space needed with antiquated methods of checking and identifying registrations for renewal and for police purposes. It will all add to the efficiency of this department which is sometimes blamed for delays beyond its control.

When the Minister was introducing the Bill, I interjected relative to a compensation case. I imagine that the Bill will apply to the various boards established under the Workers' Compensation Act. A few weeks ago a claim was made to the Cardiac Board. The patient was at Chermside Hospital in a pretty low state of health. The board required the file or chart—the Minister could give me the correct term—to determine the claim. In view of the patient's condition, the hospital was not prepared to release the document because it could be required urgently for the patient's treatment. If this legislation did not apply to such boards, claims could be delayed for some time. It would be unfair for a board to reach a decision without having full information from the hospital, and it would not be in the patient's interest for the hospital to release the document to the board. All the board could do, in the circumstances, would be to adjourn the claim until the document was available.

Dr. Delamothe: That is correct.

Mr. HANLON: This facility will be helpful in cases of that nature.

The Bill appears to provide the necessary safeguards against fraud. One of the advantages is that it is not necessary for supporting evidence to be given in person by the person who prepared the microfilm, copy, or reproduction. If such a person was called to give evidence, some further interpretation of the preparation of the print might be made. As the Minister said today, in determining the weight of evidence, the court will be able to place its own interpretation on any matter. This seems to be a development from the best-evidence rule. It must be very frustrating to find that a person who has to be called to give evidence of the making of the copy is out of the country, or has perhaps died since the reproduction was made. What the Bill proposes will clear up that situation. In those circumstances, the court, in determining the weight of evidence, will be able to have regard to what might have eventuated if the person had in fact been called.

The Minister went to some lengths to mention the affidavits that would have to be lodged, and the Leader of the Opposition expressed some concern at the possibility that the affidavits required would be bulkier than the amount of paper dispensed with by copying. An examination of the Bill suggests that that will not be the case. The affidavits required seem to be limited to those that are essential to prove the preparation of the copy.

All in all, the Opposition welcomes the Bill. We regard it as a step forward, and accordingly we support it. Other members may wish to deal with some of the ways in which it will affect operations from now on, or with some of the difficulties that have been encountered in the past.

Mr. TUCKER (Townsville North) (12.7 p.m).: Like the hon. member for Baroona, I can see the value of microfilming documents. As a former officer of the Titles Office, I can see the assistance that it will afford that department. There is no doubt that as the years have passed documents that possibly will never be looked at again have mounted up, and they have had to be stored in strongrooms and other places to the extent that they have now become an embarrassment.

The Minister said that after documents had been microfilmed they would be destroyed in a matter of months or perhaps a few years. In the Titles Office there are many documents that will have to be kept for later endorsement. I cannot see, for instance, how documents relating to long leases extending over perhaps 50 years could be destroyed in a matter of months, or even a couple of years, after copying. It is quite possible that such leases could be subleased or transferred, and those leasings and transfers would normally be endorsed on the original documents. If such a document was microfilmed and then destroyed, obviously there would be nothing on which to place endorsements concerning subleases or transfers. The only way would seem to be to produce another document from the microfilm, place the endorsement on it, and have the endorsed document again microfilmed. The Minister can perhaps tell us what is intended in such cases. There are many other papers, such as easement documents, that remain in existence for a long time and require endorsement. Mortgages, too, require endorsement. Will such documents be kept, and for how long? Will this defeat the object of microfilming?

Then there is the question of mortgages. Usually the original mortgage is in the Titles Office and the duplicate is in someone else's hands. Quite often the duplicate mortgage is lost or burnt, and in 20 or 30 years, when the time comes to release the mortgage, usually all that is in existence is the original document. It then has to be taken out and sent to a bank, possibly, or to the Public Curator Office, or somewhere such as that, for endorsement of the release of mortgage. If there is only a microfilm, how is another document reproduced and released as the original document? The Minister probably has an answer to that point, and I should like to hear it. How is it proposed to deal with the question of documents that may be destroyed in the matter of a month or a year?

I agree with the hon. member for Baroona that a great responsibility will be placed on those who do the microfilming of documents, and I hope that the Minister has taken security into account. We will have to ensure that the microfilming is correct and also that the documents are not tampered with in any way before they are microfilmed.

Sometimes it is obvious that a document has been altered. Simply by looking at it with the naked eye, one can see a change in the colour of the ink or something else that makes it very obvious, particularly to an expert, that the document has been tampered with. When a photostat copy or a microfilm of the document is made, it no longer is obvious that the document has been tampered with.

I think the Minister grasps what I mean. Once an alteration is photographed, one no longer is aware of any difference in colour. It is merely a photographic reproduction. That lends itself, to some degree, to abuse by those who may think that there is something to be gained from tampering with a document. It is obvious that great care will be necessary on the question of security and those who will be carrying out the microfilming of documents. I suppose it is done in other places. Perhaps I may be super-sensitive about this, having worked in the Titles Office, but I think that the Minister would be, too. Sometimes a good deal of money could be involved in these documents. That would apply to the Government specifically in a case in

which a person might allege that something wrong had been done in regard to a document in the Titles Office.

I stress those points, and I should like to know whether the Minister has an answer to them.

Mr. BENNETT (South Brisbane) (12.13 p.m.): Let me say very briefly that it is my opinion and submission that the Bill is designed merely to make provision for modern methods in the procedure of law in this State and in the reception of evidence.

Very often it is not easy to produce an original document, even though it is not disputed that it is in existence. If there is no query or question about the original document, then a true and exact photostat copy should not be objectionable, and it is not. As a matter of fact, because of the use of modern methods, most counsel, even at the present time, do not object to what was previously regarded as secondary evidence being submitted and tendered in court. Without this legislation, the type of evidence that is regarded as secondary can be received by the court only by consent of both counsel, or both parties, to an action. Now, of course, consent will not be necessary, and it will be a rule of evidence that evidence of that type be received.

I concede that it is in the interests of the best working of the courts to have that done. Not only is it sometimes difficult to produce an original document, but it becomes embarrassing or inconvenient to have that document before the court at a time when perhaps it is otherwise needed. Photostat copies can be kept permanently in the court's records, and the originals can be used by the department, companies or individual persons who might have them.

There is really nothing new in the principle in the Bill in regard to practical procedure because, as I said, it has been done for quite some time now. Obviously, the reason the Evidence Act did not make provision for it in earlier times was that there was no such thing as a photostat machine, and when these machines first came into use they were not entirely efficient in clarity of reproduction. Now, with such sophisticated machines available and their proper use, in most cases a photostat copy is almost as good as the original. I have no doubt that if there is any query about a photostat copy, the courts, in their discretion, will insist on the original document being produced or its absence properly explained.

I agree with the submissions just made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that, if some individuals so wished, malpractice could arise in connection with photographs or photostat copies and the use of these machines generally. I am not for one moment suggesting that this will happen officially, but in all walks of life and in relation to all activities one finds the exceptional individual who is prepared to abuse any process. I have no doubt that over the years there will be exceptional cases in which the provisions of this amendment to the Evidence Act will be taken advantage of by unscrupulous people. By the same token, I feel that such malpractice or deception will be quickly discovered in court and suitably dealt with. Normally speaking, if counsel appear for both sides and if there is any query about a document the matter is properly and carefully canvassed in court.

I conclude my remarks at this stage by supporting the claim, as I have already done, that photographs can be doctored and interfered with. I believe, of course, that the courts will jealously guard the integrity of these provisions and that it will be unlikely that any malefactor in court will succeed in any proposed malpractice. However, in Parliament, such activities can be successful. From accounts that I have read recently, this happened in the Federal Parliament when a photograph of the Opposition Leader in the Federal sphere that had been tampered with and doctored in some fashion was tabled. Of course, that was in a political arena with those supporting the Government arguing that it was not doctored, and those opposing the Government arguing that it was. I suppose the political jury, as one might call it, has at least been left in a state of doubt on that point.

However, I feel that in practice in the courts, if such a thing did happen, a judge would certainly insist on the truth of the matter being properly discovered and evidence given in relation thereto, and the malefactor or evil-doer would be suitably dealt with.

Hon. P. R. DELAMOTHE (Bowen—Minister for Justice) (12.19 p.m.), in reply: I appreciate all that has been said by the three speakers on the Opposition side. In particular, I should like to answer quickly a couple of points raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I agree entirely with his contention that the utmost security must be effected in dealing with these documents. As to possible tampering with title deeds and that sort of document, the fact that it is necessary for the holder of the designated office as approved by the Minister to make a statutory declaration that it is a true and proper copy of the original Government document will cover the situation sufficiently.

I agree that in the Titles Office and other Government departments there are documents of which the originals will need to be kept in perpetuity, but the provision to allow the microfilming of them will be useful, and indeed will be used very often, either to provide duplicates to members of the public or to produce a film in court in lieu of the original. As an ex-toiler in the Titles Office, the hon. member for Townsville North would know that on some occasions a semi-trailer would be needed to cart the bulky folios.

I think that the two points that have been raised are important, and they are well covered in the Bill.

Motion (Dr. Delamothe) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

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

Clause 7—Minister may approve photographing machines—

Mr. HANLON (Baroona) (12.22 p.m.): This clause provides that the Minister may approve photographing machines. I wonder whether he envisages in the future some form of direct transmission of the document from its source to the court or wherever else it is required.

We are told by advance salesmen of television and other amenities that eventually a person who wants to read a particular book will need only to dial a certain number and a computerised receiver will flash that book on to a console in his home, so that he will be able to read the book without having it in his home. I wonder whether the Minister envisages that ultimately photographs of documents will be transmitted from the microfilm bank to the court instead of a copy being supplied.

Hon. P. R. DELAMOTHE (Bowen—Minister for Justice) (12.24 p.m.): The hon. member is correct. At present the technology of microfilming is in its infancy, but once it becomes legally accepted in courts it will gallop. I envisage that at some time in the future, perhaps in the not too distant future, a microfilm will be sent by satellite from one country to another. That would certainly be of tremendous value in expediting law cases in which the parties reside in different parts of the world.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 26, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 27—Minister may exclude provisions of Act—

Mr. HANLON (Baroona) (12.25 p.m.): This clause provides—

> "The Minister may, by notification published in the Gazette, exclude the operation of this Act or any Part of this Act in respect of any document or class of documents specified in the notification."

He may also, by a subsequent notification published in the Gazette, revoke any notification, and so on. We do not oppose the concept of the clause, but I wonder if the Minister has an example in mind where that power may be required. Off hand, I cannot think of a class of documents that could be excluded. On the face of it they should all rank equally for reproduction purposes.

Hon. P. R. DELAMOTHE (Bowen—Minister for Justice) (12.26 p.m.): This is a further safeguard against fraud. It is akin to closing the gate before the horse gets out.

Mr. Bennett: I take it that the Crown will not exercise its rights under this provision to prevent photostat copies being produced in court.

Dr. DELAMOTHE: Yes. I do not know of any document at the moment that would be excluded. A certain class of document or a certain class of paper may be used for reproduction purposes that could be more easily used fraudulently. This provision gives the Minister power to step in and revoke permission to use it.

Mr. HANLON (Baroona) (12.27 p.m.): I appreciate the Minister's statement, but my point was illustrated in the interjection of the hon. member for South Brisbane. We are concerned because power is given to the Minister to more or less exclude certain documents. I am not implying that the present Minister, or any other Minister, would use that power irresponsibly, but general authority is given in this legislation to reproduce documents. Clause 16 states that a further reproduction may be ordered by the court, and clause 24 deals with weight of evidence relative to aspects of presentation of documents.

As the member for South Brisbane indicated, in a certain case a query might be raised about why a type of document was gazetted as not being covered by this legislation. Irrespective of the Government in power, we know that, occasionally, matters are subject to inquiry by way of Royal Commission, charge, and so on. It could be a little embarrassing if an assertion were made that this power was used by a Government as a Government, or by a Minister as a Minister, to exclude a document that might be called for at an inquiry. An inquiry could be held into alleged malpractice by a Government or a Minister, or a controversy could be investigated by a body such as the Great Barrier Reef Commission.

I am not referring to a Minister being under a charge against him personally relative to his integrity in administering his department, but to an investigation being made into aspects of Government policy. If a Minister were to exclude a document that was being sought by conservationists—again, I do not want anybody to think that I am suggesting that the power would be used in such circumstances—a question could be asked about why the document was excluded under this provision. I can only express the hope that that will not happen at any time, irrespective of the Government in power. However, worry about the possibility of it caused me to raise my query, and the hon. member for South Brisbane brought the matter a little further into perspective.

Hon. P. R. DELAMOTHE (Bowen—Minister for Justice) (12.30 p.m.): All that this clause can be used for is to prevent

the reproduction of a document being produced in court; in other words, it then comes back to the original being produced.

Mr. Hanlon: And if the original is not procurable?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: The best-evidence rule applies, as it does at the moment if the original cannot be produced. The hon. member for South Brisbane would know the court procedure in that respect.

Mr. BENNETT (South Brisbane) (12.31 p.m.): I am afraid I cannot be quite as gracious as the hon. member for Baroona in regard to this matter, because I have a specific point in mind—and it is not the only one of which I have had experience—where the Crown refuses to produce documents, even in civil litigation between the Crown and a citizen, because the document might embarrass the case for the Crown. The Crown claims privilege, as it has done quite often, even during the days of the present Minister, not because on strict interpretation of the rule it is contrary to public policy to produce the document, but because the production of the document will embarrass the case for the Crown.

I have a specific case in mind in which the production of a Cabinet minute was of material importance and particularly relevant. It was civil litigation between a Government department and a citizen of this State involving a very large sum of money. The production of the original Cabinet minute up to date was necessary in order that the case could be conducted successfully and in order that the court could be made aware of the truth regarding the relations between a Government department and a citizen.

Even after discovery was asked for in this litigation, the Crown still refused to produce the document and at least one expensive application had to be made in an endeavour to force the Crown to stop concealing material information from the Supreme Court of Queensland.

The other party in this case, namely, the citizen's legal representatives, had a proof photostat copy of the Cabinet minute. It is not necessary for me to inform the Committee how that photostat copy was obtained. However, it is in the possession of the legal team representing the citizen involved in this litigation with the Crown.

Putting it right on the line I am hoping that, under the Bill, that photostat copy will be admissible as evidence in the case. I am hoping that the Minister will not exercise his rights under clause 27, as they appear to me, to characterise that document as being one specifically excluded from the provisions of the Act for the purpose of this particular litigation.

Mr. Hanlon: At the present time, I think a file is missing at the Criminal Investigation Branch in Sydney. If a copy of it was available, an application could be made for that copy to be recognised. Otherwise, reproduction might not be allowed simply because the file is missing at the appropriate time.

Mr. BENNETT: That is true. What the hon. member for Baroona said supports my argument. I have had experience in that regard, too. Files disappear mysteriously at the relevant time and reappear mysteriously after legal proceedings are concluded.

Mr. Lickiss: That happens at the local government level in Brisbane occasionally, too.

Mr. Hughes: Quite frequently, as you and I know.

Mr. BENNETT: If it happened at Local Government level, there would be an obligation on the Attorney-General and on the Minister for Local Government to do something about it. I cannot remember their ever taking any action to insist on the maintenance of integrity, if there has been any lack of it. If there has been any deliberate concealment of documents at local government level, the Government is to blame for not doing something about it.

Mr. Hughes: You used to complain about that yourself.

Mr. BENNETT: Of course I did. When there was a C.M.O. council in office, it did that sort of thing regularly. Papers that I wanted would be in the Lord Mayor's office, or I would have to go, in great indignity and embarrassment, and sit in the records section whilst junior clerks brushed past me trying to find documents. If they did find them, I had to read them there; I could not take them to my chambers to read them. Then they would disappear into the Lord Mayor's room. Don't tell me about what happened in the days of the C.M.O. council! It was shocking and despicable. That is one of the reasons why I welcome this legislation. If I were now an Opposition alderman in a C.M.O.-controlled council, I would certainly make provision to have documents that I required photostatted so that I would have copies of them when I wanted them. That was not done in the past.

I now return to the Bill, and the comments of the hon. member for Baroona. Recently in a court case in which I was concerned a detective referred whilst in the witness box to the contents of a document that related to a communication between the Queensland police and the Victorian police. I asked for the document to be produced. The witness had it in his case in court. He went over to the prosecutor and pointed something out to him, and thereafter the document was deliberately concealed from my view. I still have not seen it, and the litigation is over. Eventually it was put into an envelope that was sealed and taken back to Police Headquarters.

The prosecutor arrived back in court and said that he had been directed by an inspector

at the Criminal Investigation Branch headquarters not to produce the document in court, and certainly to refuse to show it to me. The prosecutor, instead of claiming Crown privilege in the proper manner, said that his inspector, who had not been there to hear the argument and appreciate the evidence, had in effect decided to flout the dignity of the court and the rules of evidence by instructing him not to produce it. I had something bitter to say about this conduct, and eventually the document was brought back to court in a sealed envelope. But I never saw it.

These things can, and do, happen, and I think that in raising this issue the hon. member for Baroona sounded a healthy note of warning. It would be a sad thing if the provisions of the Bill could be abused by a Minister exercising a wrongful discretion under this clause when the Crown is involved in litigation.

Clause 27, as read, agreed to.

Clause 28, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

AMBULANCE SERVICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. S. D. TOOTH (Ashgrove—Minister for Health) (12.39 p.m.): I move—

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

As I said at the introductory stage, I do not think that any of the provisions of the Bill will be regarded as of a controversial nature. Now that hon. members have had the opportunity to examine the explanatory notes made available with the Bill, there should be general agreement with my opinion, and I feel that there is no necessity to give detailed explanations of the various amendments.

However, since some of the submissions made during the introduction of the Bill can be more satisfactorily commented upon in their proper context, I propose to do so by supplementing in more detail, where necessary, the explanatory notes provided.

I should like first to refer to the policy of the Opposition on ambulance services for Queensland as propounded by the hon. member for Nudgee, and representing, in effect, that the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade be abolished and control of ambulance services transferred from the various brigades to the hospitals boards throughout the State. It seemed to me that there was evident shyness on the part of other Opposition members to this proposal for abolishing the Q.A.T.B. One can well understand their uncertainty when one examines the policy declared on this matter by the Opposition in 1968.

We have the statement made on such policy by the hon. member for Sandgate during the introduction of the Bill that, at the 26th Labour-in-Politics Convention held at Surfers Paradise in 1968, it was decided—and I repeat his quote—

> "Labour will review the present Act relating to administration of Ambulance Services with the view to developing and maintaining a higher standard of service."

The hon. member further stated that, although this may have been modified slightly, the principle remains the same, and that incorporated in that decision—he emphasised that he could remember the debate quite clearly—was the intention that the ambulance services would become part of the great free hospital system in this State.

Now, I ask hon. members to note two features of the decision reported to have been made: first, the complete absence of any reference to abolishing the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade; second, the inclusion in the decision that the purpose of Labour's proposed review was with the view to developing and maintaining a higher standard of service.

There appears to me to be only one conclusion to arrive at from the speeches made by the hon. members for Nudgee and Sandgate, and that is that the convention studiously avoided proclaiming in clear, unequivocal terms what was intended in this matter, that the continued performance of ambulance services exercised for so many years by the Q.A.T.B. should be discontinued, and that it was preferred instead to issue the apparently innocuous decision aimed at developing and maintaining a higher standard of ambulance service.

Now that we have realised the full implications of all this, we can examine the expressed purpose of Labour's proposed review in its proper context and accept it for what it was really intended to be, and that was, without doubt, an expression of dissatisfaction with the ambulance services performed under the control of the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade. Hon. members of the Opposition who have been associated with ambulance brigade committees must quietly share my Government's feelings that the operations of the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade over so many years have certainly not deserved this derogation of merited recognition of the zealous efforts made by many of its committees and by brigade employees generally.

Mr. Bennett: Why doesn't the Government give them more funds?

Mr. TOOTH: I shall deal with that point in due course.

On this side of the House, we are resolved that the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade will continue to operate the ambulance services being provided in so many centres of the State, and we are happy to continue the State Council as a co-ordinating authority for such services,

composed, as it is, of people who are directly interested in or associated with ambulance matters and affairs generally.

Now, with respect to the financing of the operations of ambulance brigades and the many comments made in support of freeing ambulance committees from the task of raising funds by other than subscriptions and charges for services, I repeat my earlier opinion that this is one of the avenues in which I think we should encourage the instinct of the community to help one another and others who are less fortunate than the majority.

This established and accepted procedure has the stimulus of an annual endowment from the Government on all bona-fide collections, donations, etc., received by the various centres, this representing $1 for every $2 collected and $1.50 for every $2 collected for aerial ambulances.

Mr. Hughes: Surely this service is no less entitled to a dollar-for-dollar subsidy than many other organisations.

Mr. TOOTH: If the hon. member will allow me to continue, I shall endeavour to set out what the financial position is. When that basis of subsidy was established, it was considered to include adequate allowance in respect of inter-hospital transport.

The Government's contribution on the foregoing basis towards ambulance centres in 1965-66 amounted to $790,296, and that contribution has increased to almost $1,100,000 in the financial year ended June, 1970. This financial policy could scarcely be termed parsimonious, for the accumulated credit balances of all brigades—I ask hon. members to note this—increased from $1,119,854 on 30 June, 1963, to $1,337,726 on 30 June, 1966, and at 30 June, 1969, amounted to $1,636,085, the last-mentioned figure representing, in effect, an increase of $516,231 in six years. That can certainly not be classified as an unhealthy financial position.

Admittedly, there must, at times, be instances of lack of finance and generally these have been experienced in small isolated areas and temporarily in other centres, possibly due to drought or other emergency, but obviously it cannot be said that this is the case in most centres throughout the State.

Nevertheless, it was to ensure that such centres received their just consideration that the Government legislated for the representation provided in respect of State Council. I emphasise again that this is a council upon which the Government representatives number no more than four, which is overwhelmingly representative of ambulance committees throughout the State, and which cannot in any way be described as an instrument of Government policy.

The role of State Council in this regard is to consider representations made to it, and, where the council considers a need exists, that need is met and efforts are made to ameliorate the financial difficulties of the centres that apply for assistance. It is not policy, however, for special grants to be made for a special purpose or project such as the purchasing of a vehicle or the construction of a building.

If a centre is convinced that it has a just case for financial assistance and such assistance has not been granted, it could be, as has been pointed out by the hon. member for Burnett, that the centre may have need to re-examine the quality of the case that has been presented to State Council. Alternatively, a centre's feeling that it still has justification for a grant could be raised at a zonal conference where all points of view are considered, and any supporting views of the conference could be brought to the notice of State Council.

Comparison has been made of Queensland's financing of ambulance services with that of New South Wales. I have already indicated that, in Queensland, our assistance per 1,000 of population is $633 as against $222 in New South Wales and a little better than that figure in Victoria.

A matter which was raised during the introduction of the Bill, and which does not come within the provisions of the Ambulance Services Act, was the failure of the Commonwealth Government to recognise ambulance subscriptions as deductions under the Commonwealth taxation laws. The granting of this concession has been the subject of representations from Queensland for a number of years, both directly to the Commonwealth and per medium of Health Ministers' conferences. Subscriptions of this nature, however, are regarded by the Commissioner for Taxation as entitling the contributor to ambulance service when the need arises and are thus distinguishable from gifts which, as unfettered payments made without consideration, are recognised as allowable deductions for income-tax purposes.

I have noted the comments made in relation to other matters which are not governed by the provisions of the Ambulance Services Act. These include a comparison of fees charged by the Maryborough Hospital Ambulance and neighbouring ambulance brigades, the alleged lack of co-operation shown by the Maryborough Hospital Ambulance, reportedly curt correspondence from the office of the State Council, the reported need for reciprocal arrangements between committees for services to their respective subscribers, lack of co-operation by members of the medical profession, and the need for an extra attendant on ambulance vehicles.

These are matters that could obviously be referred to State Council by the zonal representatives concerned, where no doubt they would be satisfactorily resolved. But I feel sure that the demand for reciprocal arrangements must only apply to services outside committees' own areas, for all committees

have agreed to provide free service within their own areas for contributors to ambulance brigades, irrespective of the areas in which they are contributors.

As to the reference to ambulance cars answering a call with only the driver-bearer in the car, I am informed that where the call for assistance indicates the need for service by more than one bearer, two bearers are made available and, indeed, in many instances two cars attend.

If, however, upon arrival at the scene of the accident, the driver-bearer alone finds that it has been a major disaster, he immediately has recourse to his two-way radio, and an additional car or additional cars are dispatched. In many instances a car returning from another service also intercepts the call and adds its assistance.

There will be occasions, of course, when more than one accident occurs at the same time, and delay could occur in providing immediate additional assistance at one particular scene. In general, however, where the ambulance is fully informed, satisfactory and appreciated service is provided. This was evident only recently, when gas explosions occurred in the centre of Brisbane.

It must be admitted by all, with respect to this matter, that additional finance would certainly be necessary to adopt a general policy of ambulance vehicles carrying two bearers at all times, irrespective of the service required and needed, and I feel that the Ambulance Brigade's ability to meet an emergent situation is accepted by all.

Whilst there may be some merit in the suggestion by the Leader of the Opposition for the establishment of a cadetship course to encourage young school-leavers to join the ambulance service in order to maintain ambulance staff at required levels, it must be realised that this represents a remedy in that respect which would be unproductive for some time, and here again we are forced to consider the cost factor and the availability of finance to meet that cost. Again we return to the realisation by the hon. member for Bulimba that only a certain amount can be made available from the public purse to the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade.

I turn now to the measures contained in the Bill, and, as indicated at the commencement of my remarks, I shall limit my remaining comments to fuller explanations of those particular provisions on which comments and submissions were made during the introductory debate, or which possibly require some elaboration.

As indicated in the printed explanatory notes, clause 2 (b) provides for insertion of a new definition, that of "vehicle", and this is to resolve some doubt that arose recently as to whether the services provided by an Ambulance Brigade committee can lawfully extend to an aerial service. Such a service need not be a specific aerial ambulance service, such as that conducted by the Cairns and Rockhampton committees, but could be a service representing aerial transport arranged by any committee in an emergency situation.

The amendment proposed by clause 4 refers to subsections (1) and (3) of section 14 of the Act. These provided that the State Council establish an Ambulance Administration Fund in the Treasury and that payments from such fund be made by State Council. The established practice required the fund to be established by my department and for payments therefrom to be then made to the State Council, and clause 4 merely provides, in effect, that the fund continue to be maintained in the Treasury under its established name of the Ambulance Administration Fund and enables moneys from that fund to be paid to State Council as required from time to time.

The need for the provision proposed to be included in the Act by clause 5 became evident at the first triennial elections, which were held this year and which disclosed that the Act was silent with respect to appointment of a qualified person or persons to complete the number required to be elected to a committee.

This situation arose in eight centres, and the committees in four of those centres had already nominated qualified persons for appointment to fill the vacancies before the Bill was introduced. It is anticipated that the remaining four committees will also submit nominations on the passing of the Bill, and the appointment of such nominees will then be submitted for approval by the Governor in Council.

I do not envisage that committees faced with this situation in the future will have difficulty with respect to qualified persons accepting nomination for appointment, and I feel that such nomination is the prerogative of the elected committee.

Some doubt and uncertainty has been expressed by the hon. member for Ipswich East with respect to the amendment proposed under clause 6. As he stated, many Acts contain a similar provision to that proposed under this clause, which represents the disqualification from membership of an Ambulance Brigade committee of any person who is a member of the brigade concerned.

However, since a member of a brigade is defined under clause 2 (a) as a superintendent, deputy superintendent or bearer of a brigade, or a person who acts as an honorary bearer, the disqualification now proposed, following on the adoption of a formal amendment that I hope to submit at the Committee stage, renders not only an employee ineligible for membership of a committee but also an honorary bearer.

Such qualification is considered advisable and desirable with respect to ambulance committees in order to prevent the probability of embarrassing situations arising where the superintendent of a brigade is subject to direction from a committee whose membership could include an employee or an

honorary bearer subject to direction and control by the superintendent in the course of his employment or honorary duties.

The new section A2 to be inserted by clause 7 to replace the existing section 42 is aimed at ensuring uniformity in the holding of zonal conferences by requiring all matters relating to their holding and proper functioning to be prescribed by regulations, these including the manner in which such conferences shall be convened, times and places for holding them and the manner of conducting the business of the conferences.

Initial discussions have already been held to assist State Council in formulating draft regulations on such matters. In addition, clause 7 provides that discussions at these conferences be restricted to members of those committees whose areas comprise the zone for which the conference is held and requires a request to State Council for the holding of the conference to be made by a majority of the committees concerned.

These requirements are, I feel, advisable to ensure that the original purpose for the holding of these conferences be safeguarded, namely, to provide opportunities for exchanges of ideas and discussions of problems with the view to improvements in ambulance services generally throughout the whole of the area of the zone and in the areas of the committees involved in the zone.

The purpose of clause 8 is to exclude the provision of ambulance transport, first aid or teaching of first aid, under the operations of the Royal Flying Doctor Service, from the restriction by the existing law of all or any such matters to ambulance committees or hospitals boards. This amendment thus resolves any doubt concerning the authority of the Royal Flying Doctor Service to provide an aerial ambulance transport service, either as a specific service or in an emergency.

I might mention at this stage that the reputation of the Royal Flying Doctor Service should be a sufficient reassurance of continued efficiency in the provision of aerial ambulance services to those who may have any qualms that the service being provided by the Cairns Aerial Ambulance would be jeopardised by any transfer of the administration of this service to the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Clause 9 provides authority for State Council to enter into contracts, to vary such contracts and to discharge them, and prescribes the procedure to be observed by State Council in carrying out those duties.

The amendment provided under clause 10 (a) has been drafted to establish uniformity in the matter of the compilation by the returning officer of voters rolls for election of committee members. The existing law requires that these be compiled at least 14 days before the day of nomination, and the day of nomination must be specified in the public notice of the election as a day not less than 10 nor more than 21 days after the publication of that notice. It can be seen that the date of compilation of voters rolls could thus vary greatly amongst the many committees.

The amended provision greatly simplifies this to require that the voters roll be compiled by the returning officer when he gives public notice of the election, and such roll is prescribed as a list, certified by him to be correct, of the names and addresses of contributors as at the date immediately preceding the date on which the public notice is given.

I feel that this amendment certainly simplifies the existing legislation and regard as necessary the additional requirement that the certified roll be kept in the office of the returning officer and available for inspection but only by contributors to the brigade concerned.

With respect to clause 10 (b), the amendment provided thereunder merely ensures that a voter is warned that a vote for more than the required number of candidates will render his vote invalid.

The first triennial elections conducted this year revealed the silence of the existing Act with respect to the matter of scrutineers. The new rule 7A to be introduced by clause 10 (c) is in line with established practice in our democratic way of life, as are the provisions of subclauses 10 (d) and 10 (e). I point out, however, that the latter provision, clause 10 (e), also remedies a deficiency in the present Act, this representing the inclusion of a requirement for the returning officer to properly complete the form of ballot-paper before delivery or sending to the voter.

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

Mr. TOOTH: I point out also that clause 10(e) empowers the returning officer to add an elector's name to the roll where he is satisfied that such person is entitled to vote. Such a circumstance is not provided for in the Act.

The printed explanatory notes sufficiently cover clause 10(f), the need for these provisions having also been realised at the holding of the 1970 triennial elections.

The new rule 10A which is being inserted in the fourth schedule by clause 10(g), is similar in its provisions to those of the Local Government Act. I feel these are desirable to resolve any dispute likely to arise with respect to the conduct of an election.

I do not expect any objection to the appointment of the State Council as the adjudicating authority for the purposes of this new rule.

This would be an appropriate stage to refer to comments made during the introduction of the Bill concerning the holding of committee elections and the cost of posting ballot-papers. It was suggested that these elections might be held in conjunction with

local authority elections. Such an arrangement could have dangerous consequences, with confusion between the two elections and, in addition, would require alterations in the present satisfactory legislation governing triennial periods of office for both ambulance brigade committees and the State Council.

The reference made to the cost of posting ballot-papers would refer to the arrangements existing prior to introduction of the 1967 legislation—that is the current Act—when ballot-papers were posted to all contributors. Under the existing Act, ballot-papers are sent only to those contributors who apply for them by post.

As to the final clause 11, the only enlargement I wish to add to the explanation in the printed notes is that the Fire Brigades Acts contain a similar rule and penalty, but under those Acts the court's order of a pecuniary penalty can be enforced only under the Justices Acts. Clause 11 of the Bill, however, provides for the court's order of a pecuniary penalty to be able to be enforced either under the Justices Acts or through a court having civil jurisdiction. The last-mentioned mode of enforcement appears to be the more satisfactory one, since it will enable resort to be had to the offender's goods, either by warrant of execution or by a garnishee order on his wages.

I repeat my earlier statement that amendments provided for under the Bill have been drafted not only to remedy certain deficiencies in the Act but also to improve various existing provisions.

I emphasise, in conclusion, that my Government is most appreciative of the unselfish and untiring efforts of all members of the community who have taken pride in sharing the task of continuing the ambulance services under the control and guidance of the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade and have, in a most co-operative spirit, developed it into the present efficient organisation.

We on this side of the House certainly have no plan or aim to dissolve the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade in reward for its services to the people of this State.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. MELLOY (Nudgee) (2.19 p.m.): The Minister, in his second-reading speech, has given us what is tantamount to another introductory speech. He reiterated many of the comments he made at that stage and enlarged on some of them to such an extent that he has given Opposition members an opportunity to deal with practically every aspect of ambulance administration.

The Minister seems to be of the opinion that the Australian Labour Party's policy is to destroy the present ambulance service. It is not the policy of the A.L.P. to destroy, or even to reduce in any way, the ambulance services at present being provided in Queensland. All that A.L.P. policy proposes is that operation and control of ambulance services, and financial responsibility for their maintenance, rest entirely with the Government, perhaps through hospitals boards.

Mr. Davies: That would save a lot of money.

Mr. MELLOY: As the hon. member for Maryborough says, that would save a considerable amount of money. Under such a system, ambulance services would function exactly as they do today, the only difference being that they would no longer be controlled by various boards or committees throughout the community. They would, in fact, be a direct responsibility of the Department of Health. Under such a policy, no ambulance centre would ever be in the present position of the Texas centre, to which reference was made at the introductory stage by the hon. member for Carnarvon. District ambulance services would be included in the budgets of hospitals boards, and there would be no lessening of the standard of service provided.

The Minister seems to think that the A.L.P., in its policy on ambulance services, is proposing something outrageous. Under our policy, ambulance services would be even more efficient than they are today, and they would be more extensive because there would be no pinch-penny attitude in their financing.

The Minister has spoken of community involvement in the running of organisations such as the ambulance service, and he seems to think that it would be a bad thing to deprive the public of the opportunity to contribute to their maintenance by buying tickets in art unions and raffles.

Mr. Davies: That is an argument they used against free hospitalisation.

Mr. MELLOY: That is true. Years ago hospitals were run on lines similar to the present administration of ambulance services. I do not think the Minister would like to go back to those days, when hospitals were financed by public subscriptions and donations, and some beds were designated pauper beds. Is that the type of public involvement that the Minister wants? If the Minister's policy were followed to its logical conclusion, our hospitals would also be run by public involvement.

Why are hospitals now controlled as they are? And why is community involvement in the financing of ambulance services such a virtuous thing? Ambulance services should not be an extra charge on the public. Sufficient finance should be made available from the revenue of the Government to provide a public service as essential as the ambulance. There should be no necessity for ambulance employees to go out on the streets each week cadging money for the maintenance of ambulance services. In those areas that are affected by drought, and where less money

is available from the people for the ambulance, the service suffers. That has been pointed out by the hon. member for Carnarvon.

That is a consequence of the present method of financing ambulance services, which the A.L.P. does not think is desirable. Hon. members on this side of the Chamber believe that it should be a direct and full responsibility of the Government to provide this social and health service for the people of the State, instead of having it run on a contributory or voluntary basis and financed to a large extent by the residents of a particular area. It simply means that those who live in a poor area, or in an area that is stricken with a financial or economic depression, are not able to provide themselves with an adequate ambulance service. Therefore, the Government of the day should accept that ambulance services are part of its over-all responsibility and include them in the health services of the State.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister quoted from the policy of the Australian Labour Party and said that there was no direct reference in it to the control of ambulance services by the Government. That is true. However, many facets of A.L.P. policy on hospital services could not be spelt out in detail in a written statement, and I assure the Minister that it is part of the policy of the A.L.P. to maintain the ambulance services in such a way that full coverage and adequate services are provided for the people of Queensland.

The Opposition has studied the Bill and has not found anything of a very contentious nature in it. It is conceded by hon. members on this side of the Chamber that the provisions of the Bill will rectify certain anomalies in the control of the ambulance services as at present constituted, and I repeat that, although the Opposition does not agree with the system or the policy, while the policy is in force it believes that every effort should be made to ensure that it is administered democratically and to the best advantage. Although the A.L.P. will change the policy if it has the opportunity to do so, members of the Opposition agree that provisions such as those contained in the Bill will improve and make more democratic the administration of the ambulance service.

I have only one comment to make relative to the provisions of the Bill, and I shall make it when the clauses are being discussed. Other matters relative to the financing of ambulance services will be dealt with rather fully by members of the Opposition, so I shall content myself with these remarks at this stage.

Mr. DEAN (Sandgate) (2.29 p.m.): It was not my intention to speak at this stage of the debate. However, having heard the Minister cast certain reflections on the speech that I made at the introductory stage, I feel duty bound to correct him to a certain extent. He misconstrued what I said on that occasion when quoting the policy of the party and took it out of its context. That rather surprised me, because the Minister is one of the most thorough Ministers in the House and puts a lot of time and effort into his contributions to debates in this Chamber.

As the hon. member for Nudgee said, the debate has been widened somewhat, and I think it is incumbent on me, as a member of the committee of the Brisbane Ambulance Centre, to comment on certain aspects of the Minister's speech relative to the financing of ambulance centres.

Speaking of one of which I have some knowledge, I can tell the Minister that our financial worries are not over by any stretch of the imagination. Great responsibility attaches to the ambulance services in this city and one of the big existing weaknesses is the staff position. If we had more money we would certainly increase the staff. The weakness at the moment relates to service at private convalescent homes and private hospitals where, on many occasions, two bearers are required, whereas we can only send one. When one bearer arrives at a private hospital or convalescent home he has to seek the assistance of some little nurse or sister to help him lift the patient—often a heavy person—into the ambulance van. This is causing some distress. If we had sufficient money, this is one weakness in the present structure that we would correct very quickly. We would send two bearers instead of one on jobs requiring two men. Too much responsibility is placed upon the staff in these homes and hospitals.

The position is different at "Eventide" and our own hospitals where male nurses can give assistance. Private concerns, which make many calls on the ambulance service, do not have such staff. I do not suppose we can really dictate to private enterprise that it should employ more staff. Perhaps the unions dealing with the nurses' situation might rectify this position in the future.

Again, if we had more finance, we could overcome some of the problems at "Eventide", Sandgate. Although this home is situated in the Sandgate electorate, hon. members know that it services the whole of the State. People from all over Queensland are taken to "Eventide" and the provision of an ambulance service between "Eventide" and the hospital involves an additional mileage of 24,000 miles per annum. This is another sphere in which we could use more money.

The other point I raise was the subject of a question I asked this morning; that is, the Government subsidy on moneys collected from the public, which I think is very unfair. The hon. member for Kurilpa has often supported me in this. I think he interjected this morning about the amount of subsidy that the Government pays on public collections.

We cannot see, and have not had it explained to us, why this anomaly should exist, but it does exist. If more money

was allocated to these centres we could really give service in accordance with modern trends. That brings me to the matter of accidents on our roads. We could supply speedier transport to hospital of serious road accident victims. I think I mentioned during my speech at the introductory stage that I feel the time is not too far distant when a helicopter service will be instituted in our large cities and towns so that patients can be air-lifted very speedily from the roadway and transported to the hospital for treatment.

I again pay a high compliment to the staff not only of the Brisbane centre but of all ambulance centres in Queensland. These staffs include many dedicated people. In fact, many dedicated private citizens devote a great deal of time to ambulance committee work. I am not asking for expenses. I do not think one member of my committee would even think of asking for expenses for sitting on the committee, which is comprised of businessmen, commercial men, and our colleagues from Redcliffe (Mr. Houghton) and Kurilpa (Mr. Hughes). They all give much of their time to this committee which services the Brisbane area.

I thought I would rise to correct what I felt was an error made by the Minister in referring to my introductory speech as he did, especially in regard to the policy of the Australian Labour Party. The hon. member for Ipswich East and the hon. member for Nudgee said that we feel that too much responsibility is placed on the private citizen to keep our very valuable and necessary ambulance service going.

The hon. member for Nudgee pointed out that in the early days our hospital system was conducted in the same manner and that as time went on the Government took over the responsibility of free hospitalisation. We believe that the time is not too distant when it should assume responsibility for the ambulance service instead of placing it on the shoulders of private citizens. Those who are imbued with zeal could help the Government instrumentality, just as the women's auxiliary performs valuable work at the Brisbane General Hospital. Similar work could be carried out by private citizens if the ambulance service was controlled by a Government department. There would still be room for the private citizen to display his sense of citizenship and feeling towards his fellow man. He could serve on a committee to help develop the ambulance service generally.

I have concluded my remarks, Mr. Speaker. I felt compelled to rise to refer to the Minister's remarks about the policy of the political party to which I belong.

Hon. S. D. TOOTH (Ashgrove—Minister for Health) (2.37 p.m.), in reply: I must express surprise at the reaction of the hon. member for Nudgee to my remarks. He said that I had misunderstood and misrepresented A.L.P. policy. In fact, I said that, as far as I could understand his speech, A.L.P. policy, which hitherto has been somewhat vague to me, was clarified in the plain statement that the Q.A.T.B. was to be abandoned and that the Government was to accept responsibility for the ambulance service; in short, that the present brigades and the whole organisation were to be dissolved and the ambulance service was to become an instrumentality of the State. The hon. member said that I either misunderstood or misrepresented him.

Then he said three things: first, the costs of the Q.A.T.B. were to be provided by the Government; second, the ambulances were not to be controlled by local committees but by the Government, possibly through the hospitals boards; and, third, that I seemed to think it would be a bad thing if we deprived the public of opportunity to control the ambulances. And, of course, I do.

Mr. Melloy: No, I didn't.

Mr. TOOTH: If those three statements do not support my interpretation of his remarks, I just cannot follow him at all. It would appear to me that, in disputing my interpretation of his earlier remarks, he has proceeded to confirm it. This is the way I see his remarks.

The hon. member for Sandgate has referred to the Brisbane centre's financial worries. Have these problems been referred to the State Council for consideration, which is the first port of call? I assume that if the situation is a bad one this has been done. I would be interested to know whether or not it has been done, and what the result was.

The hon. member suggested that the subsidy of $1 for $2 is anomalous. Wherein is this anomaly? How is it an anomalous situation?

Mr. Melloy: In the early days it was $3 for $1.

Mr. TOOTH: It is the decision that $1 be the subsidy. Subsidies vary according to needs and public appeal. I do not mean appeal for money, but the impact upon public interest. There is some variety in the scale of subsidies, according to the nature of the instrumentality being subsidised. A completely charitable body whose resources are extremely limited would probably receive a higher degree of subsidy that those bodies which have a wide base of public support and which have very substantial income and an increment of reserves. That is the case with ambulances, as I have already indicated.

I find it very difficult indeed to accept the submissions of the hon. members concerned.

Motion (Mr. Tooth) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

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

Clause 6—Amendment of s.24; Disqualifications from office—

Hon. S. D. TOOTH (Ashgrove—Minister for Health) (2.41 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 3, add to line 4 the words—
'or is an employee of the Committee'."

This amendment has been rendered necessary because of a typographical error in the setting out of the Bill.

Mr. MELLOY (Nudgee) (2.42 p.m.): The amendment clears up a point I intended to raise with the Minister about representation on the committee. I intended to ask him why there was discrimination against one section of the employees. However, one question still remains unanswered. Why can any employee of the brigade or committee be a member of State Council when he cannot be a member of his local committee? Is that not an anomaly?

Mr. Tooth: The local committee is in the situation of controlling the local superintendent. State Council is a general policy-making body. I think there is a distinction.

Mr. MELLOY: There certainly is a distinction. I should say that State Council is a more authoritative body.

Mr. Tooth: But it does not have direct control over the superintendent.

Mr. MELLOY: The Minister does not have direct control over his departmental officers. He only acts on their advice.

Mr. Tooth: Don't make any mistake about that. Ask the member for Ipswich East.

Mr. MELLOY: It is rather anomalous that an employee, whether he be a mechanic in the garage or a cleaner employed by the committee, can be a member of State Council while, in contrast with that, he cannot be a member of the local committee, especially as he would probably have a greater knowledge and experience of local conditions than of matters affecting the State as a whole. As a member of the State Council he helps to decide matters of high policy affecting the service, yet he is unable to give the benefit of his advice and local experience to the local committee.

Amendment (Mr. Tooth) agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 7 to 10, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 11—Amendment of Fifth Schedule; Rules Governing the Members and the Proceedings and Business of Committees—

Hon. S. D. TOOTH (Ashgrove—Minister for Health) (2.45 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 10, line 6, before the words 'an order', insert the words—
'a certificate of the clerk of the court that includes the terms of'."

This is a technical amendment suggested by the draftsman to clarify the terms of the clause.

Amendment (Mr. Tooth) agreed to.

Clause 11, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

COAL AND OIL SHALE MINE WORKERS (PENSIONS) ACT AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Main Roads) (2.47 p.m.): I move—

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

I thank hon. members for their initial general acceptance of the contents of the Bill as outlined at the introductory stage. I was pleased to be able to introduce this Bill before the recent recess to enable hon. members ample time to study its contents. I feel sure that hon. members have done this, and consequently I do not propose to elaborate further on the machinery provisions.

At this point I prefer to deal with the general matters of concern expressed during the introductory stage. Firstly, I should like to reassure the hon. member for Ipswich East that the benefit rates provided in the Bill have been fixed on the basis of the present contribution rates. I indicated this in my introductory speech. Increased contribution rates are not contemplated.

Hon. members opposite have been critical of what they regard as the degree of procrastination in the presentation of this Bill. The agreement reached between the coal-owners and the Queensland Trades and Labour Council and Combined Mining Unions in May, 1969, was one of very broad principle only. However, as it seemed to offer reasonable promise of an eventual solution to a problem which had defied solution for so many years, I was happy to set in train the action which resulted in the amending Act of 1969, which provided for some increase in the pension rates from 13 May, 1969, as an interim measure pending the formulation of an alternative and more mutually acceptable pension scheme.

By October the negotiations had progressed to a point where the parties were able to place before me a set of proposals for a reconstruction of the scheme. However, these proposals were far from complete. The areas of disagreement were still too extensive. Much further negotiation was necessary. So many organisations were involved in the negotiations and it was so frequently necessary for the negotiators to refer alternative solutions back to their principals that progress to finality was understandably slow.

The State Actuary was frequently consulted on various alternative proposals, and his full co-operation and guidance were available to the negotiators over a long

period in their efforts to arrive at a viable solution and an equitably balanced scale of rates of payment for the various classes of persons entitled to payments under the Act. All parties to the negotiations at various times caused some delay. It must be appreciated that the negotiators were all busy men with many diverse problems on their plates. Therefore, they were not able to tackle the task on a full-time basis.

When it became apparent in March of this year that the proposals could not be completed in time to enable amending legislation to be presented before the winter recess, and as the unions were pressing for certain flow-on increases in pension rates, the unions were given the assurance that the new scale of rates when finally determined would be made payable from 1 January, 1970. This, then, became an integral plank of the proposals, and the negotiations continued in harmony. The whole exercise demanded patience, a full knowledge of the facts, and plenty of rational thought. I think the negotiators did a good job, and I would be reluctant to see their recommendations discarded or the balance of the recommended scale of rates of benefits disturbed.

In my introductory explanation of the contents of the Bill I conceded that the pension rates were slightly lower than those sought by the unions. They presented three scales, and what I am presenting today is the middle one. After full consideration of this question, the Government felt that it would not be prudent at this point of time to lean on the future growth in the industry to a greater extent than it has done in fixing the pension rates provided in the Bill. This does not mean we are lacking in confidence in the future potential of the export segment of the industry; but we do not underestimate the problems associated with the major expansion likely in this sector and the time it will take to surmount these problems.

It is my intention to obtain an actuarial report on the state of the fund yearly so that the progress of the fund can be kept under regular review. The Government will not hesitate to revise the scale of benefit rates immediately it becomes apparent that this can be done without jeopardy to the fund. I have given my assurance to the parties on this point.

I should like hon. members opposite to realise that the unions are far from unhappy about the end product of the negotiations on which the contents of the Bill are based. To reassure hon. members on this point, I shall read a Press statement by Mr. C. T. Vickers, secretary of the Queensland Colliery Employees' Union and also secretary of the Combined Mining Unions, in "The Queensland Times" following the introduction of the Bill. It reads—

> "The Minister has received and accepted recommendations for a reconstructed pension scheme from the mining unions, the Coal Owners' Association and from his own pensions tribunal.
>
> "In consequence he has introduced the amending legislation and I personally express to him my appreciation . . .
>
> "'The new rates,' said Mr. Vickers, 'place us substantially in front of N.S.W. and there is no doubt that the new-type scheme for current and future mine-workers will make the pensions scheme in Queensland the envy of our counterparts in southern States.'"

I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. NEWTON (Belmont) (2.54 p.m.): It is not my intention on behalf of the Opposition to go back over the history of this scheme. In 1968, the Minister, when introducing a Bill to amend the Act, dealt with its history, no doubt from information obtained for him by departmental officers, particularly the Registrar of the tribunal who would know quite a lot about the scheme over the whole period of its operation.

On that occasion the then member for Ipswich East (Mr. Jim Donald) presented the case on behalf of the Opposition, as he did on numerous occasions when the Act was before Parliament for amendment.

The present Minister for Mines complimented Mr. Donald for his sincere interest in the welfare of miners. I should like to say that on this occasion the committee of which I am chairman has been very grateful for the assistance given to it by the hon. member for Ipswich East, who has particular knowledge of the problems of the miners on the Moreton field.

The Bill now before the House removes the two principal amendments introduced in 1968. The Minister will recall that, because of the state of the fund and the advice received from the Actuary, the Government decided to raise the compulsory retiring age from 60 to 65 years. The Opposition moved an amendment at that time because it was completely opposed to such an increase, and it also moved a further amendment to provide that a person who continued working between 60 and 65 years of age should receive $10 a week out of the $16.50, which was the pension at that time. That was not accepted by the Government.

Mr. Camm: That was in the Bill. You knocked that back.

Mr. NEWTON: That is true. The Opposition said that it was not in favour of it. I wish to make that quite clear, because in this legislation the Government is writing into the principal Act compulsory retirement at 60 years of age although it was increased in 1968. The provision to which the Opposition objected at that time will be eliminated completely with the passing of this legislation. If its provisions are implemented in their entirety, no miners over the age of 60 years will be working, other than in

certain circumstances with the approval of the tribunal. Our knowledge of the industry indicates to us that there will be very few of them.

The pensions scheme in this State goes back to 1942, and has been in operation for 28 years. When one comes to the question of lump-sum payments, one finds that the Bill allows the tribunal to take into consideration the period of time that a miner may have been working in another State. Of course, he will have to satisfy the tribunal that he worked in the mining industry prior to the pensions scheme being registered in Queensland. The provision for lump-sum payments will have a big effect. On many of the coal fields, lads have followed in their father's footsteps. A number of them would have begun work in the mine at 14 years of age. Today, of course, with compulsory schooling till the age of 15 years, a lad cannot start till he is 15, but that is still a very early age to begin working in the mine.

As hon. members know, quite a number of miners have worked underground for possibly 30 or 40 years, and it is conceivable that a lad beginning work at 15 could remain in the industry till he is 60 years of age. The importance of the principle in the Bill is that if a person begins working as a miner at, say, 16 years of age, works till he is 36 or 37 years of age, or a little older, and then leaves of his own accord, when he reaches the age of 60 years he is entitled to come under the scheme and receive a lump-sum payment.

Again today the Minister touched on the question of contributions. It is true that the Opposition raised that matter, and it was raised particularly by the hon. member for Ipswich East, who pointed out that the miners are contributing to the scheme. Their contribution has increased, and at present it is $1.20. When the scheme first came into operation the employee's contribution was 25c, and this has risen today to $1.20. I want to make it clear that the Opposition has never at any time advocated an increase in the contributions made by miners, but let me point out to the House that the provisions of the Bill now allow for contributions paid from 1968 to be refunded in certain circumstances where the miner would not be entitled to a lump sum payment or pension. Of course, this is an advantage because, in effect, it means that, if for some unforseen circumstance contributions have to be increased, a refund can be obtained. This was not possible under the principal Act.

Dealing with what the Minister had to say at the introductory stage, the present position probably does weigh heavily against mine-owners but, when an amending Bill of this nature comes before us it is reasonable to assume that some agreement has been reached on it and that the mine-owners are fully aware of their commitments under it. Considering the over-all question from their point of view, in the early days they paid towards this scheme 5c per ton of coal produced and 50c for every employee. There can be no doubt that the position, over a period of time, became rather alarming and the deficiency in the fund as at 30 June, 1965, was $3,000,000. No doubt, this would have caused some alarm and, as indicated by the Minister today, the Actuary advising the Minister and his department eventually made some recommendations along the lines that, if the fund continued to show such a deficit, there would have to be some increase in the workers' contribution.

If my memory serves me correctly, the Minister indicated today that something was done in this matter between 1965 and 1968, during the period when I was not chairman of this committee. Some increase may have been made to overcome this position. The principal Act also allowed a review of the fund every three years but, because of the seriousness of the situation, that provision was amended to provide for an annual review.

Having gone through the principal Act and the amending legislation of 1968, I find that the two are tied up pretty closely because many of the clauses in the present Bill affect both the principal Act and the 1968 Act. And from the Opposition's point of view, anyway, there is no doubt that the unions and the mine-owners must have made joint representations for a stay of the Actuary's recommendations to give them an opportunity of doing something to overcome the position. There is no doubt that the combined mining unions could have taken this problem to the Trades and Labour Council, and together they could have got in touch with the coal-owners and indicated that alternative means were necessary to overcome the situation. Then recommendations could have been made to the Minister so that the fund could be put on a sound basis.

Quite a number of the provisions contained in the Bill are machinery in nature, but it is obvious that the negotiations that took place were conducted at a very high level, because a very good scheme has resulted and is provided for in the Bill. It is possible that, like the secretary of the Miners' Union, a great many people would compliment the Minister; however, I wish to point out that the combined mining unions, the Trades and Labour Council, the coal-owners and the Registrar provided valuable assistance in formulating the scheme. In proposals that either could not be resolved or did not look good the Registrar, Mr. Carter, was of valuable assistance in tidying them up so that they could be contained in the Bill.

Of course, a scheme of this nature, in which negotiations have been conducted at a high level, must be a good guide to the trade union movement. While it is not directly a superannuation scheme it is one of that type, and irrespective of what Government members may think of Mr. Hawke,

the secretary of the A.C.T.U., they should be made aware of the fact that he has indicated to the trade unions that they should look at this scheme and compare it with their superannuation schemes.

Of course, we are not blind to the role played by the Government. At the introductory stage the Minister said that the Government will continue to contribute $150,000 per annum to the scheme. That indicates to the Opposition that the Government believes that the new pensions and lump-payment scheme is on a very sound basis. Members of the Opposition indicated at the introductory stage that, as the negotiations were successful and the miners, the coal-owners and the Government will be contributing to the scheme, we feel that the money contributed should be invested in short-term loans to make the fund a healthy one in a short period of time. I am pleased to hear the Minister say that this has been done and that the money is poured back to the coal-owners to improve their mines.

The other aspect that pleases me is the coverage of employees. Owing to the widespread use these days of open-cut mining, we are pleased to see that when mine-owners let out work to contractors in open-cut mining, the employees of these contractors are covered by the scheme. The Bill has been drafted with foresight to ensure that nobody is missed.

Although certain sections of the Act are to be deleted, present pensions will not be affected. That is very important to the pensioners. As they would not be entitled to a lump-sum payment under the legislation, it was necessary to protect their pensions.

The position of incapacitated miners has been vastly improved. A disability of 85 per cent., I think, has been set at which an incapacitated miner will have a choice between a lump-sum payment and a pension while incapacitated.

Another excellent feature is that the Bill leaves no doubt about de facto relationships, which present increasing problems today with the large number of broken marriages. The Bill spells out clearly the position of a de facto wife.

Widows receiving pension payments are also covered, but one of the most disappointing features of the legislation is that their pension rate is not as high as we might wish. However, as the Minister pointed out, there must be a starting point somewhere in any scheme when there are so many different categories to cover.

The Opposition is very pleased to see in the Bill a provision that automatic increases in pensions will still be based on Commonwealth social service pensions. We suggested a similar provision relative to other weekly pensions and, thanks to our suggestion, it was applied to compensation payments. At one time an amending Bill had to be introduced to increase those payments, whether they were paid in a lump sum or weekly. It is excellent to note that the automatic increases in this scheme are based on the Commonwealth old-age pension. The payments set out in the tables supplied by the Minister indicate that the recent 50c increase granted by the Commonwealth Government has been taken into consideration. The tribunal can consider a miner's application for a lump-sum payment if he was employed in the industry prior to 1942. I gave an example of this, and I am pleased to see this provision in the Bill.

The 1968 amendments, the amendments in October last year, and those contained in this Bill will make a mess of my copy of the Act. As back-bench Government members and Opposition members have no staff to attend to amendment of statutes, it is difficult to study the principal Act and all amendments so as to ensure that legislation introduced by the Government is in the interests of the people and the industry covered by it.

I repeat that the negotiations that took place on this legislation must have been of the highest order to come up with such a fine scheme. It is to be hoped that the union or the department, through the registrar, will produce a leaflet explaining these new payments. I am pleased that the Minister, in his introductory speech, outlined the principles of the payments, because they will be of importance from now on. People have contacted me already—I suppose it could be because it is rumoured that I will be shadow Minister for Mines, although that might not be correct——

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: There is too much substance in you to be a shadow.

Mr. NEWTON: At least I am big enough to see, so there will be no problems there.

Many people have contacted me, asking their entitlements under this scheme, and I am sure that other hon. members on both sides of the Chamber will have similar problems referred to them.

Mr. MARGINSON (Ipswich East) (3.19 p.m.): I am very happy to take part in the second-reading debate on this very important Bill. At no stage have I been critical of its principles, and I do not propose to be critical this afternoon. In fact, I support the Bill wholeheartedly. I believe, as many people in my electorate do, that it represents a vast improvement on what has obtained for many years.

However, I have been critical about the delay, and the Minister took me to task for this at the introductory stage. I fully appreciate that this legislation required a considerable amount of investigation. It is quite a complicated Bill, and the scheme is quite a complicated arrangement, and, the more one reads it, the more one sees how much must have been required of those who negotiated it.

At the outset, I pay a compliment to those who played an important part in outlining and considering the various proposals put up by the Queensland Colliery Employees' Union and the Queensland Coal Owners' Association, and finally producing the Bill. I refer to Mr. Vickers, the secretary of the union, and Mr. Lawrie, the secretary of the Queensland Coal Owners' Association, who are members of the tribunal, and to Mr. Carter, the registrar of the tribunal.

I have with me a Press cutting containing the passage in "The Queensland Times" referred to by the Minister. I was going to be fair enough to read it but, seeing that the Minister has already done so, I shall not delay the House by reading it again. However, I must take my own stand and read another part of the article. Just before the portion quoted by the Minister, Mr. Vickers was reported as saying that discontent in the coal-mining industry over miners' pensions during the past two years (the newspaper is dated 25 September last) had caused State-wide stoppages of work, threats of further strikes, and criticisms of the Minister and his Government. Mr. Vickers then went on to say—

> "However, that discontent should now belong to the past."

In fairness to the registrar of the tribunal, I feel that I should read another passage. Mr. Vickers also said—

> "I feel that while a number of people who have been closely associated with the protracted negotiations around the new scheme have cause to be pleased with the outcome, special credit should go to the registrar of miners' pensions, Mr. C. Carter."

All I can say is that I, too, join with Mr. Vickers in those remarks.

I am sorry if on occasions during these negotiations, including the time of the passage of the interim legislation last year, I gave the Minister some concern, but I believe that my efforts played some small part in bringing this legislation into effect a little earlier than otherwise might have been the case.

There is, however, one problem that has still not been overcome, and I must admit that I find it difficult to see a solution to it. I have accused the Government of procrastination, but, as weekly pension payments will be retrospective to 1 January of this year, those in receipt of them will not suffer as a result of the delays that I have mentioned. But there is a group who have suffered. I think it will be admitted by the Minister—certainly the Opposition admits it—that the new scheme, to be effective from the proclamation of this legislation, is better than previous schemes. I refer to the lump-sum payments. Some miners have reached the retiring age in the last three months—or the last six months, if we work back to March, when we thought this legislation might come before the House—and those who have retired during that interim period have gone on to weekly pensions. Of necessity, they have had to do that. Those who retire after this legislation comes into effect will receive lump-sum payments. It is felt in my electorate that the lump-sum payment is the far better proposition, and there are a number of retired miners who have missed out on it.

However, I wish to express my delight that the second-reading stage of the Bill has now been reached. I hope that the committee stage will be completed this afternoon and that the third reading will take place at the earliest opportunity. I am very pleased that the scheme has come to fruition, and I shall be fair to the Minister and his departmental officers and say that I think the miners in my district, and in Queensland generally, will have a better pensions scheme than they have had in the past.

Mr. CASEY (Mackay) (3.26 p.m.): I wish to make a couple of points relative to the principles embodied in the Bill.

I agree with my colleagues the hon. member for Belmont and the hon. member for Ipswich East that in most respects the Bill is a good one. The principal provisions relate to the pensions payable and lump-sum payments, and I remind the House that contributions are made to the fund by the miners, the mine-owners, and the Government.

However, there is one matter that does concern me. Both in this Chamber and in public places, one frequently hears from the Premier, the Treasurer, the Minister for Mines and Main Roads, other Ministers, and back-bench members of the Government, of the huge revenue that the Government now receives from the mineral resources of the State, and in particular of the outstanding profits that are being made by the Railway Department from the haulage of coal. These profits, of course, can be traced back directly to the efforts of the miners in the coal-mining industry, and I think the time is now ripe for some of them to be channelled back to the miners.

I suggest specifically that the Railway Department, which claims to be making such large profits, should grant to retired coal-miners from the time of their compulsory retirement at 60 years of age till they reach 65 years of age pass privileges similar to those enjoyed by people receiving Commonwealth Government social service pensions. After they reach the age of 65 years, of course, and receive a social services pension, they get rail concessions as a matter of course.

I ask the Minister for Mines to take note of my suggestion. I remind hon. members that the Treasurer, who has now left the Chamber, spoke rather strongly in his Financial Statement about the revenue flowing into the coffers of the State from the

haulage of coal by the Railway Department and the uplifting effect that was having on the State's economy. The method of implementing my suggestion is obvious. It is only a matter of Cabinet's opening its heart.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister stated quite clearly that the soundness of the pensions fund is based on the future prosperity of the mining industry.

Mr. Newton: Particularly the export trade.

Mr. CASEY: Yes, particularly the export trade, because that is where the main contributions to the fund will be coming from. I submit that there is a strong case for granting the usual rail concessions—that is, one pass a year within the State and half fares at other times—to miners who are compulsorily retired at 60 years of age till they reach the age of 65 years. Some of the other benefits that flow to retired persons in this State could also be extended to retired miners between the age of 60 and 65 years. I think that would be humane treatment of men who have contributed a great deal to the economy of the State, possibly, as has been pointed out previously, to the detriment of their health.

Another matter that requires some clarification is the time when these payments will be made. On its face, the Bill is not clear on that point. It is not quite clear whether they will be made at the age of 60, when a miner becomes eligible to retire on a normal basis, or whether, if he leaves the industry after having qualified in any of the various ways for a pension—the Bill allows plenty of scope for qualification—he will be able to obtain his payments at that particular time or must wait until he reaches the age of 60 years. If such is the case, there is perhaps a slight anomaly in the Bill in that those who leave the industry before reaching 60 years of age—I am not speaking of those who leave through incapacity—may not be able to receive a refund on their contributions to the fund. If they have attained eligibility under the fund they cannot expect to obtain the full lump-sum payment, but will they get, say, half of their money back or will they have to wait until such time as they reach 60 before obtaining a full refund?

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Main Roads) (3.31 p.m.), in reply: I was very pleased to hear members of the Opposition commending the measure now before the House. I think that, during my introductory remarks, I commended everyone associated with these negotiations—the unions, the coal-owners' representatives and, in particular, the registrar of the Miners' Pensions Tribunal.

I cannot understand the criticism of the hon. member for Belmont, who spoke about the enforced retirement of men at 60. In my previous Bill I gave the miners the option of retiring at 60 or continuing to work until 65, and the $10 payment outlined in that Bill was in addition to any wages they earned in the coal-mining industry if they worked from 60 to 65. I have been spoken to by many miners and they have all expressed appreciation of that provision. However, the unions, in their wisdom, decided that this was unacceptable and that miners must be compulsorily retired at 60. Therefore, that provision was embodied in the Bill out of respect for the unions, who represent the men.

I am pleased that the hon. member recognised many of the good points in the Bill. I am sure that upon reading it he could appreciate the work that was put into it by the many officers in the Mines Department, the unions, and the mine-owners.

The hon. member for Ipswich East has already indicated that he accepts the principles embodied in the Bill.

The hon. member for Mackay indicated that he would like some further concessions granted to miners who are forced to retire at 60. Once we start giving concessions to one class of pensioner, of course, these concessions can be expected to flow on to the recipients of pensions of various other types. He said that rail concessions were provided under Commonwealth social services. Those rail concessions are provided entirely by the Queensland Railway Department. It may have been a slip of the tongue.

Mr. Casey interjected.

Mr. CAMM: Those rail passes are granted by the Queensland railways. The words used by the hon. member were that they were granted under Commonwealth social services.

In respect to the benefit payments made on retirement, these are paid on retirement at or after 60 years of age. Of course, invalid cases and widows receive their benefits immediately. If there is an accident to, or death of, the husband, the payments can be drawn straight away. I think I indicated at the introductory stage that the minimum entitlement for a widow, irrespective of how much time had been put into the coal industry by her husband, would be $4,500.

I cannot add much more. I am very pleased that the Bill has been accepted by the Opposition.

Motion (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 to 19, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

The House adjourned at 3.37 p.m.