Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 1971

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

PAPERS

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

Reports—

Parole Board, for the year 1970–71.

Commissioner for Transport, for the year 1970–71.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

CLOSURE OF STALLS AT CHARITY MARDI GRAS, PETRIE

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

(1) Is an officer of the Public Service permitted to disclose confidential information concerning individual files to members of the public?

(2) Will he explain to the House the circumstances surrounding the actions of a Justice Department official regarding Petrie's Annual Charity Mardi Gras on October 9.

(3) Why did the officer close some stalls and later allow such stalls to proceed?

Answers:—

(1) "By 'The Public Service Regulations of 1958' as amended from time to time an officer shall not use for any purpose other than for the discharge of official duties information gained by or conveyed to him through his connection with the Public Service."

(2 and 3) "One showman only was not permitted to operate for a period of approximately half an hour as he did not display and could not produce the permits authorising the provision and conducting of the particular entertainment machines. This showman was permitted to re-commence operating upon his giving an undertaking to produce his permits to the inspecting officer at the Department of Justice on Monday, October 11, last, and upon the request of the organiser/director of the Mardi Gras as the inspecting officer did not desire the committee to suffer

financial loss. The showman did not attend in fact, until yesterday, October 12, when he was unable to produce the relevant permits."

ALLEGED CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT BY HAYDN SARGENT

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

(1) Is he aware that a Parliament in another Australian State called a person to the Bar of the House for referring to parliamentarians as "ratbags"?

(2) If so, as Haydn Sargent on his Radio Station 4BK session on October 11 referred to the august Members of the Queensland Parliament as "hillbillies", is he prepared to have Mr. Sargent called before the Bar of the House to show cause why he should not be dealt with for contempt?

(3) If he is not prepared to call Mr. Sargent before the Bar of the House, will he confer with Mr. Speaker so that steps may be taken to prevent Mr. Sargent from denigrating this Parliament?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) "I refer the Honourable Member to section 41 of the *Constitution Acts* 1867–1968, which authorises Parliament to order any person to attend before the House. To do this the House must first carry a Motion to this effect put before it by any Honourable Member. If the Honourable Member for South Brisbane feels genuinely aggrieved by the reported statement he has his redress."

HEALTH OF POLICE INSPECTOR CAMPBELL, GOLD COAST

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

(1) What is the present condition of health, particularly from a mental point of view, of Inspector Campbell, whose information triggered off the inquiry into massage parlours on the Gold Coast?

(2) Has Inspector Campbell any history of psychiatric or mental abnormalities?

(3) What is the latest psychiatric report in regard to him?

(4) Is nothing really wrong with his health and has he changed his attitude because of threats on his life?

(5) If he does have a history of psychiatric unbalance, will the cases of all those against whom he secured convictions be closely examined in order to ascertain whether they were properly convicted?

Answer:—

(1 to 5) "Inspector Campbell, who is suffering from an acute nervous disorder, is improving in health. Medical advice is to the effect that he still requires a further period away from duty, and he has proceeded on recreation leave. He has no previous medical history of this kind and I have nothing to substantiate the suggestion in the Question of threats on his life."

DEMOUNTABLE SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

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

Further to my Question of August 5 concerning the purchase of demountable classrooms by his Department—

(1) Were the 68 purchased for 1970-71 on a supply-and-erect basis?

(2) If so, what is the reason for the delay in the supply of these buildings by the firms concerned?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes."

(2) "My Department is unaware of any undue delay in the provision of these buildings during last financial year."

SOURCES OF CADMIUM AND MERCURY IN CONTAMINATED SEAFOODS

Dr. Crawford, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Local Government,—

(1) What are the commonly accepted sources of cadmium and mercury where the possibility of their contaminating seafood exists?

(2) Which industrial complexes in Brisbane and the remainder of Queensland would be sources of such contamination?

(3) What practical steps has his Department taken to remove possible contamination by these materials in these industries or to preclude such contamination occurring?

Answers:—

(1) "Most of the problems with mercury have arisen from wastes from the chemical, electrical, and paper industries and from pesticides. The likely sources of cadmium are metal trades, electroplating, and mining."

(2) "As yet there is no evidence that contamination is occurring and the present scale of operations in Queensland is much smaller than overseas industries where major problems have arisen."

(3) "In conjunction with water quality surveys and examination of fish, the Department of Local Government has commenced a program of inspections of existing industries to disclose the materials used and the likely composition of waste discharges. Applications by new industries to discharge wastes are closely investigated as to possible pollutants and requirements fixed accordingly."

PRINTING OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT SEX PAMPHLETS

Dr. Crawford, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Works,—

Further to his Answer to my Question on October 6 that the source of printing of the Women's Liberation Movement sex pamphlets was being investigated—

(1) What was the result of the recent police raids on city printing establishments?

(2) Are the printing facilities of the University of Queensland in any way involved in this matter?

Answers:—

(1) "Following recent police action, court proceedings have been commenced. In the circumstances the matter is *sub-judice.*"

(2) "There is no information to suggest that printing facilities at the University of Queensland were involved."

METHODS OF NURSE EDUCATION

Dr. Crawford, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

Following recent publicity on the matter of desirable implementation of new methods of nurse education by establishing tertiary education-type facilities whereby nurses would be students instead of hospital apprentices—

(1) Will his Department implement this method?

(2) How rapidly can these very necessary reforms be adopted?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) "The Honourable Member will appreciate that there are many schools of thought regarding nurse education which all merit detailed investigation. At my direction, a departmental investigation into these problems is currently proceeding."

SUBSIDY TO PARENTS AND CITIZENS' ASSOCIATIONS

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

(1) What amount of subsidy was granted to parents and citizens' associations during the year ended June 30, 1971?

(2) For the same period, what amount was paid in subsidy for the purchase of library books for (*a*) State primary schools and (*b*) State high schools?

Answers:—

(1) "The amount of subsidy granted to parents and citizens' associations by the Education Department for approval items of equipment for the year ended June 30, 1971, was $88,363 (this amount excludes subsidy on schoolground improvements which is paid by the State Department of Works). Payments by that Department amounted to $602,101."

(2) "The amount paid in subsidy for the purchase of library books for the year ended June 30, 1971, was:—(*a*) $136,200 for State primary schools; and (*b*) $16,302 for State high schools; it should be noted, however, that the Commonwealth Government has made a significant contribution to high school libraries."

TRAFFIC LIGHTS, CUNNINGHAM HIGHWAY–STATION ROAD INTERSECTION, BOOVAL

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

With reference to my Question of July 29, 1970 and March 17, 1971, regarding the installation of traffic-signal lights on the Cunningham Highway at its intersection with Station Road, Booval—

(1) What priority has been given to the installation of such lights?

(2) When is it likely that they will be installed?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) "I am not in a position to enlarge on the information I gave the Honourable Member on March 17, 1971. Traffic lights will be installed at the intersection in question just as soon as available funds will permit."

COURT CHARGE AGAINST V. J. GALVIN

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

(1) Has his attention been drawn to the news item in the *Telegraph* of October 9 headed "Why her run beat his hops"? If so, will he ascertain why Policewoman Noala Holman preferred a charge of disorderly conduct against a 14-stone labourer, Vincent James Galvin, instead of a more serious charge of deliberately smashing glass on the floor of a City Council bus, which could have resulted in a fine of $300 under the Litter Act?

(2) Is it an offence to consume alcohol in a public place? If so, why did the policewoman not prefer a charge against Galvin, who swilled beer as he swung from the hand straps in the aisle of a bus and spilled the beer over her and other passengers?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes. From information at my disposal it does seem that Policewoman Constable First Class N. P. Holman preferred the correct charge against the person

named. It is doubtful whether an offence under the Litter Act has been committed by the person concerned."

(2) "It is an offence under the liquor regulations to consume liquor on any highway or public road but there are not specific provisions creating the offence of consuming liquor on a bus."

SEAWORTHINESS OF KETCH "ONE AND ALL"

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

In view of the strong public criticism regarding the flagrant disregard of the advice given by marine experts that the ketch "One and All" should not put to sea because of its unsafe condition and the fact that the rescue operation will cost the Australian taxpayers in the vicinity of $400,000 and as it is reported that the crew has sold the story of the rescue for $30,000. will he consider making a claim for reimbursement to the taxpayers of Queensland? If not, will he state his reason for not taking such action?

Answer:—

"No. I refer the Honourable Member to the statement made yesterday by the Commonwealth's Acting Minister for Shipping and Transport to the effect that his Government had no legal means of collecting any of the costs, totalling about $200,000, from the crew of the 'One and All'."

ROAD ACCIDENTS AT STONEY CREEK BRIDGE, BRUCE HIGHWAY

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

In view of the number of accidents on and near the Stoney Creek bridge on the Bruce Highway about nine miles north of Townsville and the published opinions of experienced motorists as to the reason, will he have a competent officer or engineer make an inspection in order to determine if the approaches and poor visibility at both ends of the bridge contribute in any way to the fact that in most accident cases one of the vehicles appears to be on the wrong side of the road?

Answer:—

"Inspections have already been made by Engineers of the Main Roads Department in conjunction with police traffic officers. The report is now being assessed."

SNAP CHECKS OF MOTOR VEHICLES

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

Are inspectors of the Machinery and Scaffolding Department not permitted to carry out a snap check of any vehicle unless commanded to do so by the Chief Inspector or requested to do so by the Police Traffic Superintendent and, if so, what is the reason for this ruling which, particularly in the case of vehicles used in public transport, could result in injury or loss of life before a check is made?

Answer:—

"Inspectors of machinery can carry out snap checks of motor vehicles in used car dealers' premises. The chief inspector can, in writing, require any person to present a vehicle for inspection. Inspectors can inspect any commercial vehicle at the owner's depot or workshop but the Inspection of Machinery Act does not empower an inspector to stop a motor vehicle on the road for inspection. In such cases he must be accompanied by a police officer who has this power."

JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEE, M. MELLICK

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

(1) Is a man named Michael Mellick employed at the James Cook University and, if so, in what capacity and at what salary?

(2) Is Mellick also employed in any other capacity by any other organisation in Townsville and, if so, where and at what salary?

(3) Are Mellick's travelling and transportation expenses to this second job met by the James Cook University and, if so, to what extent per year?

Answers:—

(1) "The Registrar of James Cook University of North Queensland has advised that Michael Mellick is employed as publicity officer on a salary of $8,180 per annum."

(2) "Mr. Mellick is a casual, evening only, radio announcer for the Australian Broadcasting Commission doing an average of two 15-minute sessions per week at at $5.80 per session. In addition, in emergency situations he conducts for the A.B.C. very occasional interviews (at $7 each) with University staff or visitors to the University."

(3) "No travelling expenses are paid by the James Cook University."

MERCURY CONTENT OF IMPORTED SEAFOODS

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

(1) Are tests taken to ascertain mercury levels in imported tinned oysters and other seafoods and, if so, what are the levels of contamination?

(2) How often are such tests carried out?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) "Since the end of 1970 when attention was focussed on mercury in seafoods as a possible health hazard, the Government Analyst has regularly examined canned and fresh seafoods, both local and imported, to determine their mercury content. I am advised that the National Health and Medical Research Council will be considering shortly a recommendation that the maximum level of mercury in fish and seafoods be 0·5 parts per million. In only one instance was that figure exceeded in all the products examined."

ALIENATION OF CROWN LANDS

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

What has been the rate of alienation of Crown lands in each of the last five years and for what purposes has this land been alienated?

Answer:—

"I presume that the Honourable Member is referring broadly to the issue of Deeds of Grant and conversion of leasehold tenures to freeholding tenures. Information on the number of Deeds issued each year and a complete statement of the number of tenures standing good as at June 30 in the books of the Department are published in the report of the Land Administration Commission which is tabled annually in this Parliament. It can be anticipated that the report for the year 1970-71 will be available shortly. As at December 31, 1956, 25,119,465 acres had been alienated by Deed of Grant. As at December 31, 1965, 26,476,739 acres had been alienated by Deed of Grant. As at December 31, 1970, 27,308,383 acres had been alienated by Deed of Grant and at that date a further total area of 30,242,234 acres was in the process of alienation under freeholding tenures. These figures relate to town, suburban and country lands, covering all purposes for which such lands are suited."

RESEARCH, CROWN OF THORNS STARFISH

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

Are negotiations presently taking place with any overseas country concerning research into or methods of combating the Crown of Thorns starfish plague and, if so, what are the details of any proposed action?

Answer:—

"No. As the Honourable Member may be aware, Professor Suyehiro, a Japanese marine biologist whom I visited in Japan, called on me yesterday to bring me up to date with some further work he had done in the Okinawa area. The professor had expressed the wish to have his ideas tested on the Great Barrier Reef and it had been agreed to prepare a detailed proposal which could be submitted to the Joint Commonwealth-State Advisory Committee on the Crown of Thorns starfish."

HOUSE CONSTRUCTION, MITCHELL RIVER AND EDWARD RIVER ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

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

Further to his Answer to my Question on August 24 relative to house construction at Mitchell River and Edward River—

(1) Can he now give indications of the building programme for each of these communities?

(2) As he indicated that all staff houses have insect screening provided, will he consider the same provision for all houses built and thus eliminate the discrimination which at present exists?

Answers:—

(1) "Mitchell River—Completion of 15 houses and new hospital complex. Improvement and extension of water supply, extension of distribution and internal wiring of new buildings for 240V. A.C. power. Initiation of construction new primary school complex, police quarters and new retail store complex. Completion of two outstations with attendant yards and fencing. Completion of dip. Edward River—Completion of 10 homes, erection of additional residence. Improvement and extension of water supply. Erection of pre-school building and dental clinic complex. Completion of two outstations with attendant yards and fencing. Completion of dip."

(2) "The position regarding insect screening has been previously indicated to the Honourable Member on August 26, 1969, and August 24, 1971. The council chairman, recently in Brisbane, had a detailed discussion with departmental officers relative to screening when it was conveyed that all possible departmental assistance would be given consistent with local personal effort and in the light of funds available. Some quantity of screening material is already available to residents at Mitchell."

SURVEY, WATER CONTENT OF RIVER SANDS

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

(1) In view of the increase in the number of stream gauges already established and others envisaged, has any survey been carried out as to the water content of river sands in Queensland and, if so, with what result?

(2) If no survey has been made, will he have such information collated in order to have a complete picture of Queensland's water supplies?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) "In reply to a similar Question by the Honourable Member on September 24, 1969, it was advised that an accurate survey was made in 1968 of the water content of the river sand of the Haughton River near Giru. The continued collection of information on water supplies within river sands is one part of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission's programme to assess and measure the total water supplies of the State. As far as underground water is concerned, the Commission is systematically surveying the resources available, not only in river sands, but also in alluvia along streams, consolidated aquifers and in fissured and weathered rocks. The results of these surveys are assembled in reports and on maps, details of which are available on request to the Irrigation Commission. The value of river sands as potential water supplies varies considerably due to factors such as the width and depth of the sand within the stream, the presence of controls to prevent its passage downstream and the absence of contamination by poor quality water. The Australian Water Resources Council is actively interested in this study and the Commonwealth Government contributed $176,750 and the State $229,193 making a total expenditure of $405,943 on underground water investigations in Queensland during the 1970-71 financial year."

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS AND PSYCHIATRISTS, PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTIONS

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

(1) How many occupational therapists are presently employed in Government psychiatric institutions, what is the number at each institution and how many vacancies are there?

(2) What are the necessary qualifications for employment in this category and how many of the employees in State psychiatric institutions have these qualifications?

(3) What is the ratio of psychiatrists, (*a*) full-time and (*b*) part-time, to patients in all institutions?

Answers:—

(1) —

" ——	Employment	Vacancies	Total
Wolston Park Hospital	3	1	4
Baillie Henderson Hospital	1	1	2
Mosman Hall ..	1	Nil	1
Challinor Centre ..	3	1	4
	8	3	11

In addition to occupational therapists, eleven recreation officers are employed and nurses assist in the occupational therapy departments."

(2) "Qualification is diploma or degree in Occupational Therapy from a recognised authority. All employed have this qualification."

(3) "The ratio is one psychiatrist to 204 patients.

	Full time	Part time
Number of psychiatrists	11	2
Number of patients ..		2,443."

DENTAL CLINIC FOR GOONDIWINDI

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

(1) What action is being taken to establish a dental clinic in the Goondiwindi area?

(2) What range of dental services will be provided?

(3) What staff will be employed?

(4) When is it anticipated that the clinic will be opened?

Answers:—

"I understand that the Honourable Member for Carnarvon (Mr. Henry McKechnie, M.L.A.) had in the course of a friendly conversation with the Honourable Member indicated in broad outline what was proceeding in the Goondiwindi area of the Carnarvon Electorate. However, to confirm what the Honourable Member for Nudgee no doubt already knows, the Answers to his queries are,—

(1) "Approval has been given, in principle, for the establishment of a dental service at Goondiwindi. At this time, it is proposed to construct a Dental Clinic at the Goondiwindi Hospital which will be serviced on a part-time basis by staff from the Inglewood Dental Clinic."

(2) "The Director of Dental Services advises that it is expected that a full range of dental procedures will be provided for eligible persons in all age groups."

(3) "It is proposed that itinerant staff based at Inglewood, comprising a dentist, dental technician and chairside assistant, will service the Goondiwindi Dental Clinic on a part-time basis."

(4) "As sketch plans of the proposed dental clinic were only received by my Department on October 12, 1971, for review, I am unable to indicate, at this time, when the clinic may be opened."

PROPOSED DENTAL HEALTH PLAN

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

(1) Has his attention been drawn to the statement in *The Courier-Mail* of October 12 by the Federal President of the Australian Dental Association, Dr. Bloomfield, on the proposal of the A.D.A. to establish a dental health plan?

(2) As the plan as proposed will be a sectional one, will not cover the whole community, will not fix common fees, will add administration costs to the already excessive cost of dentistry, will increase the cost of dental services to the community and will prejudice the implementation of any Government national dental scheme and perhaps may have this purpose in view, will he have the proposal closely screened before giving any official approval for the inauguration of the scheme in this State?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes."

(2) "The implementation of the plan, as I understand it from information presently available, would be a matter over which my Department would have no control."

SERVICE ALLOWANCE, RAILWAY EMPLOYEES

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

(1) Are all Queensland Railway Department employees receiving or to receive the service allowance and, if not, what sections are excluded?

(2) If certain sections are excluded, are conductors and ticket inspectors in this category and, if so, why should these employees and others be discriminated against by the Government?

(3) What is the present weekly amount of the service allowance and how does this compare with that paid in New South Wales and in Victoria?

(4) What moneys were allotted by his Department to meet the service allowance payments this financial year?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) "The service allowance of $4 per week is payable to permanent Adult male wages employees with three or more years continuous service and to those temporary male wages employees educationally qualified with three or more years continuous service who are not able to meet the requisite medical standard for appointment to the permanent staff. The payment of service allowance this financial year will cost $2,400,000. Car conductors and ticket inspectors are salaried officers. The service allowance payable per week in New South Wales and Victoria is set out in the following table:—

Scale 'A'	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year
New South Wales	$5.00	$6.50	$7.25	$8.20
Victoria ..	$4.50	$6.75	$9.00	..

Scale 'B'	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year
New South Wales	$4.50	$5.25	$5.75	$7.00
Victoria ..	$3.80	$5.30	$6.80	$8.00

The payment of service allowance in New South Wales is confined to wages employees. In Victoria the service allowance is payable to all wages employees and in addition to some of the lower grades of salaried employees. Generallly Scale 'A' applies to Tradesmen and Scale 'B' generally to non-tradesmen. Notwithstanding the variation in service payments, the total 'take home' pay of the wages employees in Queensland compares favourably with that of similar employees in New South Wales and Victoria. It should be noted that the service allowance was granted by a Country-Liberal Government. Many requests made to the A.L.P. Government for a similar scheme were rejected."

CRIMINAL COURT TRIAL OF D. HANCOCK, BOWEN

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

(1) Did Dennis Hancock appear in the District Court in Bowen on December 8, 1970, on a charge of dangerous driving causing death?

(2) What was the duration of the trial?

(3) Did the Crown submit evidence to show that the accused was driving a Ford utility which came into head-on collision with a Volkswagen sedan while the accused's utility was on the incorrect side of the highway?

(4) Did the Crown also submit evidence to show that the accused's vehicle had crossed to the incorrect side of a double white line which extended for a distance of at least 976½ feet?

(5) Did the driver of the sedan and two passengers die as a result of the collision?

(6) Did the defence call any evidence?

(7) Was the jury discharged without returning a verdict? If so, what were the circumstances which led to the discharge and, if not, what was the result of the trial?

(8) Is any further action by the Crown contemplated in this case?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes."

(2) "The trial finished on the second day."

(3) "Yes."

(4) "While the line—a continuous line with a broken line—extended a total distance of 976½ feet, the evidence led suggested Hancock may have crossed the line for a distance of 300 to 450 feet."

(5) "Yes."

(6) "No."

(7) "No. The jury returned a verdict of Not Guilty."

(8) "No further action is possible."

HOME CARE CENTRES

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

(1) How many home-help service centres have been established and at which centres are the services being carried out?

(2) Is a home-help centre to be set up at Toowoomba and, if so, can any indication be given as to when the service will commence?

Answers:—

(1) "Six Community Home Care Centres have been established. They provide a service at Brisbane, Redcliffe, Nambour, Gympie, Maryborough, and Bundaberg."

(2) "Establishment of a centre at Toowoomba is part of the future development plan. No date has been set for its commencement."

CHEMICALS TO COMBAT PLAGUE OF MICE

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

Has any arrangement been made to give to primary producers who are suffering from the plague of mice a cheap supply of poison or chemicals from local authorities, in a manner similar to that of councils who act as agents for the supply of chemicals for the extermination of grasshoppers? If not, will he take immediate action to institute such an arrangement?

Answer:—

"The supply of chemicals to primary producers in Central Queensland for the control of grasshoppers is by competitive tenders from insecticide firms. The local authorities merely provide the purchasing machinery on requests from the respective Plague Grasshopper Destruction Committees in the several districts involved. In the current programme for the aerial baiting of mice, the overall cost per acre is assessed at somewhere between 30 and 40 cents. Even if one considers the retail cost of the chemical used (i.e. $9 to $10 per gallon), the rate applied is one gallon to 800 acres, and the actual cost of the chemical a little more than one cent per acre. This is a very minor component of the overall treatment cost."

RESTORATION OF MINED LAND, WEIPA

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

(1) What area of land has been cleared for mining operations at Weipa?

(2) What area has been restored to the extent that top-soil has been returned and all planting necessary for full growth carried out?

(3) What varieties of trees and grasses have been planted?

(4) What areas are to be mined in the next year and what restoration will be carried out?

Answers:—

(1) "The total area mined at Weipa up to August 30, 1971, was 2,000 acres. Additionally, 600 acres had been cleared preparatory to mining work starting."

(2) "From the total of 2,000 acres mined up to August 30, 1971, nearly 1,300 acres have been reserved for expansion of the township site at Weipa and for the alumina plant which it is proposed to build there later in the 1970's. This leaves 700 acres awaiting regeneration. Trial plantings on mined-out areas were begun in November 1966 under the auspices of the Forestry Department of Queensland and C.S.I.R.O. to determine—(*a*) the most suitable method of restoring topsoil; (*b*) the timber species most suited for reafforestation, bearing in mind the need to provide an economic timber industry which eventually could supplement the mining industry. This type of pilot study takes, at a minimum, five years before any reasonably satisfactory assumptions can be reached about long-term regeneration. The next step is to enter a full-scale experimental stage, but it could be some years before enough knowledge has been gained to reach final conclusions. This next step is now being undertaken at Weipa, again

in conjunction with the Forestry Department and C.S.I.R.O. Work has started to prepare, by contouring and spreading topsoil, the first 200 acres of the 700 acres awaiting restoration for replanting during the 1971-72 'wet' season. Included in this area will be recreational areas for the use of Comalco employees. Parallel with the research into reafforestation, tests have been conducted into establishing pastures on mined-out areas using various combinations of grasses, legumes, fertilisers and trace elements. In 1970, after the selection and planting of suitable grasses and legumes, a number of cattle were introduced in a grazing trial. This work is still proceeding."

(3) "While it should be emphasised that the results of testing done to date can be regarded as indicative only, the most promising species of trees out of some 20 or more species used in the trial plantings, which will also be used in the first full-scale planting, are—(*a*) Cypress Pine. (*b*) African Mahogany. (*c*) West Indian Mahogany, (*d*) Carribean Pine. Of the grasses and legumes tested, a combination of Townsville Stylo and Guinea Grass has been the most successful to date, but again results can be regarded as indicative only."

(4) "During 1972, the total area to be mined is expected to be about 600 acres. On the assumption that the full-scale experimental planting of 200 acres in the 1971-72 'wet' season is successful, it is anticipated that a substantially larger area will be restored in the 1972-73 season."

FEASIBILITY SURVEY BY AUSTRALIAN WOOD MINES PTY. LTD. FOR WOOD-CHIP INDUSTRY, CAIRNS AREA

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

(1) Has the Australian Timber Mining Company been given an option to survey all Crown land within a 75-mile radius of Cairns to carry out a feasibility study for a wood-chip industry?

(2) What rights have been granted to this or any other company?

(3) Where is this company registered and who are its directors?

(4) What survey has been carried out to date?

(5) Will his Department carry out a parallel survey to determine the effect that such an industry would have on an already fragile environment?

(6) Is the total clearing of selected land part of the consideration of the feasibility study?

(7) In view of the concern of many people in North Queensland at this proposal, will he now, and from time to time, make public whatever information is available?

(8) Before any decision is made, will he consider the wishes of North Queenslanders and not just those of the company?

Answers:—

(1) "I have no knowledge of the company referred to by the Honourable Member. I assume that he has in mind the Australian Wood Mines Pty. Ltd., which company has been given approval to conduct a feasibility survey into the economics of establishing a plant in the Cairns area for the chipping of wood for export overseas. It was agreed that the forest pulpwood resource within a 75-mile radius of Cairns would be held from commitment otherwise during the period of this survey."

(2) "A number of other such feasibility surveys have also been approved, but in no case have rights to timber operation been granted."

(3) "Australian Wood Mines Pty. Ltd was incorporated in Queensland on November 24, 1970, at which time E. H. P. Abeles, R. G. Hamilton and Bela Csidei were recorded as share holders and directors of the company."

(4) "This feasibility survey is being conducted and financed by a private company, and achievement to date is not known."

(5) "It was stipulated that, should any proposition be put forward following the survey, one of the essentials would be the provision of detailed estimates of volumes considered to be available—by species and areas and in a form subject to ready check. Should the survey lead to a firm proposition appropriate checks would be proposed, although a parallel survey would not be considered warranted."

(6) "Clear felling on Crown land would certainly not be envisaged, apart perhaps from areas required for development for purposes other than timber production. Forest cover on State forests, national parks and timber reserves within the study area represents about 25 per cent. of the total, and these lands are administered by the Department of Forestry with a proper awareness of forest values for such purposes as recreation, tourist interests, erosion control, and the preservation of wildlife habitats."

(7) "I made a public announcement on the subject subsequent to the approval of the feasibility survey, and further announcements may be expected in the event that a firm proposition is received for the chipping of wood from this area."

(8) "In the examination of any firm proposition received the views of North Queenslanders conveyed to me will be taken into consideration. However I would hope that people in the area would be conscious of the benefits which would follow the establishment of such an industry, in a considerable increase in employment in the region and a great improvement in the quality and value of the forests by removal of tree species unsuitable for sawmilling or for the production of veneer."

MRS. SHIRLEY BRIFMAN

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

(1) Is Shirley Brifman, as referred to by the Honourable Member for South Brisbane, the person who is awaiting trial in New South Wales for procuring her 15-year-old daughter for prostitution?

(2) Is her husband also awaiting trial for the same offence?

(3) Is Shirley Brifman's husband presently serving a six months' sentence for false pretences?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes."

(2) "Yes, on a similar offence."

(3) "Yes."

CENTRALISED TRAFFIC-CONTROL SYSTEM, MOURA RAILWAY LINE

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

(1) Was the centralised traffic-control system on the Moura line handed over by the contractors, McKenzie & Holland, on October 11 and, if so, is it now operational?

(2) What was the total cost of the CTC system to the Railway Department?

(3) What are the designations or classifications of employees who will be required to operate, maintain and service this equipment?

(4) Have any railway employees received any extra tuition or training required for the operation, maintenance and servicing of this sophisticated, semi-computerised "Westronics" communication system and equipment?

Answers:—

(1) "The whole of the system was operational on October 7, 1971 but, for the purpose of contract conditions, has not been accepted by the Department."

(2) "$1,184,934."

(3) "Operation—Train Controllers; Maintenance of Mechanical Section—Signal Maintainers, Interlocking Fitters; Maintenance of Electrical Section—Leading Hand Railway Electrician, Railway Electricians, Assistant Supervising Technicians, Linesmen."

(4) "Yes. Key personnel received training on 'Westronic' equipment in McKenzie & Holland's Melbourne Workshop and in addition technical staff had received training at the P.M.G.'s technician's training school in electronic and transmission techniques."

SCHOOL TRANSPORT SERVICE, BESSIE POINT AND SECOND BEACH, CAIRNS

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

(1) What are the present arrangements for the transportation of school children from Bessie Point and Second Beach, in the Cairns area?

(2) How many of the 28 children are being transported by school bus?

(3) Is the present service satisfactory and, if not, will he take steps to remedy the erratic service to these areas which has operated since last May and have a regular and reliable service maintained?

Answers:—

(1) "As a more desirable alternative to the School Boat Service which has operated between these areas and Cairns over a period of approximately five years and in response to requests by parents, approval was given during August last for the institution of a road transport service to Gordonvale. It is not being operated because the contractor selected by the Local Conveyance Committee, has not yet obtained a vehicle. Another operator is available but is not preferred by the committee. Recently, the Department of Environment, Aborigines and the Arts, Canberra, advised the Regional Director of Education, Townsville, that the question of approval of a loan or grant to the prospective contractor was awaiting determination by their Minister."

(2 and 3) "Although the actual number is not known, information to hand shows that some of the Bessie Point children have been conveyed to the terminal point of the Green Hills–Gordonvale School Transport Service. This arrangement is considered to be unsatisfactory and the matter is receiving urgent attention."

NATIONAL PARK FOR COPPERLODE FALLS DAM AREA

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

(1) Has any consideration been given to declaring a national park in the approaches and surrounds of the proposed Copperlode Falls dam?

(2) If not, will he give urgent attention to the matter in this area and similar areas in an endeavour to preserve the true tropical rain forests of Far North Queensland which are unique in Australia?

Answers:—

(1) "No."

(2) "The entire catchment area of the dam is within State Forest and as such the rain forest cover will be preserved. There are extensive areas of tropical rain forest in existing National Parks in North Queensland; rain forest is widely represented in National Park proposals presently being considered; and the work of assessing the National Park potential of other areas in North Queensland will proceed on a systematic basis."

Mr. R. Jones: They are still knocking down a lot of rain forest.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I warn the honourable member for Cairns under Standing Order 123A. He has been consistently interjecting and cross-firing in the Chamber.

POLICE RADAR OPERATIONS

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

(1) How many police personnel, on an average, are engaged in radar surveillance in the metropolitan area each day?

(2) How many radar teams are engaged on such surveillance?

(3) What type and how many motor units are attached to the radar teams?

(4) How many traffic-offence tickets were issued to offenders caught in radar traps during September?

(5) Is there any evidence of a reduction in the accident rate at locations regularly policed by radar units and, if so, what are the locations and the accident statistics for the comparative periods?

Answers:—

(1) "Twelve."

(2) "An average of five per day."

(3) "One station sedan to each team."

(4) "2,382."

(5) "This information is not readily available."

HOUSING COMMISSION OPERATIONS, MOUNT ISA

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

(1) How many Housing Commission houses have been constructed in Mount Isa for each year since July 1, 1967 to June 30, 1971?

(2) How many were allocated in each year for (*a*) home ownership, (*b*) guaranteed rental and (*c*) rental?

(3) What is the present number of applicants for homes in the above categories?

Answers:—

(1) "1967-68, 27; 1968-69, 52; 1969-70, 31; 1970-71, 68; at June 30, 1971, contracts were current for a further 89 houses."

(2) "The foregoing comprise:—

—	(*a*) Home-ownership	(*b*) Guarantee	(*c*) Rental
1967–68 ..	21	6	..
1968–69 ..	41	9	2
1969–70 ..	28	3	..
1970–71 ..	29	37	2
Totals	119	55	4 "

(3) (*a*) "Clerk of Court, Mount Isa, has available for purchase 22 houses which are under construction; (*b*) 27; (*c*) With priority, 35; without priority, 38."

DRIVING OF MOTOR VEHICLES ON BEACHES

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

(1) What laws are in existence to prevent motor vehicles, registered or unregistered, from being driven on beaches in a manner dangerous to the public?

(2) What authority has the responsibility in this regard to enforce public safety below the high-water mark?

(3) Have local authorities the power, in the interest of public safety, to declare selected areas of a beach out of bounds to motorised traffic and, if not, will he consider the early introduction of legislation designed to protect the public from speeding vehicles on beaches?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) "The Government is deeply concerned about the general question of behaviour of motor vehicles on vacant crown land including beaches and an inter-departmental committee has been formed to examine in depth all aspects of the matter and to make firm recommendations for consideration by Cabinet. I am advised that the committee has not yet completed its investigations."

RETRAINING AND RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF DISPLACED FARM PERSONNEL

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

(1) Bearing in mind that rural reconstruction plans have been in the hands of his Government since December, 1970,

what steps have been taken in the policies of adjustment for retraining and re-establishing displaced farm personnel and when will such plans be put into operation?

(2) Are there any plans to further educate farmers' children who are withdrawn from school to work and assist on family farms?

(3) Is he aware that research has shown that the children of farmers, on the average, have an education worse than city children, with the tendency becoming worse?

Answers:—

(1 and 2) "The Rural Reconstruction Employment Training Scheme was announced by the Minister for Labour and National Service in the House of Representatives, Canberra, on September 16, 1971, and the scheme is in force as from October 1, 1971. This scheme was developed after consultation with all States, including Queensland. Booklets describing the scheme are available from any office of the Commonwealth Employment Service or the Regional Office of the Department of Labour and National Service, Brisbane."

(3) "There is a considerable body of research which establishes a high correlation between parents' socio-economic status and educational level and the amount of education their children receive. Farmers fall into many different categories on the socio-economic scale and it is doubtful if a researcher would make a generalisation as broad as this."

CONTROLLED MARKETING OF WOOL

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

(1) Have there been any moves in Queensland to market any definable part of the State's wool clip in order to bring about controlled marketing and to seek co-operation with those who purchase and manufacture fine and superfine wools?

(2) Have there been moves of this nature in other States and what effect would such a programme have on the activities of the Australian Wool Board if it were introduced into Queensland?

Answers:—

(1) "This of course comes within the activities of the Australian Wool Commission, which is concerned with marketing all of the Australian wool clip."

(2) "There is no accurate information to hand although I understand there has been a Press item reporting the formation of a superfine woolgrowers organisation in Victoria, but the aims, organisation and function of the body are not officially known. The effects of such an organisation on the activities of the Australian Wool Board would depend on the aims and function of such an organisation."

TROUT-STOCKING OF STREAMS; FISH FARMS

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

(1) Are there any trout-breeding farms in Queensland and is there any commercial trout fishing?

(2) As trout fishing is an international sport, has the feasibility of establishing a trout industry in rural areas been investigated for commercial purposes and for attracting tourists to well-stocked inland streams?

(3) Has the fishing industry in Queensland a stable export future and has the establishment of inland and open-sea fish farms, as a source of exportable low-cost protein, been investigated?

Answers:—

(1 and 2) "There are no trout fish breeding farms in Queensland at present. One was established at Spring Creek, Killarney, in 1896 and Killarney trout was subsequently introduced to other streams. In recent years, rainbow and brown trout were placed in streams on the Atherton Tableland and at Tinaroo. All introductions have been unsuccessful."

(3) "The fishing industry in Queensland, other than in respect of prawns, does not appear as yet to have an export future. Queensland presently is an importer of fish and it is very doubtful that competitive export markets would give an economic return to producers in comparison with the local market. Protein derived from fish of acceptable edible grading would be relatively high-cost protein."

INFLATABLE LIFE RAFTS ON COMMERCIAL VESSELS

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

(1) Are inflatable life rafts compulsory on State survey vessels and other vessels such as trawlers, etc., which carry crews and/or passengers in open waters?

(2) If not, will he consider introducing legislation to make it compulsory for all such vessels to carry them?

Answers:—

(1) "Marine life saving equipment regulations in Queensland do not provide for compulsory inflatable life rafts on all State surveyed vessels, but do make it compulsory that sea going commercial vessels carry a life jacket and 1½ cubic feet of buoyant apparatus, which may be fixed or inflatable, for each person on board."

(2) "I am advised that a sub-committee of the Association of Port and Marine Authorities Council which includes representatives of the Commonwealth as well

as each of the State Governments is at present examining all aspects of small ship safety, including equipment. When the recommendations of the council are known, this State's regulations covering safety equipment on commercial vessels will be reviewed."

CABINET DIRECTORSHIP IN PUBLIC COMPANIES

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

In view of the report in the *Sunday Sun* of October 10 which stated that two Government Liberal Senators, namely Ian Wood and Malcolm Scott, were directors of the company called Nickelfields, which was valued at $10 million last year and which is to be wound up now because it cannot pay a debt of $2,583, are any members of the Cabinet directors of any public companies and, if so, which Cabinet members?

Answer:—

"To my knowledge no Member of Cabinet is a director of any public company."

PARLIAMENTARY RATIFICATION OF STATE OF EMERGENCY PROCLAMATIONS

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

(1) Has he read the claim made by Mr. Edward St. John, Q.C., a member of the Liberal Party and published in *The Courier-Mail* of October 1, to the effect that powers under a state of emergency Proclamation should be under proper parliamentary control?

(2) If so, will he arrange to amend the legislation by withdrawing such powers from the Transport Act and making provision for Parliament to be properly called together if not in session so that any declaration of a state of emergency will have to be ratified by the supreme legislative body in the State?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes, I saw the article of twelve days ago to which the Honourable Member now makes reference."

(2) "I am not interested in or concerned with Mr. St. John's remarks. The question of the introduction of amending legislation is a matter of Government policy."

ORDER IN GALLERY

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Would the children leaving the gallery please do so quietly. They are causing a disturbance, and it is very difficult to hear what is being said.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

DISUSED ROAD-MAKING MACHINERY, GOLD COAST HIGHWAY, PIMPAMA

Mr. HEATLEY: I ask the Minister for Mines and Main Roads: Who owns the derelict road-making machinery alongside the Gold Coast Highway at Pimpama, and what steps have been taken to have it removed?

Mr. CAMM: I can assure the honourable member that it is not owned by the Main Roads Department. As to who the actual owner may be, I think this is a matter between the previous contractor and the hire-purchase companies who might own the machinery. However, I would not have any idea who actually owns it.

QUEENSLAND MARINE ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION

Hon. N. T. E. HEWITT (Mackenzie—Minister for Conservation, Marine and Aboriginal Affairs): 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 Queensland Marine Acts 1958 to 1967 in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

SALE OF CROWN LAND, MORETON ISLAND; BARRIER REEF HOTEL PTY. LTD.

Hon. V. B. SULLIVAN (Condamine—Minister for Lands) (11.56 a.m.): This is the second occasion in recent weeks that I have been required to defend officers of my department against scurrilous, although groundless, attacks by Opposition members. The honourable members concerned have not gone to the trouble to get the facts straight.

I regret that the honourable members for Wynnum and Mourilyan are not present in the Chamber. Previously, I elected to answer the honourable member for Wynnum by way of a Ministerial statement but I was handicapped somewhat. I felt that I had dealt with him sufficiently, but I read in this morning's Press that he was given his marching orders last night by the Chairman of Committees because by way of interjection he referred to me as "a liar and a cheat." That, no doubt, goes back to the complaint he made about blocks of land sold on Moreton Island. I challenge the honourable member for Wynnum to prove, either inside or outside this Chamber, that I am a liar or a cheat in relation to those sales or anything in my private life.

On 6 October, the honourable member for Mourilyan, in speaking of Dunk Island, made a completely unwarranted attack on my

integrity and that of my officers in the Department of Forestry. I think honourable members know me well enough to realise that I do not need to reply on my own behalf. But I am deeply concerned about those sincere and dedicated officers of the Crown who are unable to defend themselves against this sort of gratuitous attack which is becoming all too frequent from members such as the honourable member for Mourilyan.

In the first place, let me state my belief that it is important to have on Dunk Island a viable tourist resort of the type that the present management is endeavouring to provide, and that until this company took over the resort there were a number of changes in ownership and the situation was far from satisfactory. This view is supported by authorities with a knowledge of the tourist industry, who are qualified to assess the position. That is also well known by the Minister for Primary Industries and the Minister for Industrial Development.

The honourable member referred to his having raised the matter on 25 November 1970, and claimed that—

> "Since that time no action has been taken by any Government Department or the appropriate Minister on submissions made by interested persons."

That is completely untrue, as the honourable member well knows. The "Hansard" record of the honourable member's speech on 25 November 1970 shows that he raised the following matters concerning Dunk Island—

> 1. He claimed that Mr. McIllree, owner of the tourist resort at Dunk Island, had been allowed by the Forestry Department, with the approval of the Department of Lands, to obtain six acres near the Banfield memorial in lieu of half an acre that he returned to the Department for national park purposes;
>
> 2. He claimed to have been informed by both the Lands Department and the Forestry Department that Mr. McIllree was negotiating to procure additional national park land and to relinquish land that he already held as special lease; and
>
> 3. He stated that Mr. McIllree had made it known that if he got the second piece of land he would keep locals off the island.

Then, as now, the honourable member was greviously in error. He has apparently been given incorrect information and has accepted it at face value without having first checked its accuracy.

In particular, Mr. McIllree did not obtain six acres near the Banfield memorial. He had no need to, because his company already had freehold title to the land near Banfield's grave. In fact, the company surrendered an area of 1 rood 3 perches, including the grave, from that freehold for a reserve for a proposed Banfield memorial museum. No part of the land obtained by the resort at the same time as that surrendered was, or ever had been, national park, nor had it been under the control of the Department of Forestry in any way. There is thus no question of Mr. McIllree having been allowed by the Forestry Department to acquire the land.

Surely the honourable member knows that the powers of the company to exclude locals from the island are restricted to its freehold land, and inquiries made by the district forester show that action to debar certain individuals from the resort area was justified by an incident involving damage to resort furniture and the physical assault of the manager. Does the honourable member encourage this sort of thing?

Mr. F. P. MOORE: I rise to a point of order. I definitely refute the statement that I agree with any nonsense that goes on at Dunk Island. Dunk Island can call the police from Tully immediately, or within five minutes, and I ask the Minister to withdraw that statement.

Mr. SULLIVAN: I withdraw it.

Turning to the honourable member's remarks of 6 October, his most serious misstatements were—

> (1) that I, as Minister, asked my officers to find ways and means of allowing the hotel company to obtain this land;
>
> (2) that no action has been taken by any Government department or the appropriate Minister on submissions made by interested persons; and
>
> (3) that recommendations recently conveyed by forestry officers to the Cardwell Shire Council were complete fabrications.

I am quoting the honourable member. At no time have I asked my officers to find ways and means of allowing the resort company to obtain more land. The application by Great Barrier Reef Hotel Pty. Ltd. has been dealt with by my department in the normal manner, after full investigation of the situation at Dunk Island, and after taking into consideration all relevant circumstances.

Since 7 October 1970 there has been a thorough assessment of the situation by the Department of Forestry involving certain consideration of all submissions of interested persons. This has involved inspection of the island by the officer in charge of national parks and the district forester, a check of The Spit and resort area to ascertain the precise location of property boundaries and the relevant position of the present shoreline, and detailed consideration of the present and expected future needs for public recreation and for associated park facilities.

I have been kept informed of these investigations and have received and considered detailed reports from the Conservator of Forests on these matters. I have also received and considered submissions from a Cabinet colleague representing interested parties, and I have discussed the conservator's recommendations with him. Furthermore, the

district forester and the officer in charge of national parks called on the honourable member for Mourilyan in February this year to discuss the situation, to explain the department's position in the matter, to assure him that public interests would be safeguarded, and to discuss any queries which he raised. Yet he now claims that no action has taken place, and that recommendations conveyed to the council by officers of the Department of Forestry are fabrications that these officers took nearly 12 months to invent. Shocking! I can assure the honourable member that these recommendations are not fabrications. They were based on thorough investigation. They have been discussed with me and have my full support. It was on my instruction that these officers discussed them with the council.

As to the honourable member's protestations concerning the bulldozing of an area of the rain forest on the southern end of the airstrip and his suggestion that I should be taking action against the company for 'dozing down national park forest, a look at a map of the island will show that the national park is at least 30 chains further along the coast. I suggest the honourable member go there and have a look at it and acquaint himself of the position. Land in the vicinity of the southern end of the airstrip has never been national park.

I can assure the honourable member that public interests will be fully safeguarded in this matter. I appreciate that it is because of the honourable member's concern for those interests that he has raised the matter, but I trust that he will in future take the precaution of checking the accuracy of complaints that are made to him before levelling accusations at Government officers. In view of the accusations and the criticism of officers of my department by both the honourable member for Wynnum and the honourable member for Mourilyan, I would say they are acting very irresponsibly.

Mr. HARRIS: I rise to a point of order. At no time did I criticise the Minister's officers. I merely said that the Minister was hiding behind the apathy of some officers. I ask that the Minister withdraw that remark.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I take it the Minister will accept the denial of the honourable member for Wynnum?

Mr. SULLIVAN: It seems as though I have to.

STATEMENTS BY MRS. SHIRLEY BRIFMAN

Mr. BENNETT (South Brisbane) (12.6 p.m.): The matter of public interest that I wish to raise this morning was referred to in this morning's "Courier-Mail". I think it is of great interest that two detectives of the Queensland Police Force should seek at this late stage, through the columns of "The Courier-Mail", to denigrate a woman named Shirley Brifman, whom they both befriended for many years, whom they organised into becoming, from their point of view, the "darling" of the 1963 National Hotel Royal Commission, and who, with others, according to her own say-so, committed perjury at their behest.

While they may choose to raise her record, their offence is the more heinous because apparently they knew that she was committing perjury during the National Hotel Royal Commission in 1963. They have been very friendly with her over the years. Detective Sergeant Tony Murphy wrote friendly letters to her, one of which, dated 28 August 1963, read—

"By the way Marg . . ."

Incidentally, that is her correct name. When one is speaking to her as a friend and not addressing her in her professional capacity, one apparently calls her "Marg".

The letter reads—

"By the way Marg, I would like to reassure you that anything you tell me in confidence, will always be kept that way by myself, and so consequently, you need have no fear of my repeating anything you tell me in your letters to anyone, for I am only too well aware of the position that it would put you in. If you are worried over anything in that regard, you can leave it to me to see everything is always covered, as I have in fact already done at all times."

That statement is contained in a letter to the girl whom these detectives are now trying to denigrate.

The letter also says—

"The first time I'm in Sydney, which I don't think should be that long, I'll give you a ring just to have a mag about what's going on down there . . . Wishing yourself and Sonny all the best, cheerio for the present."

It is signed "Tony Murphy" over the words, "Det. Tony Murphy". A later letter reads, in part—

"In particular I was pleased to learn what you knew concerning this person David Young . . . You may well realise my surprise to learn that he had accused me of certain misconduct. I'm still not sure what he has alleged against me."

Further on, the letter reads—

"We waited at 8 p.m. last night for your phone call. I do hope that you clearly understand that any information you give re Young etc. will be used by myself most discreetly . . . But most important now to put your mind at ease, if you are in fact thinking that some policeman either from N.S.W. or Queensland, will land on your doorstep any tick of the clock, such will not be the case."

Here is one detective in Queensland saying that he has such perfect control of the Queensland and New South Wales Police Forces that he can guarantee to this girl, whose record he well knew, that no policeman would visit her premises.

The letter continues—

"If any member of the Force is to interview you, it will be myself . . . In other words Marg, the same applies in this case, as has applied with respect to all the other info. you have given me over the years, and I do hope you trust me in this regard. You are at liberty to ring me at my home, 40-3832, if you think fit, as it is most imperative that I know as much as possible re Young, in order that I can protect myself. Should you think that there are other things which might occur to you, if I were to talk to you personally in Sydney, I think that such could be arranged."

He can even go to Sydney when it suits him.

The honourable member for Merthyr is on record as having said, "I have just squared Murphy off with Delamothe." He may be able to explain that.

Then, on 2 July 1971, this woman, who has been so friendly with Detectives Tony Murphy and Glen Hallahan, said that she had worked in "Killarney" and that she had dealings there with Tony Murphy, Detective Hallahan and others who must have known that she was operating at the time. That was long before the royal commission; we all know when "Killarney" closed down. At that interview on 2 July 1971, in the presence of Assistant Commissioner Duncan, she said, "I lied because I was told to lie." Then she was asked, "Now the big question is, who told you to lie?", and she said, "Well, I was in Sydney and they were in touch with me all the time. Detective Sergeant Murphy and Hallahan were the two men. They used to ring me at night after the court case."

She then went on to say that on one occasion her life was threatened. She said that in the early days she was practising as a prostitute and her name was "Marge", and she was asked also at that interview, at which an Assistant Commissioner of police was present, "Do you know who sent you these letters?"—the letters from which I have already read extracts—and she said, "Detective Sergeant Tony Murphy." Then she said, "I would say that is Tony Murphy's signature. He was stationed at Woolloongabba when he wrote me the letters."

This woman said also that threats were made on her life after her sister was taken to court, and Assistant Commissioner Duncan said, "You claim that both Murphy and Hallahan separately made threats to you on the phone on the same night?" She said, "Yes." He said, "Do you claim you could recognise the voices of both on the phone?" She said, "Yes, I would probably recognise their voices. If you had been talking to them since 1958 till about 12 months ago."

Assistant Commissioner Duncan said, "Well, now, have you any further comment about the contents of (a certain document that he had in his possession from the New South Wales Police Force relating to the commission)?" She said, "I did lie."

Mr. Hinze: A self-confessed perjurer—and you are reading that rubbish in the House!

Mr. BENNETT: Of course she is a self-confessed perjurer, because these detectives arranged for her to commit perjury. That is the really serious situation: That a royal commission into a particular matter can be frustrated and deceived by a girl who is prepared to commit perjury at the behest of certain detectives in the Queensland Police Force. It is a shocking situation. I certainly agree that she is a self-confessed perjurer. The honourable member can read the evidence that she gave, as did Mrs. Halliday, that she was not a prostitute, but the records of the Modus Operandi Section will show that the Queensland Police Force knew that the evidence that these women were giving was untruthful. In spite of that, they allowed Commissioner Gibbs to be deceived in that fashion on this matter.

On 3 August 1971 she said—

"Detective Glen Hallahan flew down from Brisbane. It was the same year that Harold Holt died. Glen spent Christmas Day with Ray Kelly and then Glen was at my home. He was staying at the Rex. Glen was at my place on Boxing Day at 23 Maitland Avenue, Kingsford. He flew to Melbourne. He was only there a short time. He went there over a bombing in Brisbane where a woman and a baby was hurt. The woman is now blind. He arrives back and called at my home but later I met him in the Rex and had a few beers with him upstairs"—he was not too proud to have a few beers with her—"and he produced forged money. I did not know it was forged money. Then he said, 'Have you ever seen forged money Shirl?' It was ten-dollar notes. To me they looked real notes. Did he have a pile. He said, 'Do you want some, Shirley?' I said, 'No.' I said, 'What are you going to do with all them?' He said, 'I am going to use some myself, and the rest I am going to load onto crims I don't like.' Brian Wells, a cat burglar, the best in Australia——" (Government laughter.)

Honourable members opposite can check the court records. If they do, they will see that Hallahan arrived in Townsville and that a certain accused—I do not know whether he was a criminal up to that stage—was charged with having forged notes in his possession, and his defence was that he had been "loaded up" with them by Glen Hallahan.

I have a personal knowledge of this man's defence, and that was his defence at the time. It is strangely significant that his defence seems to be confirmed by what this woman says. Incidentally, information of this type would not be obtained from anyone who is 100 per cent virtuous and does not mix with the underworld. Detectives would not seek information from such people or ask them to commit perjury. There is only one category with whom they work. One

has to consider the evidence of people of this type, as they are the ones with whom detectives work.

(Time expired.)

EFFECT ON WOOL SALES OF INDUSTRIAL STOPPAGE BY STOREMEN AND PACKERS' UNION

Mr. McKECHNIE (Carnarvon) (12.16 p.m.): I desire to raise a matter of public interest that is of great concern to the people of Queensland generally, but particularly to those in the sheep country, and I refer both to the pastoral people themselves and to those who reside in the urban areas within the sheep-lands of this State.

The Commonwealth and Queensland Governments agree that the wool industry must be made viable and be able to maintain a degree of confidence to prevent foreclosing on wool-growers. To remedy this financial crisis, lenders need to see the wool-grower with a more secure income than the present low prices provide. To assist the wool-grower through drought and financial stress over the past six years, the Commonwealth and State Governments provided $55,000,000 to primary producers in Queensland, and now $16,000,000 has also been provided for rural reconstruction. In addition, The Treasurer has announced that a further $10,000,000 will be provided entirely from State funds to assist wool-growers in the central western areas of the State.

Last month in Brisbane, wool averaged 61c to 62c per kilo, equivalent to 27c or 28c a lb, despite support from the Australian Wool Commission, which increased it from the 22c to 23c that prevailed in earlier sales. To date this support has cost approximately $10,000,000, Australia-wide. To assist wool-growers, their employees and the people of rural Queensland, both in the towns and in the countryside, the Commonwealth this season instituted a reserve-price payment scheme for eligible wool of 38.91c a lb, which is equivalent to 36c a lb on the whole clip, or 79.3c per kilo, seeing that the wool industry has switched over to the metric system. The total cost of this scheme could be $100,000,000.

Both Governments, Commonwealth and State, have set out to assist people in the wool industry, whether they be the owners of the sheep or members of the rural communities in those areas. They have put quite a lot of money into the various assistance schemes. It is rather galling and frustrating for people in those areas to find that a lot of this work is being undermined by the Storemen and Parkers' Union, whose members are now on strike.

As wool in store cannot be delivered, and under agreement will not be paid for until it is afloat, the money that has been offered for wool at auction in Brisbane cannot be paid to the brokers and then passed on to the wool-growers, who in turn would use it to pay their employees and settle their accounts in the rural towns. Consequently, in many cases, the action of the Storemen and Packers' Union is denying sustenance to people who are struggling under extremely adverse conditions, who are working day and night in an endeavour to retrieve their industry, and who, in most cases, earn much lower wages than the storemen and packers. Many of them are on a sustenance payment less than the basic wage.

Mr. Davis: Do you want the storemen and packers to subsidise them now?

Mr. McKECHNIE: I have heard no suggestion to that effect.

Mr. Davis: You want them to.

Mr. McKECHNIE: I am not asking the storemen and packers to subsidise them; I am simply asking them to go back to work. There is no suggestion that their wages or conditions should be reduced, and consequently the honourable member for Brisbane cannot in any way imply that any subsidy is paid. If they would do their job and deliver the wool, the people who are suffering extreme hardship would have an opportunity to get the money that is rightly theirs upon delivery.

Mr. Davis: Why don't you attack the wool-brokers?

Mr. McKECHNIE: Why should I?

Mr. Davis: For not paying them.

Mr. McKECHNIE: They are prepared to pay according to the award; there has not been any dispute about that. I ask the honourable member to rise in this House and point out any wool-brokers who are not paying the men's wages or are trying to cut them.

It is solely the attitude of the union that is creating this extreme and unnecessary hardship, not only to the growers of wool but to the rural towns and the growers' employees. The union is endangering the employees' jobs, because many growers are struggling desperately to provide the wages to keep their men with them. A sense of loyalty has existed for many years in the pastoral industry, and it flows both ways. While I know employees who work extremely long hours and beyond the call of duty for their employers, I also know employers who are denying themselves many things in order to keep these employees with them. It is a two-way sense of loyalty, and honourable members cannot fail to realise the frustration and annoyance of people who live far from the coast when they are forced onto a still lower standard of living by the actions of the Storemen and Packers' Union. I cannot see that the members of this union are showing any sense of responsibility towards their fellow-men when, by their actions, they make the situation far worse than it is—and it is quite bad enough in its own right without this destructive human element entering to further worsen it.

I ask the honourable member for Brisbane what is the A.L.P.'s attitude? Do they wish to help these people? They go into the rural areas and capitalise on the financial distress of country people, saying that they want to help. I see no evidence of it.

Mr. Baldwin: Get a Government in office that will help them.

Mr. McKECHNIE: The honourable member for Logan says, "Get a Government that will help them." I think it was he and some of his colleagues who went out into country areas and advocated a 35-hour working week in the pastoral industry, in which the principals are working 50 and 60 hours a week. I hope he goes out further and more often and expounds this attitude in the rural areas. I welcome any attempt by him and his colleagues to exploit the situation.

Mr. Baldwin: You cannot handle it.

Mr. McKECHNIE: I would welcome the honourable member for Logan going out and explaining what the A.L.P. has done for the rural areas. He encourages strikes such as the one now being conducted by the Storemen and Packers' Union, which is denying people in rural areas their living and sustenance. He advocates a 35-hour week in an industry that is struggling for survival. Everything he advocates increases costs to rural producers, and they are well aware of it. The more he and his colleagues go out into the country the more this will be realised.

However, my purpose is to make an appeal to the Storemen and Packers' Union to use common sense and humanity and, in the name of co-operation and assistance to the whole State, return to work so that the money for the wool can go out to where it is needed. And I am not now referring only to wool-growers; I include also their employees and the people in the towns and other areas who so urgently need this money, which is being denied to them by this action by the Storemen and Packers' Union.

CONTEMPORARY READING FOR SENIOR ENGLISH STUDENTS

Mr. BALDWIN (Logan) (12.25 p.m.): During the past few weeks we have heard from the honourable member for Toowong a diatribe and unfounded criticism of the contents of certain Senior English textbooks. He has put forward his ideas and those of other people who support him on the likely effect that those books will have on school-students and the public. I rise to refute some of the misleading and untrue allegations made by the honourable member about a number of the books that he alleged are set for Senior English, and to criticise questions that have been asked by the honourable member for Wavell. I also condemn the disgraceful and hasty retreat of the Minister for Education and Cultural Activities from the defence of his department's teachers.

In the short time that I have available I shall refer to only a few of the 13 books referred to on one list and the 18 mentioned on another list. It is apparent that the honourable members for Toowong and Wavell, and the Minister for Education, have subverted the meaning and intent of the nine books that I have read and possibly of the others that I have not read. They have shown that they have a gross inability to comprehend, relate and compare and they have also exhibited their obvious Victorian prudery. These critics have failed to give even one clear indication to the public, either by way of a speech in this House or in Press and television interviews, of the true contents of the books. They have expected the public to accept their say-so of what the books contain—but this is typical with one-sided sectional Government which those honourable members have clearly shown themselves to be party to at least 100 times in this Chamber. It appears that the two honourable members to whom I have referred have been frightened into a political stampede from which they hope to gain personal kudos to prop them up in their shaky party positions. They have quoted passages of the books out of context and used those passages for the purpose of criticising the books as a whole.

When I was an English teacher at school I used to punish boys whom I caught cutting all the "dirty" bits out of books and learning them by heart or showing them round by telling them what a true work of art was. I can imagine Red-baiters like the two Government members looking at paintings by Titian, Delacroix and Constable and saying that they have too much red in them so, "take it out", and these works would thus be destroyed.

I have with me three of the books referred to by the honourable member for Toowong. Recently I read them. As well, I have three others that are available on library bookshelves and in book stores. Two of them have been set for university students, but I have not heard any comments made about them by the Government members. Yet, because school-teachers happened to put the books that were referred to in school libraries, they were crucified without even being afforded protection by their Minister.

Nine of the books that I have read should be read by all members of the community in this age when the Press contains hundreds of reports about the increase in homosexuality, abortions and sex crimes. However, those books have been totally misinterpreted. I cannot possibly deal with those nine books in the short time that I have available, so I shall restrict my comments to one of them, "Catcher in the Rye". Briefly, it is the story of a neglected child born of rich parents, who put him into schools that simply turned out students like a sausage machine. The schools were more interested in correct grammar than in what he was saying, and

were more intent on booming themselves up and seeking kudos on the public schools advertisement lists than in looking after an adolescent boy who possessed high sensitivity and great perspicacity—much more than that displayed by the two Government members. Because he had no way of giving vent to his feelings he failed at school, and this fact preyed upon his mind. Nevertheless, he resisted perversity.

Mr. R. E. Moore interjected.

Mr. BALDWIN: Read the book.

"Catcher in the Rye" was published in the era of films that portrayed child-actor exploitation, and the author was trying to warn students and parents about it. Because of the warning that it conveys I would recommend it to all parents of adolescent boys. As a teacher I saw the dangers, and I know of students who took overdoses of pills because they were not aware of the danger they were in. The author set out to protect young children, and that is why he named his book "Catcher in the Rye". The theme of the book is expressed in the line, "If a body catch a body coming through the rye". The idea is the same—protect that body. The lad in this book was trying to erase the filth being scribbled over the walls of Chicago and New York at that time.

Mr. Porter interjected.

Mr. BALDWIN: The honourable member would do better to read the book. I could go through the other eight or nine of them that I have read in the same way and illustrate to the House how a totally wrong interpretation of their meaning and intent has been given. I taught Senior English when two of these books were on the prescribed list. I would be prepared to teach them to pupils anywhere. Evidently when the first list of 13 books was made out, it was not given proper thought. One book entitled "M.A.S.H." was taken off the list, and another list was compiled.

I have received a circular—I do not know where it came from—headed, "Questionable Books," accompanied by a short letter referring to quotations from the books in question. I emphasise that the quotations were taken from the books totally out of context to try to destroy the meaning and intent of the work, which was designed to present a case on society's failure to spread a broad education based on today's modern society, from which mothers and fathers, more and more, are being taken from their families to engage in long working hours under a sectional government such as ours, to make great profits for overseas companies. In these circumstances it seems that the first thought of Government members is to blame the authors, and then they blame the teachers.

On 7 September, a question was asked in this House about alleged obscene literature. I will not read it all because I am sure that all honourable members recall it. The Minister's answers to each of the first three parts of the question was, "Yes". One part of the question was in these terms—

> "Will he reassure parents that every endeavour will be made to ensure that Queensland's junior citizens are protected from pornography?"

The inference was that these works were pornographic. The Minister's third "Yes" was in reply to this part of the question—

> "Will he ensure that our children do not have obscene literature forced on them by teachers to whose judgment we are being asked to give carte blanche approval?"

By replying in the affirmative, the Minister implied that he had no faith in the Senior teachers or the subject masters who set these books.

I have no time to refer in detail to the speech made by the honourable member for Toowong on this subject, but he wrongly assumed that those books are set in title, and are compulsory reading in every school. That is a complete exaggeration of the truth. I rang teachers at 11 high schools and found that only four of them had some of these books. Two had two of them, it was thought that one school had one, and the third and the fourth had one each. They were set by teachers highly qualified and trained, and of some experience. If they are not highly qualified, they should not be placed in charge of English in these schools. If there is any blame, it can be placed fairly and squarely on the Minister and his department.

I agree with what the Director of Secondary Education, Mr. Roberts, said in answer to this criticism. He made a fair assessment of it. I pity Mr. Roberts for having to skate through the prudery of the neo-Victorian "shutuppery" to get his circular out to the principals and to defend the teachers, when their Minister failed to do so.

I have here three other books, two of them from a quadrilogy by Lawrence Durrell. These books have never been mentioned although they have been on the university syllabus. They are Fascist in intent. They really set out to destroy, and paint a picture of homosexuality, drug addiction and many other matters as things to be desired. The other nine I have read are designed to have the opposite effect, but they have been crucified. This book entitled, "Isle of Free Love" is obtainable anywhere. It was sent to me by a parent whose girl picked it up from a bookstall on the street. Why does not the Government do something about it? If all these books are pornographic, what is the Board of Literature Review doing?

My last point is that this criticism has a class basis, which is significant. In the other books, and in a dozen others I could mention, there is no class criticism of the Governments of our societies with their sectional groups, which push this trash and

really want to keep the people of the State—the working classes—uneducated so that they can never resist the Governments or their sectionalism. But these books which have been attacked do so. To see a work of art such as "Coonardoo" placed on this list suggests to me that the people who put it there suffer from some psychiatric trouble. I invite them to read it in its historical context. I had to read it and, even though it was revolting in parts, it was like having to take a dose of castor oil. It was like having a doctor make an incision to remove an infected appendix. The doctors and psychiatrists can act as they do, but the moment a teacher tries to act in the same way he becomes an object of public pillory. This is what we must face.

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS IN PARLIAMENT

Mr. HINZE (South Coast) (12.35 p.m.): The honourable member for South Brisbane's information on alleged police graft and massage parlours is about as accurate as his knowledge of Greek mythology. It will be recalled that the other day the honourable member referred to Isis as being the Greek goddess of love. To enlighten the honourable member, she was in fact the Egyptian goddess of the Moon. She was the wife of the Egyptian god Osiris, who was the Sun God. The Greek goddess of love was Aphrodite. She was known to the Romans as Venus.

But that is all by the way. The point I want to make is that we are being continually subjected by the honourable member for South Brisbane to a recital of matters which he raises in the House on the claim that they are of some public importance. Last week he tabled a 17-page document. It was signed by a convicted criminal named Giegler from the South Coast. Yesterday, he tried to table another document of 23 pages containing information given by a woman named Brifman.

This morning I asked the Minister for Works and Housing a question concerning this woman. The Minister, in his reply, advised the House that this woman is at present awaiting trial for procuring her 13-year-old daughter—not her 15-year-old daughter, as I thought—for the purpose of prostitution. The honourable member for South Brisbane uses information given to him by such a person. We have just listened to a great diatribe from him in which he tried to paint this woman's virtues.

I do not intend to say anything about prostitutes as such. That is their business. But surely this Parliament should be protected against the tabling of documents such as the ones from Giegler and Brifman. A good deal of the time of his House was taken up with letters that apparently had been written by Queensland detectives to this particular woman. She is the type of person referred to as a police pimp or stool-pigeon. Does not the Commissioner of Police himself ask for assistance in combating crime? Did he not ask the people of Queensland to assist him—in fact a reward has been offered—concerning a murder committed in this State? As everybody in Queensland knows, detectives use stool-pigeons to obtain information. This woman is a stool-pigeon. Evidently Hallahan and Murphy wrote letters to this woman, and they have been produced in this Parliament seven or eight years after they were written for the sole purpose of bringing down the good name of the Queensland Police Force and that of highly respected police officers. Frankly I do not know where we are going. This Parliament makes laws, but, if the Government does not protect Queensland police officers, they will not stay here. Everybody knows that Hallahan and Murphy are highly respected police officers.

I say quite clearly, without any equivocation, that the honourable member for South Brisbane has conducted a vendetta during the five years I have been a member of Parliament. He has not stopped bringing information into this House from police pimps who have gone to him. Obviously the same applies to the letters he introduced this morning. He does not like Hallahan using police pimps, but he uses them himself for his own purposes.

Last year and the year before, Ministers were accused in this House of using Parliament for their own personal gain. But can we not apply the same attitude to the honourable member for South Brisbane for using information given to him by his clients? What ethics has he when a person goes to him as a lawyer and later finds that whatever he told his lawyer is mentioned on the floor of Parliament? Is that a "fair go"?

Everybody knows that a 17-page document by Giegler was tabled in this House. He was convicted for carrying a gun in the streets of Surfers Paradise. Brifman, by her own words, is a self-confessed perjurer. I did not say that about her; she said it herself. She is a prostitute who is awaiting trial for procuring her 13-year-old daughter. Apparently, we are to be subjected, time after time, to the introduction of this rubbish by the honourable member for South Brisbane, and his wasting the time of the State. Mr. Speaker, will you please clear the air in this regard? Is it possible that this same member will get other contradictory, stupid statements and obtain your permission to table them? He could say anything about any member of this House on information given to him second-hand by some crony. He would be prepared to table it, and then it would be left to the person concerned to get himself off the hook. If that is a "fair go", I do not know where we are heading.

Mrs. Brifman's closest friend has signed a document indicating that Brifman told her that everything she said was a pack of lies, and that the only reason she said it was that she intends to write a book and wanted a bit of notoriety. This is the woman in respect of whom the honourable

member for South Brisbane brings a document into this Chamber, and expects members to listen to what is in it.

Mr. Aikens: He didn't table the document. He was too "dingo" to do that.

Mr. HINZE: That happened yesterday, and he did attempt to table it. This woman is a self-confessed perjurer, drug addict, prostitute, and everything else undesirable that one can think of. Then there is Giegler, a gunman from the South, who has been a source of annoyance ever since he has been in Surfers Paradise. Quite frankly, I am pleased that at the week-end the Minister made public his opinion concerning police graft and corruption in the operations of massage parlours on the Gold Coast. I have all along given that as my own opinion, and I am pleased that the Minister, after sending three officers to inquire into the matter on the Gold Coast, was able to make the statement that he could see that the police in Queensland had no connection with graft and corruption.

I take strong exception to the honourable member's continually using his own practice and this Parliament to bring down the police of this State. The Police Force in this State is at "even Stevens"; it is split down the middle, and does not know where it is going. If police officers take statements from prostitutes or stool-pigeons, they have to be careful because those statements might be brought up in this Parliament.

Finally, I should like you, Mr. Speaker, to tell the House as soon as you possibly can the opinion of the Crown Law Office in this matter, and whether or not this 17-page document is privileged. If it is not privileged, I should like you to clear the air for us, because every member is at present under a cloud as to what he can say and do. The Press, too, is obviously greatly concerned.

I have covered in a few short minutes all the things that I wanted to raise, and I conclude by saying that it is a sad day for Queensland when week after week police inquiries are held into graft and corruption on the say-so of crooks, spivs, bludgers, prostitutes, and anyone else. If that is what we are coming to, it is about time we gave the game away.

REPOSSESSION OF FARM EQUIPMENT BY HIRE-PURCHASE COMPANIES

Mr. P. WOOD (Toowoomba East) (12.43 p.m.): I want to draw the attention of the House to a series of unhappy events for primary producers, that have occurred in Toowoomba. Another such event is to take place tomorrow.

Mr. R. E. Moore: This is an anti-climax.

Mr. P. WOOD: The honourable member is an anti-climax.

Mr. Aikens: This is the calm after the storm.

Mr. P. WOOD: I refer to the continuation of the practice of hire-purchase companies of repossessing valuable and essential farm equipment from grain-growers and other farmers on the Darling Downs who, for various reasons, have had a series of bad seasons. Tomorrow another such auction is to be held in Toowoomba, at which no fewer than 39 headers are to go under the auctioneer's hammer. Although I cannot be sure that all of them have been repossessed by far the greater number have been. Also to be sold are six motor vehicles, 10 trucks, and a large number of tractors and other implements. Tomorrow's auction will be about the fifth or sixth to be held within the space of as many months.

There have been expressions of regret from the Government about the state of the economy in the rural sector. Many primary producers are in difficulties, and included among them is a significant number of grain-growers. We know how the Government treated the grain-growers' case for freight justice, which has been very forcefully and well presented over the past few months. The best that can be said for the Government is that there was no increase in freight rates.

Because of a succession of poor seasons and increasing costs, a number of grain-growers are in difficulties. The wheat crop last year was a failure and farmers on the Darling Downs need a succession of good seasons to recover. This year it seems that the wheat crop will be reasonably successful. Now, when grain-growers expect a reasonable harvest and have some prospects of recovering their financial position to some extent, they are faced with the possibility, now arising, that some of their farm machinery will be repossessed if they have difficulty in meeting their repayment commitments. Many people on the Darling Downs have had to seek an extension of time from hire-purchase companies, and that involves additional costs and expense. That has been happening for some months.

If the Government is sincerely interested in the problems of primary producers and in rural reconstruction, it has a responsibility to intervene in this matter. Through this House certain procedures have been established for rural reconstruction, but it has now been proved that one essential feature is lacking. A number of farmers are finding that reconstruction is made much more difficult because their essential farm machinery is disappearing from their farms. When that happens, the farmers not only suffer a loss of that essential machinery; they may also suffer a very serious financial loss.

If the amount realised by the sale of a repossessed piece of equipment does not meet the debt outstanding on it, the farmer is still required to pay the balance—it might be as much as $10,000 or $15,000—still owing after the equipment has been sold.

I attended two auctions in Toowoomba as an interested observer, and I noted just two examples to illustrate the point I am making.

An Allis Chalmers 20-ft. auto-header, with a cabin, was sold at auction for $3,600.

Mr. McKechnie: How old was it?

Mr. P. WOOD: A couple of years. That equipment was worth at least $15,000 new. It was in good condition and should have been worth at least $9,000. That was its value, not a value that I put on it. I sought the opinion of people experienced in the machinery business who know the value of farm machinery.

Another piece of machinery that was sold was a New Holland 22-ft. automatic header. Its new price would be about $18,200. It was in good condition and should have been worth at least $10,000—I am reliably informed that that is a very low estimate of its value—and it was sold for $3,600. On either of those pieces of equipment, $15,000 might still have been owing.

Mr. B. Wood: Is it a fact that the hire-purchase company would not care what price it brought?

Mr. P. WOOD: It does not matter what it brings. If the price at which it is sold does not meet the debt, the farmer concerned is still responsible for the balance of the debt.

Mr. Bromley: There is no reserve on sale?

Mr. P. WOOD: I shall come to that.

Mr. Tucker: Does it apply to car-owners, too?

Mr. P. WOOD: It applies to anything that is under hire-purchase. The debt is not extinguished merely because something is repossessed. A piece of equipment may be worth $18,700 new, and an extension of time for repayment might have to be sought. If the debt is $15,000 and the machinery is sold for $3,600, as it was in the instances to which I have referred, the farmer is still left with a crushing debt and, in addition, does not have the use of the machinery.

At the first sale of machinery of this type, there were reserves on some of the machinery. I am aware of that, because the auctioneer said in respect of one bid, "That does not meet the reserve." Honourable members know what goes on at auctions. At the auctions I attended there were no reserves and the machinery was sold irrespective of the prices bid. I think that will apply to the auction tomorrow, because I saw somewhere that the items are to be sold, irrespective of the bids.

Two points arise from this. First of all, the Government should immediately intervene with hire-purchase companies and call a halt to repossessions. The Downs will enjoy a reasonably good wheat season. If there is a good crop, some farmers will be able to meet part of their commitments. Earlier this year there was a big payout to sorghum-growers, who had a good return last year. However, none of that money was spent on the Downs; it disappeared into the accounts of banks and hire-purchase companies. The same thing will happen with the proceeds from the wheat harvest. At least some farmers will have the opportunity to meet part of their obligations following the coming wheat harvest. If the Government is interested in the welfare of primary producers, it should intervene.

The second point is that if it is necessary to repossess farm equipment, it should be sold by tender so that a realistic price is obtained for it, with a more just return to the farmer. Some of the machinery purchased at one of the sales I attended was not bought by farmers who really needed it, but by speculators who, when they saw something going at a bargain price, jumped in and bought it. I am reliably informed that one piece of machinery that had been sold at a very low price was resold within 24 hours at a profit of about $4,000. Obviously the farmer is losing out somewhere.

In most cases repossession should not be necessary, but if it does become necessary and the equipment is sold, it should be done by tender so that a fair and reasonable price can be returned to the farmer.

There is a widespread feeling on the Darling Downs that when it comes to an issue between the grain-growers and farmers on the one hand and the hire-purchase companies on the other, the Government is on the side of the hire-purchase companies. If that is not so—I should hope it is not—the Government should act immediately to protect the interests of the grain-growers.

JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY OF NORTH QUEENSLAND

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) (12.53 p.m.): I wish to make a few remarks in the short time at my disposal about the James Cook University of North Queensland. Quite recently the Treasurer, in his wisdom, decided to cut down the funds made available to universities by the Government Naturally those of us who are interested in the James Cook University, that is, in the better section of it, thought that those in charge of the university would make some effort to re-organise it in order to meet the straitened circumstances—as they are pleased to call them. But instead of clearing the university hive of the drones on the staff and the student body to make more room for the sincere people both on the staff and the student body, according to a statement made in "The Townsville Daily Bulletin" they are going to slash all the student groups—the useful along with the useless. So we are still to have the pernicious university system of students being there who have no right to be there, and of staff members with no qualifications and otherwise no standing being retained. There is to be no cut in the staff.

This may appear rather surprising to some honourable members, but I have here a confidential document issued by the university to which I shall draw their attention. Do not ask me how I get these confidential documents. I brought two copies down with me, and gave one to the Minister for Education. In this confidential document for the year 1972 we find to our astonishment that the lecturing time, which of course includes tutoring time, has been cut down to a maximum of 28 weeks for the year. When we consider that the maximum amount of lecturing that a lecturer or tutor can do, or is allowed to do, is five hours a week, we realise that the lecturers and tutors at the James Cook University are going to lecture and tutor for a maximum of 140 hours a year. In addition to that, of course, we must remember that a lecturer or a tutor is under no obligation to lecture at all. There are many part-time tutors and part-time lecturers at the university, but their numbers are not going to be reduced.

There are some there who, frankly, cannot be found when they are required. A practising barrister is the warden in charge of Duncragan University College and is also a part-time lecturer and tutor in criminal law at the university. I have received numerous complaints about his absence from the university when he should be there. The students are not getting the lectures they are entitled to. I understand that some members on the Labor side of this House have sons at the James Cook University who are taking a course in law. Perhaps they might be able to give us some first-hand knowledge about why this man is not at the university when he should be, at times when he is paid to be there.

Of course, we know that he is a barrister and that he may not have the time to be there. However, my information is that sometimes he is not able or capable of being there. The tragic thing about a university—I will keep repeating this in the hope that sooner or later many people who do not believe it now will come to believe it—is that the students themselves cannot make any public statement about the failure of the university staff to give them the tuition to which they think they are entitled. Even the student body cannot do so, because if any student makes a public statement or a statement to the Press, or I happen to mention a student's name here—and goodness knows I have a list of names of students who are complaining that the university is not giving them the tuition or treatment to which they think they are entitled—that student can kiss goodbye to his or her degree, because there is no organisation in Australia in which blackmail is so closely organised and so rigidly and ruthlessly applied as the university. Students can only grumble amongst themselves. The moment they make a public complaint or the moment their name is mentioned in connection with a public complaint concerning the university's failure to give them the tuition they think they are entitled to, then, as I say, that is the end of their degree, because they get no pass in any examination.

It is true that, at the James Cook University, we have not yet had the same troubles, to the same degree, as the authorities at the Queensland University. It is true that in many respects the James Cook University is held in very high regard by the people of Townsville and North Queensland, but much of that lustre on the escutcheon of the James Cook University is due to a man named Joe Baker who is a lecturer—I think he is now a reader—in chemistry and who, in his spare time—he must have quite a lot of spare time, but he uses it well—has brought the university Rugby League football team from nothing to premiership grade. Not only do they play the type of football that the people of North Queensland want to see, but their conduct on the field is a tribute to Baker, to themselves and to the university.

Many other sections at the university are not adding lustre to it, but are at all times trying to shield behind the very fine image that has been built up by Joe Baker and his Rugby League teams. There are not many of these persons, but unfortunately, there are enough and they are growing in number.

When we think of the very fine image that Joe Baker and his Rugby League players—and some other staff members—have created, we have to admit that the conduct of some staff members should be deprecated. Members can read this confidential document that I have brought down with me. The name of one man who occupies a high position at the James Cook University, appears in two or three places. He, with his wife, lives in a popular suburb of Townsville and their exhibitions of drunken foul language almost nightly are such that the neighbours have come to me and complained. The police have been out there to make raids on the place, but every time this couple know the police are coming the professor screeches away, with screaming tyres, into the bush and his wife runs behind the door and locks it. While some men at the James Cook University are doing all they can to bring lustre and decency to the image of the university, others are not, yet no action is taken against them. The people of Townsville want to know why the drones are not cleaned out of the university. As I said earlier, they are not going to be cleaned out. The useful are going to be sacrificed with the useless; the working bees are going to be sacrificed with a few drones, and so the game will go on.

I asked the Minister for Education a question today regarding a man named Michael Mellick and as usual the university gave the Minister for Education, if I might use the term, another "bum-steer". I do not know what the universities think of the Minister for Education, but they very frequently distort and evade all the questions

I ask concerning them. Even the Minister admits that Mellick, who earns over $8,000 a year as publicity officer for the university, races in for two 15-minute sessions each week and is paid $5.80 for each session. That is better money than you get, Mr. Speaker—I do not want to embarrass you—and it is better money than some of the Ministers get. I always listen to the 7 o'clock A.B.C. radio news—I prefer it to the television news—and, if I do not hear Michael Mellick more than two nights a week, there is something wrong with either my hearing or my memory. In addition to working for both the university and the A.B.C., he constantly has fellows going out to the university and looking round it, and he makes a wire-recording of his interview with them. For that he is paid $7 on each occasion by the A.B.C. He has two jobs. This is the very thing for which Michael Willesee was sacked by the A.B.C. In Townsville Angus Smith is a member of the A.B.C.; yet this fellow Mellick is playing ducks and drakes with two jobs in Townsville.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Under the Sessional Order the time allowed for debate on matters of public interest is now terminated.

[*Sitting suspended from 1.2 to 2.15 p.m.*]

INVASION OF PRIVACY BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. P. R. DELAMOTHE (Bowen—Minister for Justice) (2.15 p.m.): I move—

> "That a Bill be introduced to make provision for the licensing and control of credit reporting agents and private inquiry agents, for regulating the use of listening devices and for other purposes."

Privacy has been spoken of as "the right to be let alone—the most comprehensive of rights, and the right most valued by civilised man".

The right to privacy includes more than simply the right to be let alone. Its most important characteristic is the exercising of control over the number of participants in our communications—determining whether we wish our words locked away in a diary for no eyes but our own; restricted to conversation at dinner; or blazoned in the public media.

The claim to privacy is a matter of great and increasing importance, especially in an age of unbelievable technological resources and inventiveness. It is crucial that individuals and groups be able to protect themselves from unwarranted invasions of their privacy, as it is a commonly held and justifiable belief that a man without privacy is a man without dignity.

This Bill will strike a blow against the intrusion on privacy by making provision for—

(1) the licensing and control of credit reporting agents;

(2) the licensing and control of private inquiry agents; and

(3) the regulation of the use of listening devices.

I shall deal firstly with credit reporting agents—commonly known as "credit bureaus". The credit reporting industry came into being and has grown in response to the demand by banks, retailers and other creditors for sound information about the credit-worthiness of customers.

The credit reporting industry plays an extremely important role in the modern economy, and to prohibit or unnecessarily restrict its activities would be senseless and foolhardy. However, it should be borne in mind that these activities do involve serious risks to the privacy of individuals.

It is in everybody's interest to have a reliable and speedy source of credit information. This is as true for the consumer as it is for the person granting credit. Clearly, it is to the advantage of the consumer for the creditor to be able to obtain accurate and useful information about the consumer's credit history at short notice. Ready accessibility to this information by a credit grantor obviously makes it much easier and less troublesome for the consumer to receive credit.

It must be realised that the extension of credit to a consumer is not an inalienable right, but is in one sense a privilege, in return for the granting of which he must expect some reasonable scrutiny of certain of his affairs which, in other contexts, he would justifiably regard as his own private business.

It is clear that some legislation is necessary to protect consumers against arbitrary or erroneous credit ratings, and to ensure that high standards are observed and maintained with respect to the information in the credit reports and in files of credit reporting agents.

In all fairness, it should be noted that the Bill's effect will be to seek to make uniform throughout the industry the already high standards now observed by the reputable credit reporting agents.

Mr. Sherrington: Where would they exist?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: There are several of them.

It is, then, this striking of a reasonable balance between the operations of the credit reporting agents and the requirements of society that is the aim of the Bill.

A credit reporting agent, which in the Bill means a person who is regularly engaged, in whole or in part, in providing credit reports to any other person, whether for remuneration or otherwise, will be required to apply to the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs for a

licence. Provision is made in the Bill for the grant or refusal of a licence by the Commissioner and for the renewal, variation, cancellation, surrender or restoration of a licence.

The Commisisoner is empowered to make certain inquiries in relation to each application, and, if satisfied that the applicant is a fit and proper person to hold a licence he may grant the licence for a period expiring on 31 December following the date of issue or renewal. Where an application is refused or a licence is cancelled, the applicant or licensee may appeal against the Commissioner's decision to a Magistrates Court having jurisdiction at the place where the applicant proposed to carry on buisness or where the licensee carried on business, as the case may be.

The credit reports furnished by a credit reporting agent are restricted to reports as to the creditworthiness, credit standing or credit capacity of a consumer seeking credit only for personal, family or household purposes. The definiton of "credit report" does not include credit reports on business organisations, and exempts reports containing information solely as to transactions or experiences between the consumer and the person making the report and where the person making the report is a corporation between the consumer and a related corporation. This will avoid enmeshing within legislation a wide range of commercial and professional services which have a need for and involvement in recording and reporting information relating to individuals.

The Bill has been framed to make a clear-cut distinction from the outset between credit reporting agents and organisations which it is considered should not come within the requirement of the legislation.

An important provision of the Bill restricts the supply of a credit report to any person other than a person who intends to use the report in connection with a credit transaction involving that person or the employer of that person or a related corporation and the consumer reported on, or in accordance with the written instructions of the consumer. This will prevent unauthorised persons from obtaining credit information.

Whenever a consumer is refused credit because of the contents of a credit report, the user of the report who refused credit must notify the consumer of the reason for the refusal and advise him that he has a right to request the name and address of the credit reporting agent which supplied the report.

The consumer then may approach the credit reporting agent which supplied the credit report, in person, in writing, or by telephone, and he must, upon production of some positive means of identification, then be informed of the nature and substance of all information contained in the credit report concerned.

If the consumer disputes any of the information in the credit report, the credit reporting agent must investigate the disputed information. If it is subsequently found to be inaccurate or cannot be verified, the information must be corrected and any person who has received a credit report containing such information within six months of the date on which the correction is recorded must be informed by the credit reporting agent of such correction.

Heavy penalties are prescribed in the proposed Bill for the offences of obtaining information falsely, unauthorised disclosure of information, supplying false information, and falsifying records or credit reports.

A practice which is becoming more frequent, that of sending out letters which contain an implied threat, namely, that failure to pay a debt will have serious repercussions on the person's future ability to obtain credit, is also dealt with. The Bill will prohibit this practice in respect of certain debts.

In addition to the important standards required by the Bill in respect of confidentiality and accuracy, the Bill also provides for currency of information. Information over five years old must not be disclosed in any credit report, and the credit reporting agents are required, within a specific period, to delete from their records any information which is over five years old.

Legislation to regulate the supply of information from a credit reporting agent has been passed in several of the States of the United States of America and in two provinces of Canada, but this Bill is the first such measure introduced anywhere in Australia.

The second important provision of the Bill concerns the licensing and control of private inquiry agents. The licensing and control of these agents is considered to be an essential measure in the field of invasion of privacy. This is particularly so as the Bill controls the use of listening devices, and private inquiry agents are one class of people who could use such devices.

Private inquiry agents are used extensively for the purpose of obtaining evidence in respect of matrimonial matters, but there are also other avenues in which their services are used. These include searching for missing persons, and obtaining and furnishing information as to the character and nature of the business or occupation of any person.

Another reason for introducing some measure of control is that undesirable persons may become engaged in the field of private inquiry agents, and exorbitant fees have been charged. Inquiry agents who do not enjoy a good reputation, which is required of those who engage in this type of work, no doubt can do a good deal of damage to the standing of their profession. It is expected that the Bill will ensure a higher standard in the qualifications of private inquiry agents.

The licensing of private inquiry agents will be effected in an identical manner to that applying to the licensing of credit reporting agents and will be dealt with by the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs.

The field of possible private investigations necessarily overlaps the proper activities of reputable professional and business men, such as solicitors, accountants and insurance companies. This overlap is covered in the Bill by exempting these professions and businesses from compliance with the licensing provisions of the Bill.

Exemptions are also granted to members of the Police Force of the Commonwealth or of any State, members of the Defence Forces in the exercise of their functions as such members, and officers or employees of the Crown or Government departments in the exercise of their functions as such officers or employees.

Over recent years, there has been a steady increase in the business of supplying guards and watchmen for security purposes. The Bill provides for the licensing of persons carrying on this business, and also for the licensing of the guards and watchmen employed. In every case, the principal must hold a private inquiry agent's licence, and the employee must hold a sub-agent's licence.

Important provisions in the Bill which apply to private inquiry agents, and also to credit reporting agents, include—

(1) A prohibition on licensees assuming any power or authority other than that given by the Bill;

(2) A requirement that every licensee must have a registered address to which communications and notices may be addressed;

(3) A prohibition against a licensee lending his licence to another person;

(4) A requirement for a licensee to produce his licence on demand by a police officer or inspector appointed under the Bill.

By making it an offence if a licensee exceeds the powers and authorities conferred on him, the Bill again is ensuring that a person is protected against unwarranted intrusions on his privacy.

The need for a registered address to be lodged with the Commissioner will facilitate dealings with the licensee, and will also assist members of the public who have dealings with a licensee.

The prohibition on lending a licence will prevent dealings in licences, and the production of a licence will assist an inspector or police officer to carry out any investigations directed to be made by the Commissioner.

A private inquiry agent will be required under the Bill to display at his place of business a notice showing, in legible characters, his name and description.

An important provision has been included to enable a court, in any proceedings taken by a private inquiry agent for recovery of money under an agreement of services, to re-open the transaction if the court considers the amount charged is excessive. This provision will protect the public from those agents who in the past have exploited the position they hold and have been exorbitant in their charges.

The final objective of the Bill is to regulate the use of listening devices. In the field of invasion of privacy, listening devices come within the category of physical surveillance; that is, the observation through acoustical devices of a person's location, acts, and speech without his knowledge or against his will. A technological breakthrough in techniques of physical surveillance now makes it possible for persons to penetrate the privacy of homes, offices and vehicles, and to monitor the basic channels of communication by telephone, telegraph, radio and television. Most of the equipment for this surveillance is cheap, readily available to the general public, relatively easy to install, and is not presently illegal to own.

While there are defences against "outside" surveillance, these are so costly and complex, and demand such constant vigilance, that their use is feasible only where official or private matters of the highest security are to be protected. The scientific prospects for the next decade indicate a continuing increase in the range and versatility of listening devices, as well as the possibility of computer-processing of recordings to identify automatically the speakers or topics under surveillance.

If no legislative action is taken to control listening devices, highly potent instruments will be available to the criminal class and people whose interests are inimical to the security of the country. The regulation of eavesdropping has been discussed by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General, and legislation has been passed in New South Wales and Victoria, as well as in the United States of America, controlling the use of listening devices.

The Bill, with strict safeguards, makes listening devices available to the forces of law enforcement, and everything possible is done by statutory prohibitions to exclude them from use by the criminal class.

Under the provisions of the proposed Bill, the use of a listening device to overhear, record, monitor or listen to a "private conversation" is prohibited.

"Private conversation" means any words spoken by one person to another person in circumstances that indicate that those persons desire the words to be heard or listened to only by themselves, or that indicate that either of those persons desires the words to be heard or listened to only by themselves and by some other person. If either of the persons participating in the conversation ought reasonably to expect that the words might be overheard, recorded, monitored, or listened to, it is not an offence.

Other exemptions in the Bill include unintentional overhearing on a telephone and the use of a listening device by a Customs officer or any person authorised by a Minister of the Commonwealth administering any Act relating to the security of the Commonwealth. It is considered desirable that when equipment of this nature is available, every possible effort should be directed to making it available to officers of the Police Force. As communities become more industrialised and more urbanised, there is an inevitable drift towards what can be called organised crime. I believe it to be imperative that when we reach a situation such as this, where sophisticated equipment is available to aid in the detection of crime, we must give every possible assistance to the forces of law enforcement rather than further prejudice and burden them.

Another aspect that must be taken into consideration is the protection of private interests against the competing interests of law-enforcement authorities. To ensure that there is no misuse of listening devices by members of the Police Force, authority to use the listening device must be obtained from a judge of the Supreme Court. This will apply each time it is desired to use one. In considering any application for approval, a judge shall have regard to the gravity of the matter being investigated, the extent to which the privacy of any person is likely to be interfered with, and the extent to which the prevention or detection of the crime in question is likely to be assisted.

Mr. Sherrington: That means that they have to apply in every case in which they wish to use a listening device?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: Yes.

The Bill provides that when a listening device is used unlawfully, the listening device is forfeited following conviction, irrelevant records made by the use of the listening device are destroyed, and the evidence of the private conversation is inadmissible in evidence in any civil or criminal proceedings.

There is also a prohibition in the Bill in regard to the communication or publication of private conversations unlawfully listened to; the communication or publication of private conversations by parties thereto; and the advertising of listening devices.

The remaining provisions of the Bill provide for the administration of the Bill, the appointment of inspectors, and other machinery provisions necessary for the smooth functioning of the Bill.

The advance of science and our social development has brought us to the crisis of surveillance technology. The vital decision to be made is whether the current assault on our privacy will result in man's liberation or his subjugation. I hope that the Bill will provoke an awakening to the potential threat to freedom and privacy, and assist in preserving the opportunities for privacy without which our whole system of civil liberties may become formalistic ritual.

With that warning of the danger of apathy, I commend the motion to the Committee.

Mr. BENNETT (South Brisbane) (2.39 p.m.): Although the Minister is prepared to talk at length about privacy, apparently he does not believe in the privacy of Parliament in the true concept and wider understanding of that term. He believes, apparently, that the Brisbane "Telegraph" is more important than this forum and has disseminated information to it that makes it virtually unnecessary for us to meet here this afternoon. We could have read all about the Bill in the "Telegraph" and said, "We will await the second reading of the Bill. It is unnecessary to recall Parliament this afternoon."

An Opposition Member: He is reading the second edition now.

Mr. BENNETT: Yes.

The fundamentals of the Bill have already been published, thereby negating the dignity of Parliament. The Minister has been talking about privacy and dignity. The Opposition should be the first to be informed of the Government's proposals. We should be informed of them in Parliament, not through the columns of the daily Press. Over the lunch hour I have been busy doing a lot of research, and wondering what might be the real purpose behind the Bill. Instead of looking into various laws, my time could have been better spent in reading the "Telegraph". I have been wasting my time because I believed that the Minister would treat Parliament as a Parliament. I go on record as expressing my strong resentment at the Minister's conduct.

The Minister said that a man without privacy is a man without dignity. I know that is an expression which is used, and very often abused. A man who expects to have his dignity preserved must in his privacy accept certain standards of morality, good conduct and integrity. Certain university types insist on their privacy at the university. Their understanding of and attitude towards privacy is a carte-blanche, laissez-faire attitude of doing as they please, with the public not being entitled to comment on or interfere with their privacy at the university, notwithstanding their degenerate standards of conduct. Instead of the Minister's quotation, perhaps a better expression would be, "A man without morality is a man without dignity, and is a man with false dignity, whether it be in private or in public." I do not get carried away with catch-phrase expressions.

The attitude of the A.L.P. in Opposition at the present time is that we will not by any means oppose the introduction of the Bill. We believe that credit reporting agencies, private inquiry agents and the use

of bugging devices are all very controversial matters. We believe that in all those fields legislation is necessary for corrective purposes. We are not satisfied from the indication given to the Committee by the Minister that his technique or method is going to satisfy our anxiety about the malpractices in those fields or the unsatisfactory conditions in them, but, because we believe that they need correction and treatment, we are prepared to accept the introduction of the Bill, subject to discussion about it, bearing in mind that when we study the concept of the Bill and its procedures it may well be that we could oppose the second reading of the Bill or move certain amendments at the Committee stage. We have not been convinced as yet that the proposals outlined by the Minister are going to meet the present "sick" situation.

Certainly there is some need for a system of credit reporting agencies in order to preserve the integrity of the commercial world. In the past there has been abuse in that field. Of course, in the main it is not the fault of the debtor. Very often a person becomes a debtor because of the unfair, questionable and certainly unsatisfactory techniques of some of the big companies, chain stores, hire-purchase agencies and lending companies. People can be inveigled into high-purchase agreements, or urged to borrow money at completely usurious rates of interest, which they cannot hope for one moment to honour or repay.

The person who negotiates the contract or the agreement on behalf of the big company knows full well at the time—he must know; if he does not know he should get out of his job—that the prospective purchaser cannot hope to meet his obligations under the agreement. He is prepared to sell articles under the hire-purchase law, knowing that the deposit will be forfeited, that his commission will be paid and that the goods will be repossessed and sold at a considerable discount to some friend, very often from the big company which originally disposed of the goods. There is such an amount of racketeering going on in that field of commercial activity that it is not funny.

Then, of course, the debtor's name is posted in credit reporting agencies as a defaulter and, if the poor fellow seeks to obtain Housing Commission accommodation, his history will be examined. The Housing Commission officers, of course, have to carry out the dictates of governmental policy, and, if a person is listed as a defaulting debtor, he cannot even obtain a Housing Commission home for his wife and family. He certainly cannot purchase the essential commodities he needs for his and his family's every-day comfort and living. I hope that this legislation will not only make provision for the licensing of credit reporting agents but will also impose some standard of decency and integrity on those who have the wherewithal to force people into becoming their debtors.

In the brief time at my disposal I must now pass on to what have been referred to as private inquiry agents. These people, again, are a necessary evil, if I might refer to them in that way. I know a couple in Brisbane who perform a very useful and worth-while task in the divorce field in this State, whose evidence is unquestionably honest on all occasions, and who adopt the correct standards and techniques in their investigations. However, there are many others—blow-ins and blow-outs for a short period—who adopt very questionable tactics, whose standards are poor and who, in giving evidence of adultery, think nothing about committing perjury in order to obtain their fee. Near enough would be good enough for them. In my opinion that category is composed of glorified "Peeping Toms". I often think that the honourable member for South Coast would make a good inquiry agent.

Mr. Sherrington: Except for his size.

Mr. BENNETT: Yes, except for his size. He would not be able to creep through most windows. I know of one or two private inquiry agents in Queensland's past history who have been dishonourably discharged from the Queensland Police Force and have then set themselves up as private inquiry agents. These persons, over the years, have been able to earn moneys greatly in excess of what they had been able to earn in the Queensland Police Force. They live in Brisbane in comfortable accommodation and not faced with the possibility of transfer throughout the length and breadth of Queensland. They were regarded as unsatisfactory, if not dishonest, policemen, yet they are able to practise as inquiry agents.

Of course, we would welcome any procedure that would eliminate the possibility of that happening. I know one private inquiry agent who, during the course of a raid—I suppose this will still be remembered by some people listening to me now—entered the person's premises. The man concerned, whether he was committing a matrimonial offence or not, was entitled to be protected against unlawful trespass and he protested vehemently about the unlawful entry of this private inquiry agent. In order to subdue his protestations, the private inquiry agent whacked him on the skull with a torch. And he continued to practise his profession in Brisbane for many years.

Mr. Aikens: And sued the person for breaking the torch.

Mr. BENNETT: I do not know that that happened. I think it is more probable that the honourable member for Townsville South gave him a new torch.

The Minister then referred to listening devices, which are commonly referred to as "bugging" devices. In spite of the Minister's introductory remarks, I am certainly not convinced that they are necessary, desirable or justifiable under any circumstances. He will need to put forward much

better arguments than he has submitted and collate a great deal of evidence to convince me—and, I hope, the Opposition as a whole —that "bugging" devices are necessary under any circumstances. The Minister has not told us under what circumstances they are necessary.

If I am having a confidential telephone conversation with the Minister, I should certainly like to believe that, for example, the honourable member for Merthyr is not listening in through one of these devious "bugging" devices. He would certainly do that if he could get hold of one. Under no circumstances should the liberty and freedom of people be so imperilled that, whether they are talking to friend or foe, wife or family, a fellow professional or businessman, or to anybody at all, their conversations are being overheard on some devious "bugging" device.

Mr. Davis: I reckon it goes on now.

Mr. BENNETT: I have no doubt that it does go on now. I am satisfied that from time to time my own telephone has been "bugged". One senses that it is happening from the telephone's activity.

Mr. R. E. Moore: How can you tell that by its activity?

Mr. BENNETT: I can tell what goes on in your head just by looking at you.

Mr. R. E. Moore: You might—but I am not a telephone.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. BENNETT: Having studied the honourable member for a few months, I am satisfied that nothing goes on in his head.

If what the honourable member for Merthyr said during the Budget debate is true, when he was a member of the Security Branch of the Police Force he and his colleagues were illegally using "bugging" devices. If that is so, it is a damning indictment of the Government.

It is all very well for the Minister to say that before a "bugging" device can be used the person who wishes to use it is required to obtain the authority of a Supreme Court judge. That statement is most intriguing. On many occasions he and his fellow Ministers have said that it was difficult to comply with the erstwhile law relative to search warrants. They have told us that in emergent or urgent circumstances delay and inconvenience—and even frustration—were caused when police officers were required to swear out an information before a justice of the peace. However, today the Minister has told us that a Supreme Court judge's approval and permission must be obtained before a "bugging" device can be used.

What happens if a person decides that it is necessary to use a "bugging" device at midnight? I guarantee not one Supreme Court judge would hear his application.

Mr. Aikens: You won't find one sober anyway.

Mr. BENNETT: I can only say that the conduct of Supreme Court judges is not of the level of that of the honourable member for Townsville South when he was driving trains in North Queensland.

Facing the issue with reality, we realise that it will be impossible, from a practical point of view, to appear before a Supreme Court judge between the hours of 12 midnight and 6 a.m. In any case, by what method or means would such an application be commenced? Normally a party can get before a Supreme Court judge only by filing a document of application, or originating proceedings, in the Supreme Court Registry. In order to preserve the dignity, integrity and objectivity of Supreme Court judges, no-one, be he a police officer, the Commissioner of Police, or a Cabinet Minister, should have the official ear of a Supreme Court judge without going before him officially. There should be no suggestion of private communication or appearing at his private home on an ex-parte application which, apparently, would not be reduced to writing. In order to preserve the integrity of the Supreme Court judiciary, which is unquestioned and untarnished, judges must be approached objectively through the Registrar of the Supreme Court. Will the registry be open at midnight or some such time? I assure the Minister that it takes about three weeks to get an order out of the Supreme Court Registry because of lack of staff. I do not know how registry officers will be got out of bed at midnight because apparently they are over-worked now during the day, which is causing severe embarrassment.

Mr. Aikens: If you get a writ of habeas corpus it is done in a minute. You know that.

Mr. BENNETT: The point is that a writ can be issued at any time but it must be filed in the Supreme Court Registry.

Mr. Hughes: Don't you think that solicitors and barristers contribute to the hold-up by not being ready to present their cases?

Mr. BENNETT: I do not. I know that the case in which the honourable member was involved could have been cleaned up within six months, but because of his dilly-dallying and the fact that answers could not be got from him, and because he procrastinated by filing a spurious defence and counter-claim, which eventually he virtually withdrew, it took about 18 months to clear it up. Of course, we do have clients like that.

As to credit agencies supplying false information, it is all very well to say that they will be exposed to a penalty. It will be interesting to know what the quantum of the penalty is to be. How will that restore the credit prestige of the person who has been offended? How will he be helped? At

present, a person who sues a credit agency can recover damages for defamation because of the publication of inaccurate and false information, if it is not done under the protection of a lawful act. If we legalise the publication of such information, the credit agency will be given at least what is termed qualified privilege. Even though the information is inaccurate and false, the offended party—the one whose credit has been destroyed—in any action for defamation to restore his good name and to recover damages will carry an obligation to prove that it was published in mala fides—not in good faith. If the defence established a bona-fide claim that it was acting in good faith, the action would be "euchred" and, instead of getting damages, the plaintiff would have to pay the credit agency's costs.

In dealing with the provisions relating to private inquiry agents, I might mention that some of them have been former members of the Queensland Police Force. I believe that private inquiry agents, whilst being necessary in some fields, certainly have no right to trespass on private property. Some private inquiry agents and repossession agents can be truthfully described as the scum of the earth who could not get a decent job elsewhere.

(Time expired.)

Mr. SHERRINGTON (Salisbury) (3 p.m.): I join with my colleague the honourable member for South Brisbane, and support his attitude. He outlined clearly the Opposition's abhorrence of the use of bugging devices. Like him, I know of very few cases in which one could justify, let alone legalise, the use of such devices. Already throughout the Commonwealth people generally are alarmed at the thought that "Big Brother" might be listening. By this measure, not only in certain cases will "Big Brother" be listening, but he will also be doing it with the most sophisticated and modern devices. Therefore, I join with the honourable member for South Brisbane in his expressions.

My main purpose in rising is to deal with the question of the licensing of credit bureaus. Many of the credit problems experienced by people today were not sought by them of their own volition. They were forced on them by the trading practices of many of the hire-purchase companies operating inside and outside this State.

I know of firms in Brisbane whose collectors, in addition to collecting hire-purchase payments, are obliged to obtain $2,000 worth of credit each month. Otherwise, they will lose their positions. Because of this, as the honourable member for South Brisbane said, credit is forced onto pensioners and other people who are already overburdened with hire-purchase payments merely so that the collector can keep up his sales for the month, obtain his commission, and retain his position with the firm.

The net result of such operations is that these salesmen force credit onto people who cannot afford it. They return and say, "If you buy this it will only cost you 80c a week for three years." Then, the following week, they are back again with something for 40c a week, and so it goes on, until eventually the purchaser finds he is overcommitted and has a dozen or so contracts involving a weekly payment of $10 to $15. Then the company approaches the customer and says, "In a spirit of trying to help you, we will consolidate your debts." The company then lumps all the hire-purchase debts together. I know of instances where $300 in interest and other charges has been levied on $600 worth of debts after they have been consolidated.

Rather than looking at the licensing of credit bureaus, we should be examining the trading methods of some hire-purchase companies and doing something about restricting this type of business. When a customer finds, as a result of what I have outlined, that he is unable to pay, he surrenders his goods. This information then finds its way into the hands of credit reporting bureaus and the customer becomes known as a bad payer. In many cases this happens because credit has been forced onto people by the snide methods adopted by some hire-purchase companies, and as a result, the customer gets a poor credit rating.

What right has any company to set up in business and then peddle details of a person's credit rating? I think that the obligation is on a firm wanting to sell goods to a person to satisfy itself that that person is able to pay for them. Why should others be peddling confidential information that rightly belongs only to the person to whom it refers? Business methods today are such that the majority of sales are not sought by the buyers. They result from the efforts of high-pressure salesmen who are instructed that unless they obtain new credit to the extent of $2,000 a month, they will lose their jobs. Other companies seek and use credit information obtained as a result of the snide practices of hire-purchase companies.

In addition to investigating the matter of credit ratings, the Minister should also give consideration to the dealings of certain firms in the community. Any person can walk in off the street to a firm and offer my name, or the name of anyone else, as a credit reference. That has happened to me. I have told honourable members this story before, and I shall relate it again. No check is ever made with the person named as the credit reference. Credit is given to the person who asks for it; he absconds; and the person whose name was given as a credit reference, without having any knowledge that such a transaction had taken place, is pestered by the company to advise where the purchaser can be found.

I shall tell the Committee why I feel so strongly about this matter. Last year, after returning from three weeks' holiday, I found waiting for me a threatening letter from a legal firm in Sydney. I was told in the letter that, as I was guarantor for a person living on the Gold Coast who had purchased a couple of hundred dollars worth of goods from Rena Ware and had absconded, legal action would be taken against me unless I gave some indication that I would meet the payment in full.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: Had you consented to being guarantor?

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I ask the honourable member to allow me to tell this story in my own lucid way.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: That is the crux of it.

Mr. R. E. Moore: Why don't you come to the point?

Mr. SHERRINGTON: Here is the honourable member for Windsor rattling his way through the debate. I will come to the point, if he will only shut his hollow head.

I knew nothing of this transaction, and I knew nothing about the person who had named me as a credit reference.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: At one stage you said "guarantor", and another time you said "credit reference".

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I am sorry; I correct that. I had no knowledge whatever of this transaction. My first reaction was to tear the letter up and throw it in the waste-paper basket. I then realised that it had been in the mail for three weeks, and I had no knowledge of what might have happened in the meantime. Proceedings could possibly have been initiated against me. If I had thought of it at the time, I would have allowed the firm to proceed, because I think I could have "taken" them for a few thousand dollars.

I made a telephone call to Sydney, and it required five extensions to establish the fact that the person who had caused all the trouble at Palm Beach had walked into the shop of Rena Ware, given my name as a credit reference, and obtained these goods. Then, as the result of a mistake in the records of the legal firm in Sydney, they had written to me as guarantor demanding payment of $200. As I say, I had five extensions in a trunk-line telephone call to the legal adviser of Rena Ware—not once did the company offer to reimburse me, I might say—before he admitted that a mistake had been made. I said, "If that is so, I want a written apology." However I have not received an apology from the company.

Within the next couple of weeks I received a letter from the same legal firm asking where these people had gone to, because my name had been given as a credit reference. The letter that I sent in reply probably would not be admissible in this Chamber, but in it I again reminded them that they had failed to reimburse me for the cost of the trunk-line call.

Let us consider the difficulties that could have been caused. Although the information was false, as I said earlier, my name could have appeared on a credit rating list because my name was associated with the deal.

Mr. Hughes: Under the proposed Bill, you could go out and check, and then put the record straight.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: The honourable member can speak about it later. I will tell my own story.

This has happened to me not once but time after time. I have received letters from various firms, including one of the biggest finance agencies in Queensland, saying that somebody has walked in, given my name as a credit reference, bought a car, and "blown through", and asking me to tell them where the person concerned is, although I do not know him from a bar of soap.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: If they operate their business that way, they deserve to have bad debts.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: That is what I am complaining about. Because of inaccuracies and poor trading methods, a person has been able to use my name, or perhaps the name of another honourable member, in the way I have detailed. In my opinion, the Minister should be looking seriously at the question of whether it should be possible for me to sue the company concerned for having accepted my name as guarantor without my permission.

Mr. Aikens: There is a legal decision on that point.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I know that, but I resent the fact that, in their desire to peddle their goods, these firms never consult the person whose name is given as a credit reference. A person can go in and give the name "Joe Blow" as a reference, and he will be given credit; it is merely a formality.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: If a name is given as a credit reference and they don't follow it up, they do so at their own risk; but they must have something to go on if the name of a person is given as a guarantor.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: Yes, but in the instance to which I am referring the records of the company were so inaccurate and its operations were so snide that it wanted to use me as guarantor, not merely as a credit reference.

Mr. R. Jones: That is the company that sells to 15-year-old girls.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: Yes.

I object strongly to having to take action to clear my name when the company's information is entirely false. I wish now

that Rena Ware had initiated proceedings against me. If it had, I might have been able to spend my next holiday in a luxury apartment in Honolulu on the proceeds.

The problems are not confined to credit lists. With the present trend to computerisation, firms are compiling lists of possible customers. I do not know whether other honourable members recently received a book—I forget its title, but it was about Australia and it was rather ornate—which was retailing at about $10.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: "Dynamic Australia", and it would cost 75c to return it.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: Yes. I received a copy of the book; I am sure that many other honourable members also received copies. I make the statement now—I am not completely aware of my legal position—that if the company that sent it wants the book back, it can come and collect it. I have no intention of returning it.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: That makes two of us.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: These books are sent out, completely unsolicited, to people whose names appear on a list drawn up by a computer. They are placed in the position of having to return the book if they do not want it. As the honourable member for Chatsworth said, in this instance the cost of returning it would be about 75c. There is no way in the world that I will send it back. If the company wants it, it can come out and pick it up at my residence.

Mr. R. Jones: At your convenience.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: At my convenience.

Are not the matters that I have mentioned invasions of privacy? Again the Bill is deficient in that the Minister should have looked at a number of other practices that are cropping up in the community. This sort of thing does not cause me any embarrassment, because I do not care a damn whether the firm ever gets the book back. But to many people this sort of thing is disturbing. They worry about their legal position. They say to themselves, "Should I send it back, or should I stand up to them and tell them to come and get it if they want it?" If they finally decide to send it back, it involves them in costly postage.

Mr. Davis: The Consumer Affairs Bureau handles that sort of thing.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: If it is an interstate operation, what can be done through the Consumer Affairs Bureau? Most of these things come from interstate addresses.

Mr. P. Wood: Do you know that the Premier wrote about this to——

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I do not know whether he did or not. I will have a look at the book when I go home. That is about the only thing that might tempt me to send it back. We speak in terms of protecting the privacy of people. People should be immune from the attentions of companies that peddle merchandise in this way. It is just as important to protect their privacy in that way as it is to protect the privacy of their credit rating.

The Minister said that, with a view to keeping information current, the Bill provides that after five years all records must be expunged and the slate wiped clean. That might sound all right in theory, but in practice it is an impossibility. Let us face it: once a company contacts a credit bureau and it says, "Don't sell to Keith Hooper because he is a bad risk," that company will make a note of the fact. Once a person has been branded as a bad credit risk, all the expunging in the world will not wipe the slate clean so that he can start off afresh.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: It is the earliest year that is being expunged all the time.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: No. The Minister said, "After five years we will expunge the lot and start all over again." That is the way I understood it. If the Minister wants to correct me, fair enough. I understood him to say that the record must be destroyed after five years and a fresh start made. If a person has been a bad payer for five years and a new card is started for him, the bureau will not start him off with the entry that he is a good payer and start taking points off him from thereon. Once he has been branded as a bad credit risk, irrespective of whether his record has been expunged his name would be known throughout the business world.

Irrespective of how circumstances may change, and despite the fact that the Minister says that if a firm has been wrongly informed about a person's credit rating, the onus is thrown onto the person concerned to prove that to the company. Instead of the credit bureau having to prove that he is a bad payer, he has to straighten the credit bureau out by proving that he is a good risk. The obligation is on him, not on the credit bureau. Under our concept of British justice, this is entirely wrong. After all, do we not subscribe to the idea that a person is innocent until proven guilty? Under the Bill, the onus is cast on a person to prove that he is not a bad risk if that is his reputation with a credit bureau.

(Time expired.)

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) (3.20 p.m.): This Bill, as I heard the Minister introduce it, is a lot of rose-coloured nothing. It reminds me of the story of Robert Green-Ingersoll on the omnipotence of God—and I am not being blasphemous—about the man who pointed to a wading water bird and remarked how gracefully it lifted one leg out of the water and put it ahead of the other without a ripple, without a sound, so that the fish would not be warned of impending capture and death. And the other man said,

"That's all right for the bird, but what about the fish?" This Bill does absolutely nothing to protect the fish of Queensland about whom I am deeply concerned, namely, the humble working man and woman. I am going to say without reservation that never in the history of this country have commercial morals and trading tactics been so low, and in most cases the bigger the firm, the lower the trading practices.

The honourable member for Toowoomba East, I think, mentioned today the putrid racket of hire-purchase companies that sell an article to a young lad or a young woman, or to a married man or woman, knowing that the person cannot pay for it. They get a substantial deposit and probably a few instalments, and then they repossess the vehicle, or the article, or whatever it happens to be.

More often than not they illegally repossess it. There may be, say, $400 owing on it, but the company immediately sells it to a stooge for about $50. He immediately resells it for $500 and passes the $500 back to the crooked hire-purchase company. It then makes the unfortunate original purchaser pay the difference between the $50 and the $400 owing and so bleeds him to death that way.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: That is a shocking over-generalisation.

Mr. AIKENS: That has been going on for years and, if the honourable member for Chatsworth, who leads a rather sequestered and cloistered existence, does not know it, I will take him around with me for a week or a fortnight, dress him in working-class clothes—I will try and make him look like an ordinary working man, which would be tremendously difficult—and show him things which I think he should know and which, from my knowledge of him, I think he would be upset to learn.

The argument advanced by traders is that the Bill is needed to protect the honest trader. For all I know—I suppose stranger things do happen—there may be some honest traders about. They say—and if it were true, there would be some substance in their argument—that all the losses due to bad payers must be made up by the honest customers because the firms do not carry the losses. We have only to read the financial returns of the big firms—David Jones, Myers, Waltons and the rest of them—to see that they make tremendous ever-increasing profits and pay ever-increasing yearly dividends, despite the fact that they have hundreds of thousands and sometimes millions of dollars of alleged bad debts per year.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: Because they provide for bad debts.

Mr. AIKENS: They provide for bad debts, they say, by charging the honest customer extra, the customer who does pay his debts. They say a credit bureau is necessary so that they can avoid incurring bad debts, but they do not avoid incurring them at all. As the honourable member for Salisbury said, they will sell anything to anybody so long as they can see some legal loophole through which they can get the money for the article.

I know the Minister for Justice is no man's fool. I know that there is no more worldly man in this Chamber—perhaps other than my old mate Bill Lonergan or Wally Rae. He did not come down in the last shower, but I want him to tell me how this Bill is going to work. Does he know how the credit bureaus work at the present time? They have no established offices; they have no ornate and flamboyant letterheads; all they have is a secret telephone number. We have a couple of them in Townsville, a big one and one not quite so big. If a person goes into a firm and says he wants to buy something, that his name is Thomas Aikens and he lives at 30 Soul Street, Hermit Park, and asks if he can buy it on credit, the firm rings up a secret phone number which is known only to it and other firms and says, "Have you got anything on Thomas Aikens of 30 Soul Street, Hermit Park?" If the word comes back that he is all right so far as is known, then he is able to "strap" up his $5 or $6 worth of goods. If the message is, "No, he's a bad risk," he is not able to "strap" up his $5 or $6 worth of goods. There is no way that he can go along and find out who these credit bureaus are or where they obtained the information about him. I would defy the Minister to tell the Committee how the Bill will remove that type of disqualification suffered by the ordinary citizen who wants to know why his name is being tarnished and why his reputation is being besmirched.

In the past the Minister has introduced some very good legislation to protect the ordinary battlers, particularly the women, against those who want to prey upon and fleece them, so when I heard and read the glowing reports of the contents of this Bill, I thought it, too, would protect the people. However, I cannot work out whom it will protect. Perhaps it will protect the big firms, but I do not know how it will do that. As I have said, the Bill is a lot of rose-coloured nothing.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: Doesn't the control of listening devices protect the people you are worried about?

Mr. AIKENS: I shall deal with listening devices in a few moments.

Before that, I urge the Minister to introduce a Bill that will restrict the Press in accepting advertisements from known crooks. But of course he will not do that. Recently we heard of a case involving a man named Clark. He has a criminal record as long as my arm, yet he went into the office of a Brisbane Sunday newspaper and inserted a flamboyant advertisement stating that he was prepared to sell two cartons of cigarettes for about a quarter of their price. Naturally, a great many people fell in, as they do with bargains like that, and subsequently found that there was a catch in it. After considerable activity on my part

and on the part of other people and the Minister for Justice—I give him due credit for this—Clark was brought to trial before the District Court and was convicted of fraud and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. However, he appealed to the Court of Criminal Appeal, which comprised Mr. Justice Skerman, Mr. Justice Matthews and Mr. Justice Williams—the honourable member for South Brisbane can correct me if I am wrong—and the court did not order a re-trial but simply quashed the conviction.

I asked the Minister for Justice on what astounding grounds the court had quashed the conviction of this crook, who had fleeced people all over Australia of an estimated $182,000. The Minister answered that the court found there was no evidence before it to prove that Clark himself had inserted the advertisement that invited people to subscribed to his crooked stunt. I then perused the depositions in the case, which revealed that employees of the Sunday newspaper had identified Clark from the witness box as being the man who inserted the advertisement. Let us assume that he had not inserted the advertisement. The judgment of the court was that as long as one person can get another to insert an advertisement inviting people to fall for a crooked confidence trick and thereby make thousands of dollars, the first person cannot be punished by a court because it cannot be proved that he inserted the advertisement.

Mr. Bennett: What a lot of boloney!

Mr. AIKENS: I know that the honourable member for South Brisbane is not in the Chamber very often, so I suggest that he read the Votes and Proceedings that are on the table and see the reply made by the Minister for Justice to my question.

Mr. Bennett: You are misinterpreting the Minister's reply.

Mr. AIKENS: Read it in Votes and Proceedings.

Because the court had no evidence before it that Clark inserted the advertisement he was found not guilty of having perpetrated the fraud, so he got clear with many thousands of dollars.

The honourable member for Salisbury raised a very interesting point. I am pleased that he spoke before me, not that I need his support. By the look of him, I would not have minded his support in some of the rough-and-tumble brawls I was engaged in many years ago. He referred to a matter which I thought the Minister for Justice, when introducing the Bill, would have dealt with, that is, the matter of crooked lawyers who are behind the crooked confidence men. Every time a person gets into strife with a crooked firm which writes to tell him that it has his guarantee or a document signed by him, and that if he does not pay up he will be prosecuted within a certain time, the letter is always signed by a member of the profession that the honourable member for South Brisbane so frequently assures us is an honourable profession.

Mr. Bennett: You must admit that I adorn it.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Houghton): Order!

Mr. AIKENS: Without the support of crooked lawyers, the crooked firms could not last a day, yet the Minister for Justice is not doing anything about these legal crooks who made it possible for these crooked firms to fleece the public.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: What started as a highly indifferent speech is becoming a very bad one.

Mr. AIKENS: It is a matter of what one man thinks is good and another man thinks is bad. There is an old saying that if we want to judge a man's character, or find out how much he is worth, we should get not the opinion of his friends, because friendship can be simulated but the opinion of his enemies. When a man like the honourable member for Chatsworth, with very limited intelligence, tells me that I am making a bad speech, I know, ipso facto, that it is a good one. I am quite happy that the honourable member interjected.

Mr. Bennett: When he says that you are making a bad speech, at least he proves that you are being consistent.

Mr. AIKENS: As the monkey said to the cat, there is something in that, but I will not take it any further.

If the honourable member for Chatsworth, a dyed-in-the-wool, narrow-minded Liberal, tells me that I am making a bad speech, he means that I am making a bad speech from the point of view of the affluent, indolent Liberals, which means that I am making a good speech from the point of view of the hard-working and more often than not poverty-stricken working-class.

Lawyers, of course, have no conscience or sense of justice. As long as the crooked confidence men and crooked firms are prepared to pay them exorbitant fees, they are prepared to crawl over broken glass bottles on their hands and knees to get into court to fight cases against the ordinary decent citizen. I want to know why the Minister for Justice is not doing anything about them, because they are the real villians in the piece.

It is terribly distressing to read in a newspaper, or hear over the air, advertisements that women can earn good money at home by sending $16 or $20 to a company in New South Wales or Victoria, which will send back the open sesame to earn $100 or $200 at home. The unfortunate women who send down the money demand something in return. But what do they get? I ask the honourable member for South Brisbane not to leave the Chamber.

All they get back is a bluffing, threatening letter from a member of the honourable member's so-called responsible and decent profession. Even worse than that is the fact that they have sent the money to a firm in New South Wales or Victoria. They receive a letter from a lawyer in one of those States, who tells them, in no uncertain terms, that if they dare to fight the firm, of which he is the legal representative, they will be taken under section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution all the way to New South Wales or Victoria to fight the case, and therefore they had better pay up because it will cost more to do so than they claim is owed by the firm.

The honourable member for Salisbury also dealt with the reference racket. When I am in Townsville, I call in every morning at the pensioners' office in Flinders Street to see pensioners or anybody else who wishes to see me. On one occasion the secretary of the pensioners' association showed me a form from David Jones across the road, which had been given to a lady who was buying a sewing machine. The firm had asked her for the name of someone who could give a reference, and she had said, "Mr. Aikens will give me a reference. He knows me and my family well." Mrs. Dunn said, "Will you sign this reference for Mrs. So-and-so?" I would have gladly signed the reference for her, but on reading the small print I discovered that it was not a reference. It was a guarantee that, in the event of this woman not being able to meet the payments and commitments on this sewing machine, I would be fully responsible for them. I do not now sign guarantees for anybody. In my early days, when I was young and stupid, I signed them for some members of the A.L.P. I fell in badly, and I have never signed any since.

I went to David Jones and said, "What is the idea of telling this woman this was a reference? It is not a reference at all. It is a guarantee." I was told, "We did not tell her it was a guarantee. We just said, 'Can you go and get someone to sign this form for you?'" It is quite possible that the honourable member for Salisbury, without meaning to do so, signed a form thinking it was a reference, and found out later that it was a guarantee. Those practices are rife and rampant in Queensland today, and as a result people are being robbed and fleeced. Families are going without food and clothes, and sometimes the roof over their heads is imperilled. Yet this Bill does nothing about them. It does not even scratch the surface in protecting the people.

I did intend to deal with bugging devices. Everybody knows that bugging devices have been used. A couple of years ago when I made an attack on them, the secretary of the Queensland Law Society contacted me. A person would have to be "Blind Freddie" and completely imbecilic not to know what was going on. Not long after I picked up the phone I could hear the clicking and burring of the switch. I said to her, "If you want to talk to me, turn off your bugging device." I learnt subsequently that it was not a bugging device; she was taking a record of my speech on a tape recorder. I do not know whether that is a bugging device. However, that sort of thing goes on frequently. I make speeches over the radio and on television in Townsville and honourable members would be amazed at the number of people who tape my speeches. Would that be a bugging device?

Dr. Delamothe: No.

Mr. AIKENS: If that is not a bugging device, what is to stop a person ringing a credit bureau or the officer it is proposed to appoint under this legislation and making a complaint and taking a tape recording of the conversation? If that is not bugging, I would like to know what is. That goes on frequently. It is a common practice in business and in law. A person who rings up a lawyer's office knows that lawyers use a little gadget that fits onto the telephone, and as soon as the person starts to speak, everything he says is recorded on the tape recorder. It is called a common business practice in many offices and it is almost universally used in lawyers' offices. If that is not a bugging device, I would like to know what is.

With all my friendship and high regard for the Minister for Justice, a man who has done a good deal for the working-class people and women of this State, I am bitterly disappointed in the provisions of this Bill. If my reading of the Bill, when I get it, does not improve my opinion of it, I do not think I will even bother to vote for or against it; I shall keep out of the Chamber as a mark of disgust.

Mr. MURRAY (Clayfield) (3.39 p.m.): I felt that there was only one occasion during the year when honourable members were able to read the detail of a speech at the same time as the Minister was delivering it. That speech, of course, is the Financial Statement delivered by the Treasurer. Whilst I disagree with most of what the honourable member for South Brisbane said concerning this Bill, he opened and developed one point with which I agree fully. It is what I believe to be, in this case, an example—unwitting I hope—of contempt of Parliament and particularly contempt of the Opposition. None of us on this side of the Chamber agrees with the politics of the Opposition; in fact, we detest it. However, the point is that each of us has a duty to ensure that we are all treated in a manner that will allow us to carry out our constitutional role properly. In this case, I feel that Parliament is being treated rather shabbily.

I think it is fair enough to record what appeared in a newspaper concerning this Bill before we heard details of it in the Chamber. I shall therefore quote from the newspaper, because I think it is very important to do so.

Mr. Aikens: It may be a clearer exposition of the Bill than the Minister's introductory speech.

Mr. MURRAY: I certainly have a clear exposition of the Bill, because I at least have something in written form before me. Whilst the Minister is a deliberate, slow and clear speaker, I am not fast enough in note-taking to be able to write down details of what he is saying.

The article that I am about to quote appears in the City Final edition of the "Telegraph", which apparently appears of the streets before 2.15 p.m. The article is headed, "State Action to Control Credit Files."

An Opposition Member: That was in the 12 o'clock edition.

Mr. MURRAY: I certainly picked this paper up before 2.15 p.m.

The article reads—

"Legislation for stringent controls to prevent the invasion of privacy is expected to be introduced by the Justice Minister, Dr. Delamothe, in State Parliament later today."

I ask honourable members to notice the journalese used in dealing with the subject.

It continues—

"Under the legislation a Commissioner for Privacy will licence and control credit bureaus and private inquiry agents in Queensland."

I emphasise the use of the future imperative.

It continues—

"Government members said the Bill also would prohibit the use of bugging devices except in special circumstances."

"One Government member said, 'This legislation is Dr. Delamothe's personal baby.' "

We are all familiar with this type of journalese.

The article goes on—

" 'I regard it as an enlightened Bill to protect one of our most cherished rights.'

"Under the legislation a credit bureau providing reports for payment or otherwise will have to be licensed by the Commissioner for Privacy who will be defined as the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs.

"The Commissioner will have the power to make inquiries about each applicant.

"If an application is refused the credit bureau will have the right of appeal to the Magistrates Court.

"In the Bill, credit reports furnished by a bureau will be restricted to the credit worthiness, standing and capacity of a consumer seeking credit only for personal, family or household purposes.

"It will not include credit reports on business organisations.

"When a consumer is refused credit because of a report he can approach the bureau and must be given all information in the credit report.

"If this is disputed, the bureau must investigate the information and, if found to be inaccurate, it must be corrected.

"Information more than five years old must be expunged from the records of credit bureaux.

"It is believed . . ."

(There is a change in the journalese)—

". . . that heavy penalties are prescribed for obtaining information falsely and for falsifying credit reports.

"It is understood . . ."

(We have heard that word before)—

". . . the Bill prohibits the use of a bugging device to listen to a private conversation."

"Private inquiry agents are licensed in all States except Tasmania.

"The legislation also is expected to lay down the way in which private inquiry agents' advertisements can be published.

"Every inquiry agent and sub-agent will have to have a registered address.

"Legislation will provide that every agent must display at his place of business a notice showing legibly his name and description and it will prohibit unlicensed people acting as sub-agents or recovering fees.

"Use of a listening device will not be an offence by police authorised by an officer above the rank of inspector and after approval by a judge of the Supreme Court.

"Bugging devices also can be used by Customs officers authorised by the Comptroller-General of Customs and when authorised by the Federal minister administering any Act relating to the nation's security."

I draw the attention of the Minister, and Cabinet generally, to that as a clumsy effort by a journalist to cover up the use of information that he must surely have had before the Bill came before this Parliament. Someone must either have the Bill or have a very detailed precis of it, and it must have been made available to the Press, surely, for detail of that type to appear in a newspaper.

I take a particularly dim view of this, and, in supporting the honourable member for South Brisbane, I ask: What are we doing here, listening to the Minister's introductory speech, when details have already been printed in the Press? It would have been far better, as the honourable member for South Brisbane suggested, to have it printed in the Press and then to come back a couple of weeks later for the second reading. Properly, details of proposed legislation should not appear in the Press before they are announced in Parliament.

Mr. Houston: Don't you agree that the Press is being used more and more as a means of official communication in this State?

Mr. MURRAY: I think that this practice has probably been in existence in Queensland for a long time. However, I think it is growing, and we should all be made aware of it because a very grave danger indeed lies in the practice.

I am not flogging the old horse of "rubber stamps" in my approach to contempt of Parliament. I say that, in the main, the practice is entirely wrong. Honourable members, on either side of the House, should not get up in the morning, pick up "The Courier-Mail" and see in it details of proposed legislation or legislation that is coming before Parliament.

Mr. BENNETT: I rise to a point of order. To keep the record straight, and having in mind Mr. Speaker's ruling yesterday, as the honourable member has produced a document of the nature of the "Telegraph" newspaper, I move—

"That the document be printed."

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Houghton): Order!

Mr. MURRAY: I shall be very happy about that, Mr. Houghton, if you agree. Would the honourable member for South Brisbane prefer that it be tabled or incorporated in "Hansard"? I think it has already been recorded by "Hansard".

Mr. Bennett: I moved that it be printed for the purposes of the record.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. MURRAY: I do not wish to take up much more time on this matter.

Mr. BENNETT: I rise to a point of order. I want the record straight, Mr. Houghton. An official ruling was given yesterday, and I have moved that the document mentioned be printed. I ask for your ruling on that point.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! In view of the ruling yesterday, if the honourable member insists on moving that the document be laid on the table, it is a question for honourable members to decide whether it should be tabled for their benefit. I now put the question—

"That the document be printed."

Motion negatived.

Mr. MURRAY: If it is of any benefit, I will willingly lay it on the table.

I warn honourable members on both sides of the Chamber that this practice should be watched very closely. We should ask Cabinet to examine it very carefully. It has reached the stage where it is disturbing many honourable members on both sides of the Chamber.

I am not raising this matter for any party-political purpose. I felt that I should take the opportunity to express my views on it and draw it to the attention of honourable members. I hope they agree with me. It has already reached a dangerous stage, but if the practice extends any further there will be a complete pre-conditioning of the public before legislation is introduced and the fait-accompli type of situation will develop. Details of legislation will be flung far and wide in the public arena before it comes before Parliament. In those circumstances, I wonder what our future role will be considered to be. Therefore, I strongly urge the Minister to ensure that this does not happen again. I ask the Premier and his Cabinet colleagues to ensure that this practice is stopped.

Mr. DAVIS (Brisbane) (3.51 p.m.): I rise to bring to the attention of the Committee some matters concerning private inquiry agents. I was sorry that the honourable member for South Brisbane did not have time to go into full details about private inquiry agents. From his phraseology as he began to talk about them, it was obvious that he has about as much liking for them as I have.

Recently a female constituent approached me with a problem. She was separated from her husband, who was living with another woman in a de-facto relationship. She sought the services of a private inquiry agent to obtain divorce evidence in a raid. The first private inquiry agent she approached took money from her, but, to use her words, "He didn't have a clue." He did nothing about making a raid for three or four months, so she engaged the services of a second agent. He had so much ability that he could not even locate the City Hall.

Finally, she went to a third private inquiry agent, who promised her the world. He said, "Don't worry about the height of the house. We have all the bugging devices necessary. We will make sure that we get you the necessary evidence." The arrangement was that she pay $75 down and the balance, plus expenses, when the raid was made. Up to that stage she had spent $250 on the two other private inquiry agents, with no results. Six weeks went by after she consulted the third private inquiry agent, and every time she asked him about raiding the house where her husband was living—it was no secret that he and a woman were living there together as man and wife—she was given some sort of excuse. Obviously the agent was stalling.

When this woman asked me what she should do, I gave her certain advice. I went with her to see the private inquiry agent, but he was not in his office. One of his subagents told her that a lot of things would be done, but up to that point nothing had been done. When I asked what was going to happen he said, "There are a lot of things that have to be done, but we don't know

when we will be able to make the raid." However, the next day she was informed that the raid would be made that night. It was duly made and she got her divorce evidence. Had I not intervened, probably she would still have been waiting for it.

Private inquiry agents seem to be able to take people down for as much money as they like. They have no set fees. I should like the Minister for Justice to inform the Committee if these people will be allowed to have a sliding scale of fees, and also what the fines will be if private inquiry agents fleece people in obtaining divorce evidence, which is their main role. I hope the Minister will provide us with some details in this regard.

Mr. HUGHES (Kurilpa) (3.56 p.m.): First, I should like to compliment the Minister, who, in my opinion, has championed the cause of the right of people to privacy. People's privacy has been infringed over the years by many authorities, both governmental and private, and because today we live in a data-processing world with its bugging devices and other technical advances, so much is known of the private affairs of citizens of the State that it is necessary for the Government to initiate a Bill that will not only provide protection for their privacy but will also remedy errors that have occurred in the past.

Mr. Bennett interjected.

Mr. HUGHES: That has been known to happen. I can cite a personal case in which I became a guarantor and paid the necessary money into a trust fund. Much has been said about solicitors and, if I opened up on the subject, the honourable member for South Brisbane would go red in the face. Although I had paid the money into a trust fund, because I was guarantor for the person who was being sued and he had failed to make payment, a demand was made on me. That occurred because of the inefficiency, error and oversight of the solicitors.

Mr. Bennett: If you are "fair dinkum", name the solicitors.

Mr. HUGHES: I can certainly name them. All I have to do is refer to the case now before the courts in which a man named Lamb is involved. Does the honourable member want me to tell him the story about Lamb? Does he want me to tell him, as he should surely know, the white-washing that has been done in this connection by the society that controls the honourable member's profession? If the honourable member for South Brisbane remained quiet, he might do some justice to his profession.

Not very long ago I was asked by some Sydney people if I could obtain for them a good solicitor in Brisbane. I felt like answering, "Is there such a person?" I am not castigating everybody in the legal profession, but many of them are known to be dilatory, to charge like wounded bulls or express trains, and to have no regard for any of the ethics of their profession. I do not label everybody in the profession with this tag—there are many who are quite good—but, we can castigate many of them because of the knowledge we have of their mishandling of estates and other things. Many people have come to me over the years blaming the Commissioner for Stamp Duties and the Probate and Succession Duties Office for delays, but on investigation it has been found that, in fact, it is the fault of the solicitor for not sending in requisitions. In one case the solicitor did not put in any documents at all for 18 months. If the honourable member for South Brisbane wants to do one good thing in his day, he should remain silent. He protests too much in support of his profession.

I continue by saying that in my view the present Minister for Justice will long be remembered as the best Minister for Justice and Attorney-General that this State has ever had. He has pioneered and initiated onto the Statute Book legislation which has always had the underlying purpose of protecting the average John Citizen. In fact, he pioneered and brought onto the Statute Book the first legal-aid legislation in Australia. Amongst many others, the most notable is this Bill, which relates to the registration of private inquiry agents and the outlawing of bugging devices. This is another first for Queensland.

The Minister has said that the Bill strikes a blow against intrusion on privacy. It provides the basic right to protection against errors that are made by credit reporting bureaus. Many honourable members have received complaints from constituents about problems that have arisen as a result of such errors. So far, those people who have been maligned or affected in such a way have had no redress whatever, because they have not been able to learn the source of the information or who or where the credit bureaus are. As I say, many people have been the innocent victims of errors committed by certain credit bureaus. I have no doubt that generally these organisations are reputable, so I am sure that they will uphold the principles of the Bill. By so doing they will show that they are bound by the code of ethics outlined in the measure. Both the seller and the purchaser require correct information for their own protection.

I cannot reconcile the comments of the honourable member for Salisbury with the Minister's introductory speech. The honourable member appeared to be highly emotional and completely illogical. He said that people have credit inflicted upon them, but then he went on to attack the ability of firms to find out if prospective purchasers already have too much credit. On the one hand the honourable member complains that many people are over-extending themselves in trying to meet repayments; on the other hand he denigrates a very good and worth-while principle in the Bill. Which way does he want it?

The Bill is designed to protect both buyer and seller. If a person has over-extended himself in his ability to repay, he will probably receive the best protection possible from the Bill. I hope the honourable member for Salisbury will analyse its principles, which are not spelt out, and try to learn its true meaning.

Mr. O'Donnell: We have not seen the Bill.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: Then why not wait to see it before condemning it?

Mr. HUGHES: The comment made by the honourable member for Chatsworth is a fair one. The Minister gave such a detailed and succinct explanation of the principles of the Bill that surely the honourable member for Salisbury should have realised that it is a very worth-while measure.

Mr. O'Donnell: Doesn't the evidence indicate that the "Telegraph" has already seen the Bill?

Mr. HUGHES: The honourable member for Clayfield has said that there is an article on the Bill in the "Telegraph". I have not read the article, but I agree that the details of any Bill should be outlined first to Parliament.

The honourable member for Salisbury heard the Minister give a detailed outline of the provisions, and he should have had sufficient intelligence to realise that this was a champion Bill, initiated by a champion of people's rights and designed to protect their privacy and all aspects of their credit rating and citizenship. I laud the Minister and commend him for bringing another first to Queensland. I predict that other Australian States will model their legislation on this Bill.

When dealing with this Bill, we should closely scrutinise the activities of hire-purchase companies. In my view, almost without exception they are highly ethical and reputable. When speaking about them we should not use dirty words or think that their money is dirty, as was suspected a few decades ago. Today, most hire-purchase companies have very high ethics. I laud them for being responsible in their outlook and in the implementation of their ideals. In my opinion they are responsible, ethical and mindful of the need to conduct their business in a proper and ethical manner. They are also mindful of their public image and the public's trust in them. Today, the public and legislators throughout the Commonwealth look on hire-purchase companies as a form of fringe banking.

Mr. P. Wood: At 17 per cent interest.

Mr. HUGHES: The honourable member is quite wrong. There are varying rates of interest. It may surprise the honourable member to know that they sometimes charge as little as a bank, and up to a specified amount of 12 or 13 per cent. Today, banks give a type of personal loan on which 9 per cent interest is charged, and people can do almost as well with hire-purchase companies.

However, no matter how responsible or ethical a hire-purchase company may be, it must rely on the recommendations of credit bureaus when making decisions on lending. Errors have occurred, and John Citizen should not suffer because incorrect information is supplied by a credit bureau. This Bill champions his cause and underlines the principle that credit bureaus keep a record card on virtually everybody.

I agree with the honourable member for Salisbury that the passage of this Bill will place John Citizen in a position in which he can demand that the record be put right; that the error be expunged and that his reputation be not impugned. I do not know what redress he may have, and I do not know that it is spelt out in the Bill. Possibly the Minister may be able to tell us when making his reply.

Mr. Bennett: I told you that he had no redress.

Mr. HUGHES: We have had an outline of the Bill. Let us study it when it is printed and ascertain its exact provisions. I hope it contains provisions relating to the manner in which a person can obtain redress.

If wrong information is supplied, who will correct the record and how will it be corrected? It is a good step to ensure that credit bureaus are licensed because, to be licensed, they must be reputable. They will be investigated by the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs, who will control licensing. In the case of malpractice he can also cancel a licence. After this measure is passed, John Citizen will be able to ascertain the names of all credit bureaus, where they are situated and the names of responsible persons, principals or agents associated with them, and in that way he will be able to approach credit bureaus and demand to see his record and thus ascertain if the information in it is correct. If it is not, he can demand that it be corrected. This is a tremendous advantage. The Minister is to be commended on his forethought and initiative, and on having the courage to do something that is so right that it is beyond the sight of most mere men.

If a consumer is refused credit because of the credit report on him, the user of the report must notify the consumer of the reason for the refusal, and the consumer has the right to request the name and address of the credit reporting agent and to demand to see his card and have any errors in it corrected.

It was wise to stipulate the five-year period. Some people have found themselves in economic hardship through circumstances beyond their control, such as a Federal Budget which introduces an economic squeeze or an economic circumstance experienced at a

particular time. However, after a year or two, they have been able to get out of their financial difficulties and have established a tremendously high credit rating. I know people who at one time experienced grave financial problems, but who today possess considerable real and personal assets. It would be tremendously unfair for them to be given a bad credit rating simply because the bureau went back to the year dot in its records.

It is good that private inquiry agents will have to be registered. They are masters of the invasion of privacy and the use of bugging devices. This applies also to some solicitors who take this action for purposes associated with their clients. But private inquiry agents are not always so meaningful. The licensing of private inquiry agents will give them a higher standing. The principal of a firm will hold a licence, and any person working for him must also hold a licence. The Bill, because it provides for rules, regulations and requirements, will put a brake on exploitation. People will have somewhere to turn for help and advice so that they are not exploited and charged extortionate fees by private inquiry agents.

This legislation, together with the legislation dealing with the licensing of auctioneers and commission agents, places an extra workload on the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs, and his office will have to receive consideration in the appointment of extra staff. In my opinion, they are overworked already. Queensland has experienced a tremendous upsurge in companies, both local and foreign, and many investigations have been conducted. This office needs special assistance and a right to appoint specialists or investigators. Mr. Kehoe and Mr. Moore and their staff do a wonderful job, but the office must be given more staff. Seldom do I advocate more staff for departments. This would be one of the very rare occasions.

The Bill, which outlaws listening devices and the monitoring or recording of, or listening to, conversations, is a wonderfully good piece of legislation, and the Minister is to be commended on its introduction. Customs officers, police and certain other people are exempted in special circumstances. Of course, we cannot control the Commonwealth. I pay tribute to Mr. Don Cameron, M.P., who has campaigned in Canberra for a considerable time to outlaw the use of bugging devices. The work he has done in this regard will earn him great commendation. I hope that he passes on to the Federal authorities what has been done in this House, and then does whatever he can to initiate similar legislation in the Federal Parliament.

I conclude by quoting this passage from "The Law and the Computer", by Douglas J. Whalen, Professor of Law at the Queensland University—

> "I wish to comment on the area of privacy of personal information, the Big Brother complex. I suggest that if no action is taken, there is a very serious danger that our individual freedoms will be curtailed and that our personal rights are likely to be infringed by the availability of computerised information."

Today, more authorities, Government and non-Government, know more about people than they have known at any other time. To mis-quote Sir Winston Churchill, it can perhaps be said that never in the history of human endeavour has there been opportunity for so much to be made available to so many by so few.

I commend the Minister on the introduction of the Bill.

(Time expired.)

Mr. PORTER (Toowong) (4.16 p.m.): I propose to speak only briefly, because I know that the Minister wants to reply to the points raised by the honourable member for Clayfield.

One would be remiss if one did not stress what a notable occasion the introduction of this measure is. I think that it is something that all liberals of good faith—I use the word in its best literal, not political, sense—delight in seeing. I know that members on this side of the Chamber are proud to be associated with the introduction of the Bill, and to align themselves with legislative procedures that have the aim of sustaining the essential individuality and integrity of the private man. I, for one, regard this as a red-letter day—perhaps I should say a "blue-letter" day—for Parliament.

The honourable member for Clayfield quite properly drew attention to an article that appeared in the Press today. The Press, aided by some people, has a rather distressing tendency to pre-digest matters that should properly be fed to the community by this Parliament. The Minister himself, of course, is not in the least involved in it, and I know that that was not suggested by the honourable member for Clayfield.

It is very odd that Opposition members suggest that they have some doubts about the Bill, primarily because it does not go far enough. This attitude is a little like the situation in Alice in Wonderland—it gets "curiouser and curiouser". I find it is strange indeed that honourable members who are committed to a policy of socialism should believe that this measure, which is designed to enhance individual freedom, does not go as far as they would like it to go. Socialism is, of course, the absolute antithesis of individual freedom, which rests on a reasonable amount of individual privacy.

I think it is quite correct to say that the essence of any fully planned system—which is what socialism must be in the long run—is that, since collective action cannot be confined to the tasks on which all agree, there has to be enforced agreement on everything in order to have any action taken at

all. This is the sorry, depressing history of all countries that have experimented with socialism. It is the basis of all those who have been the architects of socialism, for example, the Germans Sombart and Plenge, and Trotsky, who was a Russian. Marx was a good German. Sombart said that the State is a unity in which the individual has no rights but only duties. That is socialism. Trotsky, the architect of the Russian system, is on record——

Mr. BENNETT: I rise to a point of order. Is this a speech on socialism, or it is a speech dealing with the members of this Parliament?

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lickiss): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr. PORTER: What an odd point of order! The honourable member for South Brisbane belongs to a socialist party, and I am pointing out that the measure introduced strikes a death blow at the proposals of socialism. The honourable member does not even wish to support the policy to which he is officially dedicated. That is a strange thing.

I presume, of course, that the honourable gentlemen opposite who are now endeavouring to dissociate themselves from the type of fully planned society in which the individual has no rights—which is Socialism—will also want to dissociate themselves from the comments of their Federal Leader, who is now suggesting that individuals have so very few rights that there should be abortion on demand. It will be very interesting to see.

Mr. Bennett: Say what you like; the Chairman will let you say it.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lickiss): Order! The honourable member for South Brisbane has reflected on the Chair. I ask him to withdraw that statement.

Mr. BENNETT: I withdraw, Mr. Lickiss. I ask for your ruling on whether abortion has anything to do with the proposed Bill.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! There will be no debate on my ruling. Will the honourable member withdraw the statement?

Mr. BENNETT: Yes. On a point of order, I ask: Has the proposed Bill anything to do with abortion?

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr. PORTER: The honourable member for South Brisbane is very free in expressing personal opinions this afternoon. I say again that the attitude of honourable members opposite to the proposed Bill is another example of the schizoid character of the Opposition. They pose as champions of democracy.

Mr. Jensen interjected.

Mr. PORTER: They oppose this Bill, as they say——

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I heard an interjection by the honourable member for Bundaberg. If he is not sure of the motion before the Committee, I will read it to him: "That a Bill be introduced to make provision for the licensing and control of credit reporting agents and private inquiry agents, for regulating the use of listening devices and for other purposes."

Mr. PORTER: I believe that the proposed Bill strikes a deep and fundamental blow at the whole concept of socialism, which aims to degrade the individual, and that is the policy to which the Opposition is committed. I suggest that I am totally correct in trying to bring to the notice of the Committee what socialism is, in order to make quite clear how excellent the measure now before the Committee is.

Again I say that honourable members opposite display a peculiar schizophrenic tendency on this matter. They wish to pose as champions of democracy; yet at the same time they are committed to socialism, which would degrade and debase the individual—the private man. It will be very interesting to see how much of their attitude to the proposed Bill stems from real conviction and how much from grandstanding and striking what they desperately hope will be popular attitudes.

The proposed Bill is an important one. It covers the three major principles that have been outlined adequately by the Minister and by other honourable members: the licensing and controlling of credit bureaus, the prohibiting, except under very special circumstances—that is, under judicial protection—of the use of listening devices; and the licensing and control of private inquiry agents. It may well be that, in the opinion of some, the proposed Bill does not go far enough; but it goes a long way along the road that I am certain an overwhelming number of people want Parliaments to travel, and in introducing this measure we will in some respects be leading the Comomnwealth in this field.

The private man stands beleaguered today. He is becoming swamped by the proliferation of the very technology that he has created. He is getting more and more things to live with; hence he has more and more things to contend with. The enormous growth of cities enhances all these problems. He becomes less of a person if he lives in a big city than if he lives outside it. So there is a very real need for measures to protect him, and I think that moving into the field of regulating the controls that are exercised by computer data banks is not only timely but will give great sustenance to ordinary people, who have grave doubts as to whether they retain essential individuality now that threats to privacy are so

gross, and often unwarranted, that the individual does not really know where he stands.

Mr. O'Donnell: Big business contributes a great deal to that.

Mr. PORTER: Undoubtedly it contributes a great deal to it, and to the extent that government has to step in and impose some limitations on what big business does, the Government is now doing that. I would expect the Opposition, in common with everybody else, to commend it for what it is doing.

There can be no doubt that much of the current concern over the threat to the individual's privacy is focused on the development of machines. That is our great problem. We have now reached an electronic age where so much can be done in taking note of a person's private life. Details from a whole host of sources can be collected in the one place, and those collected details can be traded from one computer bank to another, so that eventually a computerised version of a person can be built up which could be quite different from what the person is in reality. But for commercial purposes, for credit purposes, the individual is what is in the computer banks. We have reached a very sorry situation indeed when a person becomes much less than a number—merely a collection of odd pieces of recording in the banks of computers.

Without doubt there must be the requirement that the individual has some control over this system that tries to degrade him from a human being into so much recorded material. I think the Bill has sufficient controls in this regard, including the requirement to expunge the material after a period of time. I should imagine, too, that if in the collection of credit material a person finds that he has been grossly maligned by errors in the collection of the material, and to some degree the errors have been malicious, he would have the same right against the credit agency as he has against any person who defames, libels or slanders him, because the injury to his credit is indeed a very pernicious form of slander. I should expect that principle to remain the same.

It is a very good measure, and I am indeed staggered that the Opposition should take this peculiar, ambiguous approach to it. We need this legislation. Those of us who years ago read the book by George Orwell titled "1984"—"Big Brother" is looking at you in every way—must sadly reflect that so many of the things that Orwell feared in his fictionalised version of the society of the future—he wrote the book in the 1950's, I think—have already come true. So many of Orwell's prophesies have already come true that very few are left to be fulfilled. We have to recognise that we are now in 1971, so that we could say that we are minus 13 and counting. The Bill will undoubtedly assist in making sure that the count adds up to a useful one, and does not count us out as a society based on private people.

Hon. P. R. DELAMOTHE (Bowen—Minister for Justice) (4.28 p.m.), in reply: First of all I want to throw back in the teeth of the honourable member for South Brisbane and the honourable member for Clayfield their reflections on my integrity and political honesty by their references to what appeared in the midday edition of the "Telegraph". Both honourable members spoke as if I had sat down with the reporter responsible for it and had given him that information. I deny that absolutely.

Mr. Bennett: His prognosis was pretty good then, wasn't it?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: The principles of the Bill have been under examination and investigation by me for over 12 months. Not at any stage during that time did one breath get into the Press. On 25 June the principles were discussed by Cabinet—over three months ago. Not one word of it appeared in the Press. Some weeks ago the principles were discussed with the back-bench legislative committee. Not one word of it leaked to the Press. But last week a precis of the principles of the Bill was distributed to the joint parties. The honourable member for Clayfield, who has been one of those most vocal over the past few years in advocating that this sort of precis should be supplied to the joint parties, was the recipient of a copy, and with the 30 members all told, apart from Cabinet and my legislative committee, who received them, he must bear his 1/30th share of the suspicion for the leak to the "Telegraph".

Mr. Bennett: Do you say it was one of the members of that joint committee?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: The joint party. He is 1/30th of that body and must bear 1/30th of the suspicion.

Regarding the debate, I suppose if there was ever a strong argument against an introductory debate it was provided today. All sorts of subjects were traversed. Although I attempted to give an outline of the material in the Bill, all manner of things from hire-purchase to unsolicited goods and secret agents were brought in. I am quite sure that Opposition members were doing their best to provide an afternoon's entertainment for themselves. However, when they read the Bill, although they may not agree with all of it, they will know what they are talking about. They may feel that it should be strengthened in parts and weakened in others. There are parts of it that I do not think should be weakened, but before answering any of what was said I will give them an opportunity of studying the Bill and then, when we come to the second reading, we will all have a better appreciation of what we are talking about.

Mr. Sherrington: The matters we raised relative to hire-purchase were very relevant.

Dr. DELAMOTHE: This Bill has nothing to do with hire-purchase. That is covered by a separate Bill.

Mr. Sherrington: It is all linked with credit rating.

Dr. DELAMOTHE: I will leave the matter at that.

Motion (Dr. Delamothe) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

Bill presented and, on motion of Dr. Delamothe, read a first time.

ELECTIONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. P. R. DELAMOTHE (Bowen—Minister for Justice) (4.34 p.m.): I move—

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

The main objects of this Bill, shortly, are to make provision for the introduction of electoral-visitor voting, to extend the franchise to certain members of the Defence Force, and to abolish the necessity for presiding officers to initial ballot-papers.

The present legislation provides for postal voting for electors who are unable to attend at a polling place because of illness, infirmity, approaching maternity or religious beliefs, and for electors who will not throughout the hours of polling on polling day be within five miles of a polling place.

At the last State general election this system of voting provided 2.53 per cent of the total vote, and it represents a vital part of our electoral system. Irregularities, however, do occur owing to the impossibility of supervising the actual recording of the vote, and the electoral-visitor system is designed to eradicate these irregularities.

The existing provisions of the Act relating to electors who will not be within 5 miles of a polling place on polling day and electors who are precluded from attending a polling place by reason of religious beliefs will remain unchanged.

Electoral-visitor voting seeks to meet more conveniently the requirements of an elector who is seriously ill or infirm and by reason of such illness or infirmity is precluded from attending any polling place to vote, or, in the case of a female, will by her approaching maternity be precluded from attending any polling place to vote.

Such an elector may, after the issue of the writ for the election and before 6 o'clock in the afternoon of the day immediately preceding polling day, apply to the returning officer for the electoral district in which the person is at the time to vote before an electoral visitor.

The returning officer, who is appointed by commission and whose powers are expressly stated in the Act, will appoint electoral visitors for his district. Where the need exists, more than one electoral visitor will be appointed for the district. Upon receipt of an application by an incapacitated elector, the returning officer will direct an electoral visitor to visit the applicant at the place where the applicant then is in the district for the purpose of taking his vote. Provision has been made to enable scrutineers to be present. Electors are entitled to vote in this manner, whether they are within or outside the district for which they are enrolled. Electoral-visitor voting is also applicable to by-elections.

Under the Bill, the patients of small hospitals and institutions which are not appointed polling places will be able to vote before an electoral visitor. Where the number of possible voters in a hospital or institution exceeds 20, an approach could be made to the returning officer for that district to give consideration to the appointment of such place as a polling place.

During the introductory stage, the question was raised of an absentee voter who votes for the wrong electorate and whose vote is thereby not counted. I agree that this can happen. I point out, however, that all presiding officers are supplied with a list showing the streets in metropolitan electorates and provincial cities, as well as an alphabetical list of all places in Queensland showing the electoral district in which each place is located. With this information available, it is considered that the number of absentee voters who vote for the wrong electoral district is reduced to an absolute minimum.

The matter of an elector in a hospital which is a polling place who is discharged on the Friday before polling day and is still too ill to attend at a polling place was also raised. If an elector is aware that there is any likelihood of his being discharged before polling day, he should apply to the returning officer within the prescribed period for an electoral-visitor vote. The electoral visitor can then visit the elector in the hospital before polling day and take his vote.

With the introduction of electoral-visitor voting, a person to whom the provisions apply who is physically incapacitated to such an extent that he is unable to write his own name may sign an application form by making his mark on it.

Mr. Bromley: Will this apply to blind people?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: Yes. The question of aged and infirm persons opting out of the Act was also raised during the introductory stage. The Act at present contains provisions to assist elderly people who do not desire to vote.

The Principal Electoral Officer is empowered to remove from the roll any person whom he considers incapable, by reason of physical disability or mental incapacity, of complying with the compulsory-voting provisions.

Further, where the Principal Electoral Officer is satisfied that, by reason of physical disability or mental incapacity, a person is incapable of complying with the enrolment provisions of the Act, it is provided that non-compliance is not an offence.

It will be appreciated, therefore, that ample arrangements have been made to cater for elderly and other incapacitated voters who are not desirous of voting.

The Bill proposes to extend the franchise to members of the Defence Force who are under 21 years of age or are 21 years of age or over, are British subjects, and have lived within the Commonwealth of Australia for a continuous period of six months and within Queensland for a continuous period of three months, whilst they are outside Australia on special service in a special area. Any such person who has been discharged from the Defence Forces will retain his right to vote whilst he is living in Queensland and is under 21 years of age. This provision is similar to that of the Commonwealth, and the manner of voting will be similar to that of postal voting. Honourable members will appreciate that the names of these service personnel will not appear on any electoral roll. Consequently, these persons will not be subject to the compulsory-voting provisions of the existing law.

The Bill proposes to abolish the compulsory initialling of ballot-papers. Experience has shown that despite every precaution, valid votes have been rejected because an official has overlooked initialling a ballot-paper.

Another important provision of the Bill concerns placing Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders on an equal footing with other Queenslanders by the repeal of the present voluntary-enrolment provisions.

The existing provisions of our electoral laws whereby inmates of charitable institutions are deemed to live in the electoral districts in which they respectively lived or were enrolled prior to their becoming inmates is no longer considered to be desirable, and therefore the Bill proposes that this provision be eliminated.

The enrolment provisions for inmates of convalescent homes, nursing homes and similar places will be identical to those applying to other electors. That is, such a person must be a British subject who has lived within the Commonwealth of Australia for a continuous period of six months, and who has lived in the electoral district for which he makes a claim for a continuous period of three months.

Mr. BENNETT (South Brisbane) (4.43 p.m.): As was indicated at the introductory stage, the Opposition favours the fundamental principle of doing something to decrease the opportunities to engage in malpractices that have existed in the past. Having studied the contents of the Bill closely, and having considered what is proposed, we are prepared to support the second reading of the Bill, although we will oppose the provisions relative to the electoral visitor contained in clause 21. We are not satisfied that the provisions of that clause are at all neat and tidy, or that they will meet the wishes of the electors of Queensland. They will cause much heartbreak and inconvenience to aged and infirm citizens, who will be subjected to annoyance and inconvenience that they should not be called upon to endure. I will expand on that point as I proceed.

On principle, the Opposition supports the proposal to extend the opportunities for servicemen to vote. That is wholly in keeping with A.L.P. policy, and certainly is fundamental proof of our policy that the proposal should be extended to cover all 18-year-olds living in Queensland. Without going into detail, I say that the Opposition is deeply disappointed with the Government, and particularly with the Minister, for failing to include a provision in the Bill enabling teenagers to vote. I shall pass from that subject by assuring teenagers that, when the Labor Party takes office next year, it will amend this Act to give them adulthood in this as well as other fields.

The Minister has not made clear how the fundamental principle of the Bill will operate with perfection, as it should, and in detail. Nor has he dwelt on what will happen with regard to the visits of the electoral visitor. Primarily, it will be necessary for a person to satisfy somebody that he is seriously ill. I do not know why the word "seriously" has been written into the clause. If the principles of the Bill otherwise met with the satisfaction of the A.L.P. Opposition, it would move an amendment to delete the word "seriously". With the greatest of respect to the Minister, no doubt he would agree that doctors differ considerably on the meaning of the words "seriously ill". Different hospitals, in determining the condition of patients, refer to them as "seriously ill" or "dangerously ill". It is difficult to find a nice and fine difference between the two. But why should any old person—for that matter any young person—have to be seriously ill before being excused from being dragged out of bed to go to a ballot-box and so endanger or damage his health?

Mr. Tucker: He could have the measles or chicken-pox, yet not be seriously ill.

Mr. BENNETT: As the honourable member for Townsville North says, a person could have the measles, chicken-pox, or mumps, without being seriously ill. But it would cause him great inconvenience to have to get to a polling booth.

Mr. Bousen: He could have a contagious disease, too.

Mr. BENNETT: Exactly, and without being deemed to be seriously ill. As a doctor, the Minister will appreciate that in some cases mumps is regarded as being a mere bagatelle. However, when I had mumps there were far-reaching repercussions. I was eventually carried off to hospital in the ambulance because I could not walk.

Mr. Bromley: How old were you?

Mr. BENNETT: I was of such an age that the attack of mumps resulted in my being unable to father any children since then. Any doctor would have said that I was not seriously ill, and that I could hie myself off to a polling booth. People with that sort of illness are not regarded as being seriously ill. As I said, the Opposition would have moved an amendment to delete the word "seriously" from that clause, but there is further confusion in the provisions that have been suggested and we will therefore divide on the whole clause as it stands.

We believe that no-one should have to hire a taxi, or for that matter an ambulance, to get to a polling booth when he is not seriously ill. I know a man who lives in a hotel at Woolloongabba. I have driven him to the polling booth at the Mater Hospital for several years, simply because he wants to go. He is not seriously ill, but his legs are bad. I have to take half an hour or three-quarters of an hour off to get him into the vehicle, get through the traffic, get him to the booth, wait for him to vote, and get him home again. I should like him to be given a postal vote, but he is not seriously ill in terms of the legislation and thus is required to attend a polling booth.

Apparently electoral visitors will have to carry man-sized ballot-boxes with them. One person could even be obliged to service more than one electorate. He could be appointed, for instance, to be electoral visitor for South Brisbane and the neighbouring electorate of Norman. There are more than 800 postal voters in South Brisbane alone, and the electoral visitor there would have to drag a large, heavy box around with him.

There is also the naive provision that ballot-boxes must be closed, locked and sealed. That amuses me. We all know the types of locks used on ballot-boxes. They can be picked with a pocket-knife, a nail, or a pin. They can even be sprung open by tapping them with a hammer.

Mr. Aikens: I suppose you have done that often.

Mr. BENNETT: If I had, I would be prepared to admit to it. I am not like the honourable member for Townsville South, who always denies his offences. In any case, ballot-boxes have been opened in Queensland before today.

I am not suggesting that ballot-boxes should be fitted with Yale locks or some other strong type of lock. What I am saying is that ballot-boxes will not be carried only in motor-cars. They could be put on buses, and they could be placed under the electoral visitor's bed at night. They will not be under the direct supervision of the returning officer at all times, or indeed at any time till they are returned to him.

The reference to the sealing of ballot-boxes also amuses me. To seal a box, one merely melts a piece of wax and presses a 20c-piece into it, and the box is sealed. If one wants to open the box, one pulls off the wax and puts another seal on it when it is closed again. I have never yet seen a returning officer use an official seal. If he did, the seal could be melted and another seal impressed later. Sealing is therefore not of any great consequence.

The ballot-box has to be taken to the voter at what is deemed to be a reasonable hour. It must be before 6 p.m., but it is otherwise left to the discretion of the electoral visitor. Postal votes numbering up to 50 in a day have in the past been picked up by electoral workers. Incidentally, electoral visitors will have to be retired gentlemen, persons who are ill or infirm, persons who are on holidays, or persons who are able to get leave from their places of employment. There will not be on tap a supply of ready-made electoral visitors from one election to the next. They will have to be drawn from people who are retired or on leave, or are not in regular employment.

Under the provisions of the Bill, returning officers can also be electoral visitors. Many returning officers in various towns and cities are the resident magistrates. In Brisbane, returning officers are magistrates who find it difficult enough to cope with their electoral duties during an election campaign without having to undertake the additional duties of an electoral visitor. As I say, these visitors will have to be drawn from people who are on leave, or are engaged only casually in other activities. They could well be retired persons who could not carry heavy ballot-boxes with any ease, and who would not be able to collect more than 20 votes a day.

Mr. R. E. Moore: They need not be heavy ballot-boxes. They could be small boxes, and they will be.

Mr. BENNETT: I hope the honourable member knows what he is talking about.

Mr. R. E. Moore: I am on the committee. I should know something about it.

Mr. BENNETT: The honourable member is one of those who leaks information to the Press before we hear it in the Chamber.

Mr. R. E. Moore: That's right.

Mr. BENNETT: And the Minister blamed the honourable member for Clayfield!

An election campaign proper, from the issuing of the writs to the expiration of the time for the collection of ballot-papers, usually covers a period of three weeks. How on earth could one electoral visitor cope with the demand in the Brisbane metropolitan area, where the demand for postal votes is heavy, or, for that matter, in country areas, where long distances have to be covered even though the demand may not be heavy? I do not think the Minister has fully realised the difficulties that will be encountered. There is provision, I know, for the appointment of more than one electoral visitor in an electorate, but the expense of carrying out the duties will be very high.

Then we come to the question of the "reasonable hour". No doubt that will be determined by the electoral visitor. Elderly women will not want an electoral visitor calling at their place of residence before 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning. Of course, if an electoral visitor calls and a person is not ready to vote, or perhaps is absent, he has to wait for only half an hour. It may be said that that is a long time to wait; but if a prospective voter is not at home or, alternatively, is not available to vote, surely an electoral visitor should not have to cool his heels and waste his time there for as long as half an hour. He should go on his way and try to collect votes elsewhere, and then return to the home at a convenient hour suggested by the occupiers. We all know that elderly people have to visit hospitals. Again, their children may decide to take them on a day's outing to the South Coast or somewhere else. If the electoral visitor calls while they are absent, he has to wait only half and hour—doing nothing, incidentally—and it is then within his discretion whether he returns and tries again. We may be placed in the position of having partisan electoral visitors. Let us face reality. We have had partisan officials in the past, and I am not suggesting that they have been confined to one political party. To be quite frank, I readily concede that when one asks members of one's own party what they intend to do on election day—whether they can do any good is another matter—they say, "We will be doing a lot for the party. We will be paid officials for the day. We are working on the inside." All political parties have partisan officials, and, if they are electoral visitors, after waiting for half an hour they will have a discretion in deciding which homes they will return to. They will gain, as we do, a knowledge of the voting propensities and inclinations of postal voters, and they might well decide that they will not go back to the homes of certain people because of their knowledge of the way they vote. I am a realist in these matters.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: You must always trust public servants at some point, mustn't you?

Mr. BENNETT: Frankly, I think one must trust everybody to a large degree; but one should not place an unnecessarily heavy burden on a person in the trust that one reposes in him.

Mr. Sherrington: They need not necessarily be public servants.

Mr. BENNETT: As the honourable member for Salisbury says, they need not necessarily be public servants. That is not one of the qualifications laid down. They could be former party officials. For example, when the honourable member for Toowong becomes more elderly, he, as a former party president, could become an electoral visitor.

Dr. Delamothe: The same thing applies to the poll clerk in your polling booth. There are no qualifications necessary for him.

Mr. BENNETT: The Minister misses my point, obviously.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: Impossible.

Mr. BENNETT: I know that my powers of persuasion are rather convincing and my lucidity of argument excellent, but on this occasion the Minister has not yet caught up with me.

What I was pointing out is that the returning officer has certain direct obligations without the exercise of any discretion. I will concede that when a public servant or other authorised officer has a direct obligation, he will carry out that obligation sincerely and honestly. I am not arguing against that.

The poll clerk will do likewise. He sits at the polling booth and, if a voter has complied with the Act and has his name on the roll, the poll clerk has no discretion at all. He will carry out his duties sincerely and honestly. However, we are giving the electoral visitor a discretion. He can decide, "I will go back to Blogg's place because I know how he votes. Having spent half an hour at Mrs. Smith's place, I won't go back there because I know how she votes." He would not be doing anything actually dishonest. He would merely be exercising his discretion in the fashion that the Bill allows him to. That is the point I am making.

When we write the powers of discretion into legislation, we must be satisfied that we have officers who can carry out that discretion, and in a judicial manner. But in order to exercise judicial authority it is necessary to have judicial training. A person can exercise his discretion wrongfully without believing for one moment that he is being dishonest. That is the point I am making.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: We are improving on the situation where previously the voter was susceptible to the influence of the party worker.

Mr. BENNETT: I do not know whether the Government is improving on that position. From reading the provisions of the Bill, I am beginning to believe that there will be a tremendous number of informal votes in this category in the community. In previous times the voter gave his vote only to the official of the party for which he wanted to vote. Fundamentally, I think that is a fair obseravtion to make.

Dr. Delamothe: Will you answer a question?

Mr. BENNETT: Yes.

Dr. Delamothe: How often do you think an electoral visitor will have to call on a person who has submitted an application for one of these votes because he is quite unfit to attend a polling booth as a result of sickness or infirmity? How many of these people would be out when the electoral visitor calls? They would be too sick or infirm to leave their homes.

Mr. BENNETT: In answer to the Minister I can say on a very conservative estimate that at least 50 per cent of the aged and infirm people who require postal votes do go out on visits from time to time. Quite frankly, I am surprised that the Minister should ask me such a question. He asked it in a dual capacity: first as a parliamentarian who has worked in politics, and then as a doctor who has treated elderly people. No doubt—I do not say this at all disparagingly—he has required them in his practising days to call at his surgery. Sometimes when he has been busy they would have had to be there for at least an hour. That is one outing they would go on. They can arrange to attend a doctor's surgery at a time suitable to themselves, but on polling day they may not be able to arrange the necessary assistance to get them to a polling place.

They will visit the doctor because they have confidence, faith, trust and, if I may say so with respect, affection for him. They do not get all stirred up when they are going to visit the doctor. But they do not like going down to a polling booth where many people, standing outside, will be thrusting cards into their hands and trying to persuade them that they should vote for this or that candidate. Sometimes they have to be helped up the stairs; they get inside and, if things are done properly, they are supposed to go to the voting place on their own. It is a big assignment for these elderly people and they do not like having to face up to it. A visit to a polling booth is a rather frightening affair for many of them, but a visit to their own doctor is quite different.

Dr. Delamothe: That is the very reason for introducing the electoral-visitor system.

Mr. BENNETT: I understand what the Minister is driving at, but I do not think he is achieving his ambitions and intentions. I am inclined to doubt very much whether the system will be any improvement on the previous one. That is the point I am making.

Finally, dealing with outings of these people, if, as many of them do, they have relatives in Brisbane who are shift workers, their relatives might, on a week day, take them down to the seaside. They might be out all day, but that does not say that they are capable of getting to a polling booth on their own. What is the electoral visitor going to do for them? He cannot assist them in that, quite properly, he is not supposed to tell them how to vote or what they should do. He can say to them, "You have to vote." Perhaps he could even go as far as to say, "You have to fill in every square", but that is different from going into their homes. Some of them, of course, spend a great deal of time in bed and others are bed-ridden. They want only their personal friends and associates in their homes. The home might not be tidy, and entry by an outsider might cause an old person undue disturbance and inconvenience. In any case, to attend to a postal vote, one very often has to go into the person's bedroom. What is going to happen? As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is pointing out, on occasions he has had five opponents—six candidates including himself. If they all attend with scrutineers——

Mr. Hughes: Can't the postal voter refuse admission?

Mr. BENNETT: No. That would be an offence. That is the danger of it. Assuming that some member of my own family required a postal vote because of illness, or I had my elderly relatives staying with me for a time, I could name one or two persons in other political parties who would dearly love to come into my home just to embarrass me and offend my relatives.

Sir Gordon Chalk: I think they would appoint Tony Murphy as one scrutineer.

Mr. BENNETT: I do not think they would. There would be one more arrogant than he who would try as he did on one other occasion. It would be an offence for me not to let such persons in. I would then have a procession of six candidates and scrutineers.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: This is a person's private home. You are not telling us that it would be an offence for a person to prevent entry by anyone other than the electoral visitor.

Mr. BENNETT: I can point out the provision which says it is an offence if he does.

Mr. Hughes: Under common law one has the right of privacy and the use of one's home.

Mr. BENNETT: Put it this way: as I see it I, in my position, certainly would not allow any scrutineers into my home, but I would be committing an offence under this Act. Say somebody wanted to forcibly enter my home and said, "I have lawful authority under this Bill to enter your home." I would say, "To hell with you; down the stairs you go." In common law I certainly would not have committed an offence and the person could not sue me for damages for assault, but the authorities could charge me with a breach of the Elections Act and I would have no defence. That is the position. My common-law rights certainly would not be disturbed. I could turn him out and he could not sue me for damages, but I could be proceeded against for committing an offence under the Elections Act and I would have no defence.

What old person wants to have a procession of seven people—six scrutineers and the electoral visitor—marching in with a ballot-box? In some of the small rooms in the West End and South Brisbane houses that are occupied by elderly people there is so little oxygen that the elderly person would suffocate.

Mr. Aikens: Up in the North the elderly people would treat them with their usual hospitality and give them a cup of tea and a plate of scones.

Mr. BENNETT: I suppose that would apply to most citizens in the North, but certainly not to the honourable member.

I am not exaggerating when I say that many elderly people become tense, and shake to such an extent that they need to have a pencil put in their hands and be shown where to write.

Dr. Delamothe: And you've even got to vote for them?

Mr. BENNETT: In many instances, that might be so. I do not think the person who votes for them would be doing them a disservice—provided he is told how they want to vote.

The Bill requires the applicant to do certain things. In the presence of the electoral visitor he is required to cast his vote; then fold the ballot-paper so as to conceal the manner in which he has voted; then obtain from the electoral visitor the envelope endorsed with the certificate of declaration, as the case may be, place the folded ballot-paper therein, and fasten the envelope; and then place the fastened envelope in the ballot-box provided by the electoral visitor. Many elderly people are simply not capable of doing all those things, and it is unfair to expect them to do so.

For the benefit of those honourable members who have been interjecting and have not read the Bill, I point out that the poor old soul who receives a visit from the electoral officer is required to obey all his directions. In other words, from the time that the electoral visitor, with his entourage, enters the old person's home—by force, if necessary, because the Bill gives him the right of entry—and goes to the old person's bedside, he or she cannot even say to him, "Will you call again? I do not find this moment convenient to vote." The old person is required to obey all the directions of the electoral visitor. It is rather strange that the electoral visitor is able to enter a person's home and take charge of it. When introducing the Invasion of Privacy Bill today, the Minister said a great deal about a person's privacy. He said that a man without privacy is a man without dignity. Yet in this Bill the Minister gives the electoral visitor the right to force an entry into any person's home and give directions to that person.

The Bill also provides that any other person who is in the home can also be given directions. It is well known that scrutineers and political-party supporters become very enthusiastic about elections. It is good to see their enthusiasm, energy and determination outside a polling booth when they are dealing with healthy, vigorous people. While one party's supporter is trying to shove a how-to-vote card into an elector's hand, another party's supporter is trying to do the same thing at the same time. What will happen when a band of over-enthusiastic scrutineers and party supporters are congregated in one small room? One will say, "Don't forget, Mrs. Smith, that Bill Bloggs is the ideal candidate." Another will say, "Shut up! You can't do that sort of thing. That is a breach of the Act and an offence." Another will say, "Well, as you two have mentioned your candidates, I will mention mine." Then the electoral visitor is forced to intercede and restrain them. The result will be a general melee in the bedroom of some poor old soul who should not have been disturbed in the first place.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: If it happens once, the electoral visitor should control them the second time.

Mr. Sherrington: What about the once?

Mr. BENNETT: If they are appointed, what right does the electoral visitor have to sack them?

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: He would have no right to sack them, but surely to God he could control them reasonably.

Mr. BENNETT: With the greatest respect, Mr. Speaker, I cannot control the interjector at times, and I believe I would have just as much authority, force and power as many electoral visitors.

Mr. R. E. Moore: You're just a cream puff.

Mr. BENNETT: The honourable member would look better with a cream puff on his head.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: Surely the scrutineers' work is to see that the ballot-paper is filled in correctly.

Mr. BENNETT: The honourable member is either talking with his tongue in his cheek, or he is very ignorant of these matters. Surely he has been present during the count of a close postal vote in a returning officer's home when various scrutineers have become tense and over-enthusiastic, or have been so carried away in the arguments that take place that the returning officer cannot contain them. I emphasise that that has taken place in a returning officer's home during a close recount. I have been present to give legal advice to various people, and other political parties have also had legal men present to try to give legal advice on the arguments, which sometimes might be termed brawls, that have taken place in the returning officer's own home. What will happen in the home of somebody who has no power over these persons because they have a right of entry?

Under the existing legislation an applicant's son or daughter may help him to complete his vote, because it is not an offence for relatives of the family to help such a voter to do so. Under the proposed legislation, the electoral visitor will have to direct the family that they are not entitled to help; that they must refrain from doing so. He must ensure that they do not interfere in any way. I do not doubt the bona fides of the Minister's intentions, but I certainly believe that he has not examined the possibilities closely enough. Obviously he has not anticipated all the pitfalls that can arise.

The Minister referred to by-elections and said that the same law would apply. If a by-election was to be held in the electorate of Merthyr——

Mr. W. D. Hewitt interjected.

Mr. BENNETT: One was held recently, with rather disastrous results. If a by-election is to be held in the electorate of Merthyr and a person in Cloncurry, Mt. Isa or elsewhere wanted to lodge a postal vote, would the electoral visitor have to be flown to Cloncurry to get the vote? Does the Government intend to appoint electoral officers all over Queensland for one by-election?

Dr. Delamothe: Have you read the Bill?

Mr. BENNETT: Yes, and I hope the Minister has.

Dr. Delamothe: The electoral-visitor provision only applies within five miles of a polling booth. If a by-election is held in Brisbane, the man at Mt. Isa would not be within five miles. He would lodge an ordinary postal vote.

Mr. BENNETT: In that case the ordinary system of postal voting is regarded as fit and proper. If it is regarded as satisfactory in those circumstances for a postal vote to be lodged at Mt. Isa, or somewhere else not within five miles of a polling-booth, why is it necessary to introduce this system of voting?

There is another point I may have overlooked. I cannot see it in the Bill because it does not apply at present. I am referring to the provision to sign by making a mark. The Minister, in his reply, could perhaps point out the section which provides that an applicant for a postal vote can sign by his mark. It is generally conceded that, under the existing legislation, it is not possible to sign by mark. However, that is now the provision. Incidentally, I believe that applicants for postal votes who cannot write or are blind should be given the opportunity of signing by making a mark.

Mr. Sherrington: Or be given an open vote.

Mr. BENNETT: Of course, they can have an open vote if they go to the polling booth. But how can they get an application into the electoral office or to the returning officer if they cannot sign by a mark?

Mr. Sherrington: I raised this with the Minister at the introductory stage. He said he would attend to it, but apparently has forgotten about it.

Mr. BENNETT: I realise that. The Minister, in his reply at that time, did not say that the Bill contains a provision for signing by a mark. I can see him referring to the old Act at the moment. Let me assure him that, in every election in which I have been involved during the past 22 years, returning officers have ruled that an application cannot be signed with a mark, but only with a proper signature. That has been the case in South Brisbane and in every other electorate in which I have worked. In his reply to the honourable member for Salisbury at the introductory stage, the Minister did not say that the Bill contains such a provision. He said he would look into it. He gave us to understand that if he favourably considered the proposal of signing by a mark, he would amend the Bill. He said he would amend the Bill if he thought it was desirable after giving consideration to it, but he has not circulated any amendments.

Dr. Delamothe: Not yet.

Mr. BENNETT: The Minister says, "Not yet", so he might. Does the Minister claim that that provision is contained in the Bill?

Dr. Delamothe: The old Act says that an application for a postal vote must be signed by the applicant. This is not an application for a postal vote. The ordinary legal significance of a signature includes the making of

a mark which can be attested at the time. I said I would look into it, and this is the advice I have been given.

Mr. BENNETT: I still say, with the greatest of respect for the Minister, that the existing legislation contains no provision for signing by a mark. That has been the irrevocable ruling of every returning officer I have met. Most of them have been magistrates and qualified lawyers. They have always ruled that a person could not sign by a mark. I have argued with them on this point and have not been able to find any expressed phraseology in the Act to convince them that they have been wrong. Not once in 22 years have I been able to find such a provision.

In my electorate there are a few homes for blind people. I have had to arrange a fleet of cars to take those blind people to the polling booth. When I have been the candidate I have had to arrange for one of my scrutineers to go in and vote for them one by one, and I have done it when I have not been a candidate, because every returning officer, without exception, has told me that there is no provision in the law for any document to be signed by the person with a mark. I have not been able to find such a provision. It is all very well for the Minister to endeavour, in a rather scoffing way, to show that there is some difference between postal voting under the old system and voting by means of the services of an electoral visitor. In both instances it is an application for a postal vote.

Dr. Delamothe: You are quite confused.

Mr. BENNETT: Under the previous system, a person made an application for a postal vote and received it. Under the provisions of the Bill, a person who makes an application for a postal vote will have it brought to him by an electoral visitor. That is the only difference. Some people say that lawyers use a lot of verbiage in argument.

Mr. Hanlon: Under the electoral-visitor system, a voter is required to answer in writing, and sign, certain questions that can be put to him by the electoral visitor.

Mr. BENNETT: That is correct. The elector is supposed to vote, but he is required to do a lot more than just that. He has to put his signature on an envelope.

For 22 years, to my knowledge, it has been irrevocably ruled by every returning officer that a voter cannot make a mark on the envelope. It has been held that a mark does not satisfy the requirements of the Elections Act. An application under the Bill is still in essence an application for a postal vote. The only difference is that, instead of receiving a vote through the post, a voter will now receive it from the hands of an electoral visitor.

This is very important to me, because I do not think that aged and blind people should have to be taken to polling booths. They are not idiots, but at polling booths they feel that they are. It is embarrassing for them to be led to the booth and asked, "Do you want to vote for so-and-so?"

At the introductory stage, the Minister did not give the explanation that he has given now. He said that he would examine the matter, and bring in an amendment if necessary. If he states that he has legal advice to the effect that under the present legislation an application signed with a mark is valid, I challenge him to produce that legal opinion. If he is able to do so, I shall move that it be tabled so that, when I have difficulty in the future with returning officers who say that applicants cannot sign with a mark, I shall be able to refer them to the official parliamentary document tabled in the House setting out a qualified lawyer's opinion, adopted by the Minister, that signing with a mark is valid. I say this very seriously in view of the Minister's change of attitude between the time when this matter was raised by the honourable member for Salisbury and now. I am pursuing the matter by asking him to tell the House which lawyer in the Crown Law office told him that an envelope containing a vote can legally be signed by a mark.

I conclude my remarks by indicating that the Opposition will call for a division on that clause at the Committee stage.

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) (5.26 p.m.): I shall not take as long as the honourable member for South Brisbane, although I hope to say a lot more than he did.

I have always regarded the facilities for postal voting under the Elections Act as providing an opportunity for perhaps the greatest amount of fraud, corruption and skulduggery existing in this State. I say that with full knowledge of the fact that I was trained in that fraud, corruption and skulduggery when I was a member of the A.L.P. I have no apologies to offer for that. In fact, we were given lessons in it.

Mr. Bennett: That's why they kicked you out.

Mr. AIKENS: That could be so, but whether I was kicked out or whether I left it with dignity is beside the point. The fact remains that I have repented of my sinful ways and I no longer engage in any corruption or skulduggery in postal voting or anything else connected with elections.

However, it can be worked the other way. The State Elections Act applies also to local authority elections, and in Townsville the T.C.A. aldermen who were thrown out of office holus-bolus in 1967 worked up such a practice of skulduggery in connection with postal voting that over 2,000 postal votes, I think, were cast in the city council election. The honourable member for Townsville

North may correct me if I am wrong, but I should say that his electorate and mine have almost the same electoral value, and I doubt whether 500 or 600 postal votes were cast within those two electorates at the last State election, notwithstanding that quite a number of people went out canvassing for postal votes. I am not suggesting that there was any fraud, corruption or skulduggery, but with all the canvassing that was done in those two electorates, which comprise the whole of the city of Townsville, and with the same rolls being used as were used for the city council election, only about 500 or 600 postal votes were cast, whereas at the city council election about 2,000 postal votes were cast.

Mr. P. Wood: It was a holiday week-end, wasn't it?

Mr. AIKENS: No, it was not. The honourable member should not fall for that malarky. The trouble with him is that he is like many Ministers of the Crown who used to attack me for conducting a vendetta against the T.C.A. until I disillusioned them at the 1967 city council election in Townsville. Whether or not it was a holiday week-end, the T.C.A. used to send its canvassers round to say, "Why bother going to the poll? Why bother inconveniencing yourself by going to the nearest polling booth? Leave it to us. We will arrange a postal vote for you." It was a well-organised campaign.

Mr. P. Wood interjected.

Mr. AIKENS: The honourable member should forget all that malarky. I live in Townsville and I know what goes on. It was a well-organised postal vote, and it worked in a way opposite to that in which it usually works. I think that one vote in eight, perhaps more, was a postal vote.

I have always been very concerned about what could be done to eliminate all the unsavoury activities, if I may put it that way, associated with postal voting. When I read that the Minister for Justice intended to introduce a Bill that would provide for a person appointed by the returning officer to go round and collect postal votes, I thought, "That is a jolly good idea. At least we will not have any suggestion of party canvassers, irrespective of party, going to a home, talking a person into making an application for a postal vote, saying to the elector, 'Now, don't use that postal vote until I come back and tell you how to use it, because there are a lot of tricks connected with it', then going back when the postal vote arrives, sometimes seeing the vote actually cast, collecting it after it has been marked, taking it round the corner, putting a lead pencil in the flap of the envelope containing the postal vote (as we were taught to do), opening the envelope, taking the ballot-paper out, putting it back in again if it was marked correctly, and then posting the postal-vote envelope." If the ballot-paper was not marked as the canvasser thought it should be marked and it could not be altered to suit the particular political opinions of the canvasser, it was either destroyed or made invalid. Do not tell me what goes on with postal voting! I know, and so do other honourable members, and it is no good acting the "Simon Pure" about it.

Mr. Bennett: Are you "dirty" on the old system because you have no workers?

Mr. AIKENS: My party has more workers than the honourable member's dog has fleas—and that is saying something! We have more workers than we can use. They flock to me, and I cannot find jobs for all of them, although I try to find jobs for as many as I possibly can.

There are some aspects of the provision of an electoral visitor about which I am not quite happy, although it is an improvement on the present open go given to the canvassers and the electoral stooges and touts who go round.

The honourable member for South Brisbane, as one would expect from a lawyer, engaged in what is known in legal phraseology as a "special pleading". He made a case relative to one or two isolated instances and indulged—he is a past master at this—in a great deal of sloppy sentimentality about the "poor old feeble person who cannot hold a ballot-paper". It is a wonder that he did not go on with that. He was indicating that these old people were absolutely at their last gasp. If I may use an expression well known to the Minister for Justice, according to him, they were in extremis and were the only type of people who cast postal votes. I went around with postal votes for many years, but only rarely did I strike the type of elector that the honourable member for South Brisbane harped about with such tremendous enthusiasm. The tears were coursing down his cheeks as he spoke about them. It could never be denied that the honourable member for South Brisbane is a past master at histrionics. He should have been on the stage. He would make a first-class television actor. He would leave the rest of them for dead.

Mr. Bennett: Another Clark Gable.

Mr. AIKENS: He would put Clark Gable in the baby class. The electoral visitor is no more likely to be corrupt than the present canvasser or political tout. Therefore, I think we can discount the argument put forward by the honourable member for South Brisbane that the electoral visitor may be prone to political prejudice. Most people have some political prejudice, but if they are officers of the Crown they seem to submerge it, or at least we expect them to. We have to run that risk. If I had to cast a postal vote, I would rather entrust it to an electoral visitor—an officer of the Crown—who I knew to be a supporter of the A.L.P. or the Liberal Party, than to a canvasser or a tout who I knew was a member of the A.L.P. or the Liberal Party.

An Opposition Member: They won't all be officers of the Crown.

Mr. AIKENS: They will be appointed by the returning officer, and one would expect that even if they are not officers of the Crown they will at least be reputable persons connected with the Public Service.

An Opposition Member: A J.P.

Mr. AIKENS: A J.P., or something like that. We all know how valuable J.P.'s are; the latest quote for them was 22c a dozen. Nevertheless, some of them are reputable.

At the present time a voter applies for a postal vote, and the returning officer issues the ballot-paper automatically; he issues it on the application made by the elector. But what will happen when the electoral visitor goes round? This is the point that agitates my mind, and it is one that I should like the Minister to clear up. How will he determine whether the applicant is sufficiently ill or incapacitated to warrant a postal vote?

Mr. Bennett: If he is "seriously" ill.

Mr. AIKENS: There again I appreciate the point made by the honourable member for South Brisbane about the word "seriously", but I draw an analogy. I can remember some years ago, when Arthur Jones, as Minister for Labour and Industry, amended the Industrial Conciliation Act in respect of some offence or other. A certain provision applied to any worker who was guilty of misconduct. A case arose in which a worker was dismissed. He lost his appeal to the Industrial Court for doing some piffling little thing. In order to clear up the point and differentiate between "misconduct" and "serious misconduct", we had to write the word "serious" into the Act. This might be something the other way about. If we write into the Bill, "If the elector is, in the opinion of the electoral visitor, ill or incapacitated", it will give the electoral visitor a whole field in which to operate. He might say, "This fellow is suffering a hangover", as I used to in years gone by. Or he might say, "This fellow does not feel like going out to vote", or something like that.

Where are we going to draw the line of demarcation? I am not disagreeing entirely with the honourable member for South Brisbane, but how, for instance, can we describe a condition that lies between "ill" and "seriously ill"?

Mr. Hughes: You always give them the benefit of the doubt.

Mr. AIKENS: If that is written into the Bill I will be quite happy about it, but someone has to make the decision. As it is now, anybody can apply for a postal vote. Any woman can say that she is pregnant and will soon be having a child. Any man or woman can say that he or she is too ill, too incapacitated or too injured to go to a polling booth, and a postal vote will be issued automatically.

Although, I am very happy with the provision for the electoral visitor, I am rather concerned about whether he will go to a home where an application has been made for a postal vote and say, "Seeing that you made the application I am going to give you a postal vote." I think the honourable member for South Brisbane was a bit flustered and rattled by what happened earlier in the day, when he put up probably the worse argument of all time. He defeated his own argument when he said, "When the electoral visitor arrives, the applicant may not be home; he may have gone visiting relatives; he may have gone out shopping; he may have gone anywhere."

Here is an applicant who can wander all over the countryside—visit relatives, go shopping; probably go out and listen to the honourable member for South Brisbane addressing a public meeting—but who cannot go to a polling booth. How would the electoral visitor determine whether an applicant who can do those things should be given a postal vote? Surely he can say, "If you can do all those things—visit relatives, shop, and go here, there and everywhere—you can go to the polling booth and cast a vote."

This is not an easy problem to solve. I am not suggesting it is one of those things that can be solved by a straight cut down the middle, as Alexander's sword cut the Gordian knot. The honourable member suggests they might force an entry into an applicant's home. They will not be able to force an entry because, before the electoral visitor can go to the home, the elector must make an application for a postal vote. Only then does the electoral visitor go to his home.

I would know as much about this as the honourable member for South Brisbane. I am not suggesting that I know more, but at least I know as much. If a person is so old, so decrepit, so dilapidated or so tottering as to be on the brink of eternity, as the honourable member so very soulfully told us, that he would object to these visitors coming into the home and invading his privacy, as I know northern people—it is quite possible that they are different from southern people—he would simply not apply for a postal vote. He would say, "I will not have a vote. When I am asked why I did not vote, I will say that I objected to this man coming into my home." That is what I would advise him to do, anyway. When all is said and done, only about 15 or 20 voters in my electorate, with about 18,000 or 19,000 electors, would fail to have a vote that way. As a matter of fact, many of them fail to have a vote now, and after the election they come to me with the letter from the returning officer and say, "Here is a form I got asking me to declare why I did not vote on polling day,"

and I write out the excuse for them. I suppose many other honourable members have done the same thing.

Mr. Bennett: You make one up?

Mr. AIKENS: Yes. I am quite happy to do so. When it comes to serving the interests and welfare of the poor, the downtrodden or the oppressed, I am the most plausible liar this side of the "black stump". I make no apology for that. My job is to protect and help the people.

If people really object, it could be explained to them that even when the electoral visitor comes to them they can say, "I am too sick, too decrepit, too tottering, and too close to the brink of the grave. I do not want to vote after all." He will then be quite happy to go away.

Mr. Bennett interjected.

Mr. AIKENS: From my experience of the administration of the Electoral Act, I would say, "No." I have been in Parliament for a long time. I was elected to this Parliament five times when the A.L.P. was the Government, and goodness knows how many times since the present Government has been in office, and I would say that, irrespective of what party was in power, the returning officers, at least for my electorate, have been men of the highest honesty, integrity and probity. I have no quarrel with them at all, althought some of them were dedicated A.L.P. supporters. That did not affect their honesty and dedication so far as the conduct of the election was concerned. That is my opinion, and I think that will be the case with this provision.

Mr. Bennett: Your greatest protection was that they were A.L.P. supporters. They were 100 per cent honest.

Mr. AIKENS: I have no objection to any public servants.

Mr. Davis interjected.

Mr. AIKENS: The honourable member for Brisbane has been interjecting quite a lot. I can tell some beautiful tales about the member he succeeded. Where was there a bigger villain at election time than "Johnno" Mann—and where was there a more likeable fellow? If he has taught the present member for Brisbane one-hundredth of the things he knew, the present member will be a pretty wise "cookie" when it comes to elections.

Another matter that concerns me is the problem of plural voting. I have looked through the Bill but I cannot find any reference to it. In my electorate there are many dedicated members of the A.L.P. I do not blame them for their dedication. This is a free country and they can believe what they like. But I wish they would not go along on polling day, as nine or 10 of them do, and vote up to nine times each. One dedicated A.L.P. member who is an ex-engine driver voted nine times at the last election. What can be done to stop that? Of course, it does not affect me, because I could give some of my opponents' supporters 90 votes each, and I would still beat them. Nevertheless plural voting is a problem. As it is now, the returning officer draws up a list, which shows that some people voted twice, others voted three or four times, and others again voted as many as nine times. All of us know that the great majority of those votes have been cast corruptly by people who go from polling booth to polling booth and cast votes for their particular A.L.P. candidate. They think they are being loyal to the Labor Party, but in fact they are not. One of these days there will be a difference of only two or three votes in the final count and an appeal will be made to the Elections Tribunal, where the whole thing will blow up.

Mr. Davis: What about the graveyard vote?

Mr. AIKENS: When anybody ran against him, old "Johnno" Mann used to boast that he had a 400-vote start. He had 400 "ghosts" on the roll. After the split in the A.L.P.——

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

Mr. AIKENS: "Johnno" Mann had 400 postal votes. The returning officer had been tipped off by Bill Power, and went in to "Johnno" with these votes.

Mr. Bennett: You weren't game to attack "Johnno".

Mr. AIKENS: Yes, I was—gamer than you are in attacking policemen outside. You would get another kick in the pants, just as you did from Glen Hallahan.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. AIKENS: I am not making an attack on "Johnno"—this is a tribute to his capacity. The returning officer brought in 400 votes and said, "I want to talk to you about these, Mr. Mann." "Johnno" said, "Give me those." Then he ripped them in half and threw them in the waste-paper basket. He used to tell that story himself. As I have said, he was probably the most likeable villain we had had in this Chamber.

A tremendous number of people, particularly old people, are not on the electoral rolls. A cause of that is the section of the Act that provides that, if a person wishes to cast a vote and his name is not on the roll, he can claim a vote on the grounds that he has been wrongly removed from the roll. What that person does not know is that later on when the returning officer finds that that person's name has not been on the roll for the last four or five elections——

Mr. Bennett: The vote is thrown away.

Mr. AIKENS: The vote is not counted. I throw this suggestion into the ring, and I am sure the Minister will pick it up: before

a vote can be granted to a person who has claimed that his name has been wrongly erased from the roll that person must be compelled to fill in an application form for enrolment in that particular electorate. At present such a person casts his vote, and afterwards, when asked, "How did you get on?", he replies, "I had my vote all right. They can't rob me of my vote." He cannot be told, as the honourable member for South Brisbane knows, that his vote is thrown in the waste-paper basket. If this problem can be overcome by regulation, it would be a good thing, but if it can be solved by writing a suitable provision into the Bill, so much the better. Any person who claims a vote on the ground that his name has been wrongly erased from the roll should be required to fill in an application form for enrolment before he is given a vote.

I am happy about the principle of the electoral visitor; however, I am not happy about many of the matters associated with it. The principle is certainly a little bit better than the present system which is wide open to skulduggery, graft and corruption, whether or not it is practised by the party canvasser or the party tout.

Hon. P. R. DELAMOTHE (Bowen—Minister for Justice) (5.50 p.m.), in reply: I want to make it quite clear to the honourable member for South Brisbane that there is a distinct difference between the wording of section 71 of the Act, which covers postal votes, and that of what will be section 72 in the new legislation.

Motion (Dr. Delamothe) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

(Mr. Lickiss, Mt. Coot-tha, in the chair)

Clauses 1 to 20, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 21—New s. 72; Electoral visitor voting in cases of illness, etc.—

Mr. BENNETT (South Brisbane) (5.52 p.m.): I do not propose to elaborate on the submissions I have made on this clause, or to deal with the untruthful, puerile arguments advanced by the member for Townsville South. I could, of course, go into great detail on this clause, which would keep us here till after 6 o'clock, but the honourable member for Townsville South would not be here tonight. He is never here at night-time. He has to curl up in his little rug and refuses to come out into the cold night air.

Mr. Aikens: At least I do not go to weddings like Darcy Dugan's.

Mr. BENNETT: It probably would have made a man of the honourable member if he had.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lickiss): Order! The honourable member is debating clause 21. I trust that he will keep to the clause.

Mr. BENNETT: I wish to raise only one point on clause 21, because the Minister in his reply confined his remarks to it. He said, in effect, that I would find on reference to the Act that section 71 was worded differently from the new proposal contained in clause 21, which will become section 72 of the new legislation. I merely point out that this clause does not deal with the method of signature at all. It does not resolve the doubt that certainly has been in the minds of all returning officers over a great number of years. I challenge anyone to say that he knows of any returning officer who has ruled that, under section 71 of the Act, any application at all can be signed with a mark. I am dealing with the signature. Under section 71 of the Act it has always been ruled that there must be a signature. And no provision is made in the amendment for a signature to be made with a mark. As the Minister pointed out, the wording of the two provisions is different, but the new provision certainly does not resolve the ambiguity.

For the information of "Hansard" readers, and those more intellectually concerned with this discussion at the moment, I intend to read the relevant portion of the provisions that would seem to justify the conclusion that there is, in essence, no difference between the application of the Act provision and the application of the new provision, bearing in mind that they both apply to a person exercising a vote in his home. Section 71 of the existing Act states—

> "Any elector who—
>
> (i) By reason of illness or infirmity or approaching maternity will be unable on polling day to attend at a polling-place to vote . . .
>
> may, after the issue of the writ for the election and before six o'clock in the afternoon of the day immediately preceding polling day, apply in the prescribed form to the returning officer for the electoral district for which the elector is enrolled for a postal vote certificate."

Clause 21 of the Bill reads—

> "An elector who—
>
> (a) is seriously ill or infirm, and by reason of such illness or infirmity will be precluded from attending at any polling place to vote . . .
>
> and who is not eligible under section 71 of this Act to apply for a postal vote certificate may, after the issue of the writ for the election and before six o'clock in the afternoon of the day immediately preceding polling day, apply in the prescribed form to the returning officer for the electoral district in which the elector is at the time of application, to vote before an electoral visitor."

For the life of me, I cannot see any distinction or differentiation. Under the existing law a person may apply in the prescribed form for a postal vote. Under the proposed

law he may apply for a postal vote certificate, no doubt in the prescribed form. I cannot see the difference.

Dr. Delamothe: May I break in for a moment? Section 71 prescribes specifically—

> "No such application by a voter who cannot write his or her own name shall be granted."

That bears out what you said, that no polling clerk would accept any certificate that was not signed. That is the reason why. It states specifically that no such application shall be granted. However, that has been left out of the proposed section 72.

Mr. BENNETT: With the greatest of respect, section 71 is not being repealed by the Bill. It is being amended to some extent. However it will still say that no such application by a voter who cannot write his or her own name shall be granted. It provides—

> "The application must be signed by the applicant with his or her own hand in the presence of..."

So that in effect the principle contained in the Act is that applications must be signed, and not signed by making a mark. I cannot see any provision in the Bill to alter the spirit or the intention of the Act.

Mr. Hanlon: Subsections 7 and 17 of the proposed new section 72 use the phrase, "his or her own hand."

Mr. BENNETT: Yes.

Dr. Delamothe: Clause 21 introduces a new section 72 which says what you said. Section 71 of the Act also says that, but says further that no application shall be received from a person who cannot read or write. I do not want to argue the point. If any difficulty arises, in practice, it can be overcome. My present advice is that the new section 72 can be complied with by a person making a mark. If that is wrong in practice, it can be overcome.

Mr. BENNETT: The provision referred to by the honourable member for Baroona reads—

> "An applicant required to answer such questions, or any of them, shall not be permitted to vote until he has answered the same in writing signed by him to the satisfaction of the electoral visitor and in such a manner as to show that he is entitled to vote."

Dr. Delamothe: To the satisfaction of the electoral visitor. Those are the key words.

Mr. BENNETT: Is this to be determined not according to law but according to the opinion of the electoral visitor? An electoral visitor may say in one instance, "This has been signed to my satisfaction." He may then go to the next house and say, "I don't like this mark. This is not to my satisfaction." In another instance the baby's footprint might be put on it and he might say, "That is signed to my satisfaction." Why should not these things be determined clearly and properly, thus saving all the brawls at the bedside of elderly people that the exercise of these powers will cause?

Mr. Sherrington: Wouldn't the words, "to the satisfaction of the electoral visitor" apply to the answers to the questions, rather than to the signature?

Mr. BENNETT: I concede that there is that ambiguity. The phraseology of this Bill, and the uncertainty of many of its provisions, leave us most concerned not about the Minister's sincerity, but about the efficient application of the Bill's intentions. The arguments produced today convince us that the Minister cannot be satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt that no nuisance, annoyance or inconvenience will be caused to elderly people. In fact, he seems to be confused himself on what should happen. There is a lot of discretion residing in the Bill. We are completely unsatisfied with this clause, and we intend to divide the Committee on it.

Question—That clause 21, as read, stand part of the Bill—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 37

Alison	Knox
Armstrong	Lane
Bird	Lee
Bjelke-Petersen	Low
Camm	McKechnie
Campbell	Miller
Chalk	Moore, R. E.
Chinchen	Müller
Cory	Murray
Delamothe	Newbery
Fletcher	Porter
Heatley	Rae
Herbert	Row
Hewitt, N. T. E.	Sullivan
Hewitt, W. D.	Tooth
Hinze	
Hooper	*Tellers:*
Houghton	
Hughes	Ahern
Jones, V. E.	Kaus

NOES, 28

Aiken	Marginson
Aikens	Melloy
Baldwin	Moore, F. P.
Bennett	Newton
Blake	O'Donnell
Bousen	Sherrington
Bromley	Thackeray
Davis	Tucker
Dean	Wallis-Smith
Hanlon	Wood, B.
Houston	Wood, P.
Inch	
Jensen	*Tellers:*
Jones, R.	Casey
Jordan	Harris

PAIRS:

Tomkins	Hanson
Hungerford	Wright
Wharton	Lloyd

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clauses 22 to 27, both inclusive, and schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

The House adjourned at 6.10 p.m.