Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 10 APRIL 1975

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Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. J. E. H. Houghton, Redcliffe) read prayers and took the chair at 11 a.m.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

PRESENTATION AND ANSWER

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that, accompanied by honourable members, I this day presented to His Excellency the Governor the Address of the Legislative Assembly, adopted by this House on 20 March, in reply to His Excellency's Opening Speech, and that His Excellency has been pleased to make the following reply:—

"Government House,
"Brisbane, 10th April, 1975.

"Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen,

"As the Representative of Her Majesty The Queen, I tender to you and the Members of the Parliament of Queensland, my sincere thanks for the Address in Reply to the Speech which I had the honour to deliver at the Opening of Parliament on February 26th last.

"It will be my pleasant duty to convey to Her Majesty The Queen the expression of continued loyalty and affection to The Throne and Person of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II from the members of the Legislature of Queensland in Parliament assembled.

"The Queen is the unifying centre for the peoples of the Commonwealth of Nations, and a sign to the world of our faith in freedom.

"I trust that your labours to promote the advancement and prosperity of this great State will meet with success in full measure.

"I pray that the blessings of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels.

"C. T. HANNAH,
"Governor."

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Orders in Council under—
Industrial Development Act 1963–1973.
City of Brisbane Act 1924–1974.
State Housing Act 1945–1973.

Rules under the City of Brisbane Act 1924–1974.

(A) Proposal by the Governor in Council to revoke the setting apart and declaration as a State Forest of all that piece or part of State Forest 611, parishes of Beerwah, Canning and Toorbul, described as portion 589, parish of Beerwah, as shown on plan Cg. 1073 deposited in the Survey Office and containing an area of 14·498 hectares—under the *Forestry Act* 1959–1974.

(B) A brief explanation of the proposal.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

PUPIL ROAD TOLL; NEWSPAPER REPORT ON ANSWER TO QUESTION

Hon. V. J. BIRD (Burdekin—Minister for Education and Cultural Activities) (11.6 a.m.): I wish to draw attention to the report in this morning's "Courier-Mail" to the effect that, in answer to a question by the honourable member for Everton, Mr. Lindsay, I stated that 1,035 children had been killed on Queensland roads while travelling to or from school.

As members are aware, this report is as incorrect as it is dangerously misleading. I in fact stated that no information is available specificially relating to the number of children killed or maimed going to or from school, but that 1,035 persons up to the age of 20, including motor drivers, motor cyclists, pedestrian cyclists, pedestrians and passengers had been killed on Queensland roads.

This answer is quite different from that reported in the Press, and I am at a loss to understand why this should be so in view of the fact that typed copies of such answers can be made available to the media.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

BEEF CATTLE INDUSTRY ASSISTANCE SCHEME

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

(1) With reference to the Queensland Government's $10 million low-interest beef-assistance scheme, how many applications have been received and how many loans have been made?

(2) What is the total amount of loans involved?

(3) Are beef producers only eligible for these loans if they are unable to borrow from normal lending institutions?

Answers:—

(1 and 2) "To date 71 applications have been considered under the Beef Cattle Industry Assistance Scheme and loans to these applicants total $827,754."

(3) "Yes."

GUTEKUNST REPORT ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

(1) In view of his claim, as reported in *The Morning Bulletin* of April 8, that the Gutekunst Report on Religious Education was only a personal report, who were the members of the committee headed by E. F. Gutekunst, what departmental or educational positions did they hold at the time of the study and who appointed the committee?

(2) At what schools are the "innovative programmes" to which he referred being undertaken, who instituted the programmes and how long have they been in operation?

(3) Has he read the report and, if so, is he prepared to act on the recommendations made in the interests of upgrading religious instruction in State schools?

Answers:—

(1) "The members of the committee and their positions at the time of appointment were: Mr. E. F. Gutekunst (Chairman), Regional Director of Education at Rockhampton; Mr. N. A. Adsett, Staff Inspector (Primary); Miss N. C. A. Alcorn, Senior Mistress, Hendra State High School; Mr. A. H. Anderson, Principal, Kedron State High School; Dr. K. E. Tronc, Senior Lecturer in Education, Mt. Gravatt Teachers College; and Mr. I. J. Weir, Principal, Serviceton South State School. The committee was appointed by the then Minister for Education and Cultural Activities, Sir Alan Fletcher."

(2) "The innovative programs referred to were locally sponsored and developed without any direction from my department. It is known that such programs have been initiated at the Gabbinbar State School in Toowoomba, Ashgrove State School, and Rockhampton, Balmoral and Newmarket State High Schools."

(3) "Yes, I have read the report. May I say that I was impressed with it, and give full credit to the Chairman and members. The Honourable Member is no doubt aware of Cabinet's decision last Monday with regard to religious education and I refer him to the statement I made on this matter following the Cabinet meeting."

DISPOSAL OF FURNITURE FROM MINISTERIAL ROOM OF HONOURABLE W. A. R. RAE

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

(1) Is there a complete record of all furniture which has been removed from Parliament House in the last 10 years?

(2) If so, does this record designate where such furniture is now?

(3) Will he make this record available to interested Members and allow Members to investigate the present condition and whereabouts of this furniture?

(4) With reference to the cedar furniture, including a large cedar bed, a round table, a bedside unit and chairs,

which was in the Ministerial room used last year by the Honourable W. A. R. Rae, where is that furniture now?

(5) Is it now the personal property of the Honourable W. A. R. Rae, following the Government's agreement to Mr. Rae's request to allow him to purchase the furniture for personal or sentimental reasons?

(6) What was the estimated value of this furniture?

(7) Did Mr. Rae pay the sum of $65 for the furniture and, if not, what was the amount paid?

(8) What was the cost of refurnishing this Ministerial room for the Minister who is now occupying it?

Answers:—

(1) "No."

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

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

(4 to 7) "When Mr. Rae was appointed Agent-General it was ascertained that the Agent-General's residence in London was not fully furnished. Mr. Rae consequently expressed a wish to have certain furniture which he had been utilising in Queensland. As such furniture was redundant it was agreed that he be allowed to purchase the items for a nominal figure of $50 and the furniture was crated and shipped to him as Agent-General accordingly."

(8) "$854.25 for new items."

INTERSTATE CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMISSION

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

(1) Since the formation of the Interstate Corporate Affairs Commission in the three non-Labor eastern States, is it the expressed intention of these States to harmonise the law and practice relating to companies or is it a commission designed to further confuse and mutilate the public mind with a multiplicity of legal jargons and jingoisms?

(2) What is the position of a legal firm which may from time to time be instructed to prepare and file documents for lodgment in a State other than its own?

(3) Will a company form printed in one participating State be accepted for lodgment in another participating State?

(4) Will amended forms be recognised as between States or will the requirements of Oaths or Evidence Acts have to be met in this regard?

(5) Will there be any uniformity in applicable fees as between the States comprising the Commission?

(6) What will be the position re annual return forms for the exempt proprietary companies as the Queensland requirement differs now from those of the other two States?

(7) Are regular conferences held or likely to be held to iron out many differences that will occur between the participating States of the commission?

Answers:—

(1) "It is the intention of the Interstate Corporate Affairs Commission to secure uniformity in administration of the Companies Act and to ensure that reciprocal arrangements are followed within the participating States in respect to the incorporation of companies, the registration of prospectuses, the approval of trust deeds and trustees, requirements in relation to accounts and audit, proclamation of companies as investment companies and class and individual exemption powers relating to fund raising, etc., and to takeovers."

(2) "I understand that legal firms have no difficulty in following the revised arrangements."

(3) "Yes."

(4) "Yes. Amended forms are acceptable but you will appreciate that the requirements of the Oaths Act of the particular State where the declaration is made must be complied with."

(5) "Yes."

(6) "The Queensland Act requires that annual returns in relation to an exempt proprietary company should be made up to the anniversary date of the company's incorporation. The Companies Acts of Victoria and New South Wales similarly provide although the particular provisions have not yet been brought into effect. The matter is the subject of discussion among members of the commission."

(7) "Yes. Meetings of the commission are held monthly."

EXPORT COAL

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

(1) Has he noted the jubilant news from Tokyo wherein the Queensland coal producers are confident of securing increases of approximately U.S.$20 per metric tonne and are also optimistic of securing large increases on the European market for our export coal?

(2) As huge increases in export prices of the past three years have meant increased profits to the Queensland coal industry and to Government funding agencies, allowing the Treasurer to overcome many budgeting worries, will the present projected huge increases lead to increased export-coal royalty charges?

(3) Is he or his relevant Minister prepared to acknowledge Mr. Connor's negotiations based on the U.S.A. coal consolidation new contract price of $59.95

per tonne and so amend the harmful criticism previously levelled at this fine Commonwealth Minister by himself and Ministers concerned?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes, I have read that negotiations are taking place."

(2) "As the Honourable Member well knows royalties are based on the export price of coal."

(3) "Many of Mr. Connor's decisions have done much harm to the mining and oil exploration industries of Australia. This is evidenced by (a) the fact that there is now no oil exploration taking place; (b) the fact that by his refusal of an export licence he wrecked the proposed $500 million Weipa complex; (c) the fact that by adopting a similar attitude he wrecked what was to be the world's largest coking coal processing plant in Central Queensland; and (d) the fact that by his decisions he has wrecked the prospects of a $1,000 million uranium enrichment plant in Central Queensland."

LAE ENTERPRISES PROJECT, HOLLYWELL

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

(1) Did the Gold Coast City Council carry out a survey of the Runaway Bay Canal Development, east of Bayview Street, Hollywell, prior to the issuing of a permit to Lae Enterprises–Shearwater Estate and, if so, what was the date and the result of the survey?

(2) Where were the conditions contained in the permit with which the developer had to comply?

(3) What stringent conditions were incorporated in the permit issued by the council regarding air-borne dust pollution and the general pollution of adjacent waters?

(4) Was an environmental impact study carried out by the council prior to the project being commenced and, if not by the council, has one been carried out by any other body?

(5) If a report has been prepared, will he ask for a copy of the report?

(6) Has there been an inspection of the area by an officer or officers of the Water Quality Council?

(7) If an inspection has been made, what was the extent of the inspection and the nature of the inspector's report?

(8) If an inspection has not been carried out, will he ascertain from the council the reason why such an inspection was not carried out prior to the permit being approved?

(9) Has a licence to discharge water into the Broadwater been granted to Lae Enterprises?

(10) If a licence has been granted, what are the terms and conditions and period of the licence?

(11) Has the Water Quality Council power to revoke an existing licence if the conditions of the permit have not been carried out by the developer?

(12) May the Water Quality Council direct that water be disposed of by a particular method?

Answers:—

(1 and 2) "I am advised that the council gave approval for this subdivision in May, 1972 in the normal manner and in accordance with an approved design. Conditions of the approval would no doubt appear in the minutes of the relevant council meeting, which minutes are required by the Local Government Act to be open to inspection."

(3) "I am advised that the council did not impose dust pollution or general pollution of water conditions. However general water pollution in this situation could well have been outside the council's jurisdiction."

(4 and 5) "I am not aware of any environmental impact study being carried out, and it would seem that the approval of the subdivision occurred before the environmental impact provision (section 32A) was inserted in the Local Government Act in December, 1973."

(6) "An inspection has been made by an officer of the Water Quality Council."

(7) "The inspection included a study of the method of constructing the canals and some sampling of the bottom in the Broadwater. The report concluded that it was probable that suspended solids from the canal construction were entering the Broadwater."

(8) "See Answer to (7). The reference to Gold Coast City Council in this regard is not understood."

(9) "No licence has been granted."

(10) "See Answer to (9)."

(11) "Yes."

(12) "The Water Quality Council can determine the method of disposal, e.g., wastes into waters. The Department of Harbours and Marine also has powers in this matter where tidal waters are involved."

MANDATORY GAOL SENTENCES FOR DRIVING WHILE DISQUALIFIED

(a) **Mr. Jones,** pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Community and Welfare Services,—

Concerning announced amendments to the Traffic Act to allow magistrates discretionary power in punishment imposed for drink-driving offences and the proposed removal of the six-months' mandatory gaol sentences for driving while disqualified, how many offenders are presently serving prison sentences under the existing provisions and how many have completed the six-months' prison term?

Answer:—

"Fifty-two offenders have completed their sentence imposed for driving whilst disqualified and one hundred and eighty-five are at present serving a prison sentence for a similar offence."

(b) **Mr. Jones,** pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Police,—

Concerning announced amendments to the Traffic Act to allow magistrates discretionary power in punishment imposed for drink-driving offences and the removal of the six-months' mandatory gaol sentences, what is the total number of convictions under the existing provisions since proclamation and how many cases are listed as awaiting adjudication or are on remand under this section of the Act?

Answer:—

"There is no six-months' mandatory term of imprisonment for drink driving offences. There is however a mandatory six-months' term of imprisonment for offences of driving without a licence whilst under disqualification imposed by a court. The statistics sought are not readily available and could not be obtained quickly without a great deal of research requiring the unnecessary wastage of man power. I do not propose directing that this research be undertaken."

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

BRISBANE VISIT OF ANGELA DAVIS

Mrs. KYBURZ: I ask the Premier: Is he aware that one of America's 10 most wanted fugitives, Angela Davis, has applied for a visa to visit Australia? Secondly, in view of the tendency of the Federal Government to grant visas to well-known and potentially dangerous reactionaries, can anything be done to prevent this personage from visiting Queensland? Thirdly, is he aware that Angela Davis has been invited to address a May Day rally in Brisbane and that that invitation has been issued by a Communist organisation with a Trades Hall facade, the May Day Committee?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I have received information that Miss Davis is likely to visit Australia and that she has been invited to participate in Queensland's May Day celebrations. The Labor Government in Canberra has the sole responsibility for preventing or allowing the entry of any person into Australia. It causes me a great deal of concern that that Government will probably grant Miss Davis a visa. Doubtless, it will facilitate her entry and assist her in every possible way, just as it assists, promotes and encourages Communists from other parts of the world to come to Australia to participate in and attempt to influence this nation's way of life.

Mr. Marginson: Still on the old hymn of hate.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: It is not a hymn of hate. It is a matter of great concern.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: Evidently the honourable member for Wolston is another one of those who side with the Communists. I am very surprised to have his admission in the House today that he supports this sort of thing.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. I ask members to refrain from persistent interjections while a Minister is on his feet answering questions. The Premier will be heard in silence.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: The honourable member for Wolston should be very careful in the attitude that he adopts. He cannot blame anyone for thinking he is an ardent supporter of this sort of thing if he adopts the attitude he has just indicated.

Mr. Hanson: Are you threatening him?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I am not threatening him. I am telling him. If the honourable member for Port Curtis is not careful, I will line him up with them, too.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I am surprised that the honourable member for Port Curtis also has put his spoke in and indicated support for these people.

The fact cannot be ignored that Australia's Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister have come out clearly, distinctly and without any equivocation on the side of the Communists. They have backed the North Vietnamese and have said they are poised and ready to recognise the take-over of Saigon and South Vietnam. To me it is an act of treachery by the Prime Minister to adopt that attitude. He should be supporting a free way of life and preventing people such as Miss Davis from entering Australia. However, I can assure the honourable member

for Salisbury that the police will give Miss Davis special attention and protection should she come.

MEDIBANK HEALTH SCHEME

Mr. DOUMANY: I ask the Minister for Health: With reference to the continuing discussions on Medibank and the effects it will have on private hospitals, would he advise how private hospital funding will be affected if Queensland does not sign the Commonwealth-State hospital funding agreement?

Dr. EDWARDS: This Government is well aware of the tremendous importance that we and the community place on the role of private hospitals within the hospital and health system of this State. Sections 31 and 33 of the National Health Act contain a provision that, if a State does not enter into an agreement on the Commonwealth-State Financial Agreement for the funding of its public hospitals, the private hospitals within the State cannot obtain the subsidy of $16 a day for each patient. This is a matter of grave importance to this State.

As the Act is already law and will come into operation on 1 July, we should certainly give serious consideration to the National Health Act Commonwealth-State Financial Agreement. If no financial agreement is entered into by any State, under this Act the patients who attend private hospitals will not receive the $16 per day subsidy towards the cost of their private hospitalisation.

DISMISSAL OF WORKS DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES, CAIRNS

Mr. JONES: I desire to direct a question to the Minister for Works and Housing, but before doing so, Mr. Speaker, I point out that all the Ministers are not always present for the full hour of question time, and I prevail upon your good offices to have them present so that we can question them.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I remind the honourable member that a Minister cannot be expected to be here when he has other duties to perform. If a member has a question to ask of a Minister who is not in the House, he should place it on the Business Paper.

Mr. JONES: With respect——

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Cairns will ask his question.

Mr. JONES: I ask the Minister for Works and Housing: Is a large pay-off of employees in the Department of Works at Cairns scheduled for tomorrow? If so, is this part of a plan for State-wide dismissals, or is this action to be confined to the Cairns area? How many employees are involved in the Cairns area or throughout the State, and will the last-on, first-off principle be applied?

Mr. LEE: As statistical information is required, and as I am surely not expected to know everything that is happening throughout the State, I ask the honourable member to put his question on notice.

Mr. JONES: I will place on notice that part of the question relating to numbers but which will not ——

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Cairns will place his question on notice and ask his next question.

Mr. JONES: As a supplementary question without notice, I ask the Minister: Is there or is there not to be a pay-off at Cairns tomorrow?

Mr. LEE: To my knowledge, no.

PETITION FROM NURSING STAFF, ROYAL BRISBANE HOSPITAL

Mr. MELLOY: I ask the Minister for Health: Has he received a petition from a section of the nursing staff at Royal Brisbane Hospital protesting against the non-appointment of Miss E. A. Abell as Executive Director of Nursing Services? In view of the strong views expressed in the letter which accompanied the petition, can he inform the House what action he proposes to take?

Dr. EDWARDS: I have received the petition, and I do not propose to take any action.

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

SECOND READING

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (11.57 a.m.): I move—

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

I thank honourable members for their initial general acceptance of the contents of the Bill as outlined at the introductory stage.

Now that honourable members have had the opportunity to examine the Bill in detail I feel there will be a general acceptance of the merit of the amendments proposed, and I am hopeful that the passage of the Bill can be concluded today to enable the pensioners and other persons entitled to the improved benefits to receive the new rates and the arrears due at the earliest possible date.

At the introductory stage I feel that an adequate explanation of each individual provision contained in the Bill was given and, consequently, I do not propose to use up the time of the House on any further detailed explanation. Of course, if there is anything in the Bill that honourable members have found unsatisfactory or confusing, any such points can be explained in greater detail.

However, perhaps I should elaborate on my reply to the honourable member for Ipswich West on the question of a provision for the automatic adjustment of the lump-sum benefit rate on some appropriate formula. Whilst I appreciate the merit in his suggestion, I do not feel that any real injustice has been caused by the absence of such a provision. The benefit rate is kept under regular review by all parties associated with the scheme, and it is adjusted whenever an actuarial examination, which is now conducted each year, indicates that some improvement can be made.

I think the long delay referred to by the honourable member was the period of the quite protracted negotiations between the parties concerned which led to the new scheme provided in the Amendment Act of November 1970. In this case an agreed interim pension increase was made from 13 May 1969, and the finally negotiated pension rates were made retrospective to 1 January 1970.

The problem with an automatic adjustment provision in respect of the benefit rate is that such a provision would logically have to entail an automatic adjustment of contribution rates, which, I feel, because of the necessity to apply the higher benefit rate to all the past service of a qualifying mine worker, in addition to his service subsequent to the date of the increased contribution rates, could not generally be in the same proportion as the increase in the benefit rate.

It would be necessary for the actual financial requirement to finance the increased benefit rate for service, both past and future, to be assessed by the State Actuary, and for the new contribution rates necessary to finance this added liability of the fund to be calculated and, of course, these new contribution rates could well, in many cases, be unacceptable to the parties to the scheme.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. MARGINSON (Wolston) (12 noon): Opposition members have no objection at all to the Bill. We have examined it, and we are quite happy with it. Of course, we would like to see even greater improvements in both weekly and lump-sum payments.

On the question of automatic increases in lump-sums payments to retired mine workers, some years ago the union suggested that there should be automatic increases based on a formula under consideration at that time. However, as the Minister said on Tuesday, lump-sum payments have been substantially increased.

There is another matter that I should like to mention. If my recollection is correct, it was about 1970 when the Government made an increase in its contribution, which I think is now $150,000 per annum. It may be necessary at a later date to reconsider this amount as well.

The Opposition applauds the Bill. We are happy with it, and we are pleased to see that its provisions have been made retrospective to 1 January 1975. We look forward to the completion of its passage through the House so that its benefits can flow to retired mine workers.

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) (12.2 p.m.): I am not going to address the House for any length of time. The Bill, however, brings back memories to me. Many people today ask why the worker does not, as he did in the old days, blindly support the A.L.P. at the polls. I remind the House of a memorable occasion, not long before the present Government came to power, when the A.L.P. Government of the day decided to bring down a Bill virtually identical with the one now before us in order to amend the terms of the Act govering miners' pensions. Two Opposition members—if I remember rightly, the late Ernie Evans and Lloyd Roberts—moved an amendment to improve the pension scheme under the Act. Naturally that disconcerted and considerably embarrassed the A.L.P. That, of course, was to be expected in this rather grubby game of politics.

But the most astonishing thing was yet to come. In those days Ipswich was represented by one of the finest men ever to come to this place, named Jim Donald. So honest and sincere was he that he found himself on the horns of a dilemma. He knew that the Bill being brought down by the A.L.P. did not contain what the miners really wanted. He knew that his representations to the Government on behalf of the miners (I think he had been secretary of their union) had been fruitless. The Government brushed him off and fobbed the miners off with an apology for an amendment of the Act. As Jim Donald was a genuine Labor man steeped in the old traditions of Labor, even though he agreed with it he could not vote for the amendment moved by the hated Tories of the Opposition. He salved his conscience as best he could by walking out of the House during, I think, the second-reading stage of the Bill.

Jim Donald was on his way to a Cabinet position and he deserved it, but that was the end of him in the Labor Party. From that day on, he amounted to nothing. I think later he was elected leader after the big split in the A.L.P., but he showed his honesty by standing down to allow Jack Duggan to take the leadership again. That gives an idea of why the workers in this State are drifting away from the A.L.P. and are no longer blindly supporting it.

During the introductory stage of the Bill, a Liberal or National Party member—it is hard to distinguish between them when one has known them for such a short time—made several suggestions that must have come from a practical miner. They must have come from the Miners' Union, or from somebody closely associated with that union.

That illustrates something that hard-and-fast, dyed-in-the-wool, boof-headed members of the Labor Party cannot, and will not, realise—that the workers today no longer blindly vote Labor, because they can no longer blindly trust Labor. When they want anything done, they take it to someone who they think can do it for them. They have been doing that in Mundingburra and Townsville South for 31 years, and they will continue doing it as long as I represent the electorate. As I said, why the workers do it is something that A.L.P. members cannot understand. I have no doubt that the Minister who has introduced the Bill receives more representations and delegations from workers than any former Labor Minister for Mines received. Until A.L.P. members get that fact into their stupid big heads, the Labor Party is going to be at the bottom of the ashcan at every election.

Mr. HANSON (Port Curtis) (12.6 p.m.): I am very pleased to have speaking for the Opposition today, after a very long illness, the honourable member for Wolston, in whose area miners' pensions are of vital concern. In the past he has been Opposition spokesman and shadow Minister for Mines, and naturally he has a great feeling and concern for those engaged in the industry. It is, of course, a remarkable tribute to him that, in spite of the side issues that were raised during the election campaign in December last, the people of Wolston stuck firm and returned him as their representative in this Assembly.

I take issue to some extent with the honourable member for Townsville South, who introduced into the debate a matter that occurred many years ago and involved a former member of this Assembly, Mr. Jim Donald. Mr. Donald was a very well-respected member of the Australian Labor Party. He was revered in the Labor caucus.

Mr. AIKENS: I rise to a point of order. No-one could have been more fulsome or more sincere in his praise of Jim Donald than I was. No-one could construe what I said as an attack on Jim Donald. I should say—and this is the best tribute I can pay to him—that Jim Donald is almost a better man than the honourable member for Port Curtis.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I hope that the honourable member for Port Curtis will accept that.

Mr. HANSON: In acknowledging the compliment of the honourable member for Townsville South, I suggest that he takes issue with me merely by virtue of the fact that he has expressed his appreciation of and eulogised the former member of the House of whom I am speaking. I say to the honourable member for Townsville South that, in many conversations I have had with him, Jim Donald did not express his appreciation of the honourable member in terms as generous as those that he used this morning. I hope he gets that message loud and clear.

Of course, Mr. Donald, who was a former member and secretary of the Miners Union, was a person with very strong views and strong union principles. The honourable member for Townsville South, in common with many other devious members of this Assembly, referred to Mr. Donald, in the back alleys and corridors of Parliament House, as a Comm., when first he came here. That was not to their credit, I might add.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will come back to the Bill.

Mr. HANSON: As I said at the introductory stage, I am very happy about and delighted with this legislation. However, I did not appreciate the rather sacrastic and veiled reference that was made by the Minister to my contributions to the mining industry of this State. It is quite unbecoming of him. I do not think he really means it, but at times he does show a little bit of anger and temper momentarily. I am certain that, in the role of the true penitent, when he goes along the corridors of the House later he sincerely regrets many of the unfortunate references that he makes.

Of course, the same cannot be said of his ministerial colleague the Minister for Local Government and Main Roads, who——

Mr. AIKENS: I rise to a point of order. Will you remind the honourable member for Port Curtis which Bill we are discussing, Mr. Speaker? He thinks we are on the Primary Industries Bill, or something like that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I thank the honourable member for Townsville South, but I will look after the conduct of the House.

Mr. HANSON: If he could, the Minister for Local Government would be to the forefront in denying the miners their breakfast. Of course, he would toady to those engaged in the nefarious practice of scrounging millions of dollars out of the unfortunate people who are duped when they come to the Gold Coast looking for a piece of land. I hope we see the day when miners' pensions are commensurate with their hazardous occupation. If they are ever fortunate enough to be able to accumulate a considerable amount of money, they might be able to afford a block of land in the Minister's subdivision.

I have very much pleasure on behalf of my colleagues in endorsing the legislation. No doubt in future years we will be called upon to consider further amendments to the Act to bring it into line with modern events. The fund is in a very healthy state and is actuarially sound. All I can do at

this stage is wish it success, and wish those who are getting benefits from the fund every prosperity.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (12.11 p.m.), in reply: I am very pleased to have the assurance that honourable members opposite accept the principles of the Bill.

Motion (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. W. D. Hewitt, Chatsworth, in the chair)

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

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

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

BUILDING BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. W. D. Hewitt, Chatsworth, in the chair)

Debate resumed from 8 April (see p. 547) on Mr. Hinze's motion—

> "That a Bill be introduced to prescribe standard by-laws for local authorities in respect of the erection of buildings and other structures, to prescribe the powers of local authorities in relation to certain buildings and other structures, and consequentially to amend the Local Government Act 1936-1974 and the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act 1964-1974 each in certain particulars and for related purposes."

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (12.15 p.m.): This Bill is an exercise in State centralism. I am really surprised that a Government that has used this Chamber for the last two years to attack centralism, and to rave about the evils of decisions being made far away from the local people, should introduce such a Bill. We have had regular diatribes in the Chamber about centralism, and the Minister who has introduced the Bill has continued to deliver them himself in respect of national roads and other matters. But this week this same Minister has introduced a Bill that is one of the most blatantly centralised legislative measures the Opposition has seen. He seeks to whip into line the 131 local authorities throughout Queensland by imposing upon them a building code drawn up outside their areas of authority.

Mr. Hinze: You don't know what you're talking about.

Mr. BURNS: Yes, I do.

Mr. Frawley: The local authorities want it.

Mr. BURNS: Later I shall read some statements made by members of local authorities to prove otherwise.

At the introductory stage the Minister said he had called a seminar, at which local authorities agreed to standardise the building code. But they did not agree that the code should be framed in such a way as to remove the rights of local people to object.

Mr. Hinze: Haven't you ever heard of the Local Government Association?

Mr. BURNS: I am talking about the rights of the people, not those of various associations or groups getting together and making decisions on behalf of the people. I am talking about the people's rights. Perhaps as I analyse the Minister's introductory speech he might agree with me.

Alderman Abbott, a member of the North Queensland Local Government Association executive, said he believed that Queensland Government departments were building their own hierarchies and were progressively whittling away the rights and responsibilities of local authorities and, with them, the direct participation of people in the growth and development of their own regions. Alderman Abbott, of Mackay, was speaking in support of a motion that called on the association to protest strongly to the Premier about such a removal of rights.

Mr. Hinze: Not on this one.

Mr. BURNS: No, not on this Bill; I am not suggesting that. What I am saying is that people are becoming concerned at the fact that, while the Queensland Government is ranting and raving about national centralism in Canberra, at the same time it is implementing State centralism in Brisbane. It is removing the rights of the local authorities and denying local people their own say.

Constantly the Government preaches that local people, those who know more about local conditions, should have a say in their respective areas, and now it has the opportunity to practise what it preaches. But instead of giving the local authorities the opportunity to continue to do what they have done in the past, that is, operate in their own way, the Government has said that it is not in favour of such participatory democracy.

Surely the Minister would not suggest that building codes on the Gold Coast should be exactly the same as those in the western or northern areas of the State. The Minister has, in fact, told us that provision is made in the Bill for cyclone-prone areas and for local authorities to be given some leeway in relation to homes erected on tops of hills where they may be damaged by high winds.

But has the Minister considered, for example, the person who wants to erect a fisherman's shack? This Bill will, in effect, kill him; there will not be any more fishermen's shacks. Every island along the Queensland coast will come under the provisions of the Local Government Act, and this building code will apply to the fellow who wants to put up for himself a tin shed,

for example, at Jumpinpin or on Short or Rat Island, or at other places in lower Moreton Bay. The Minister simply will not allow it.

The Minister has decided that the day when a man wanted to build a seaside shack, away from it all, has gone. In future such a person will be governed by the uniform building code. The Minister shakes his head. At a later stage we will see whether my forecast is correct. Many people like to get away from the hurly-burly of city life into peaceful surroundings, but this Bill will prevent them from doing that in future.

We might ask ourselves: should we decide that every house in the State must be built to minimum requirements or in accordance with certain standard by-laws? Is this what we really want in the interests of safety and security? Should this standard code apply in developing areas, or should we provide some leeway to move with the times?

I am aware of the saving of cost involved in a national building code. For example, I realise that as a result of different by-laws a home built, for example, in Queanbeyan might cost as much as $900 more than an identical home in Canberra. I also realise that people who live in Tweed Heads are required to adhere to different standards from those applying in Coolangatta. The same comments can apply to home-builders in different local authority areas. I am also aware of the fact that lending authorities lay down their own building standards.

I agree that some form of national uniformity is necessary, but I also believe that we should leave in our legislation gaps that will allow a man to do something just a little bit different. For example, there is nothing in the Bill to enable people to experiment with home construction. Apparently no-one would be allowed erect an air-house of the type that is now being built in America, or a spherical type of home on three stilts, or a plastic home.

Will people be able to experiment and try to build something completely different from the standard type of buildings? I do not think that will be permissable under our building code. If we specify that a house must be built in a certain way, how will people who buy 5 or 10-acre blocks, say, at Capalaba, and build a home piecemeal fare? Some of the restrictions will certainly make building more costly for them, and we will destroy the initiative and enterprise of people who wish to build in that way.

I hope that the main objective will be to prepare minimum generally acceptable standards for home-building in Australia. We must expect that there will be more mechanisation of building construction.

I hope that provision is made in this Bill for a type of industrial housing, or factory housing that must become available in years to come by which large sections of houses will be built in module form in a factory and then taken to a building site. I have been told that a 1 per cent saving in housing costs in Australia would amount to many millions of dollars a year. This type of operation might be one means of effecting such a saving.

I understand from the Minister's introductory speech that he thinks it desirable to have all the provisions relating to erection, demolition, repair and occupation of buildings included in this legislation. He referred also to site approvals. We are not dealing only with standards for the building of a house so that it will not be blown over by a cyclone. We are dealing with everything from site approval to occupancy of a house after its completion. We are not talking only about common building standards or a building code. We are talking about things that will affect the ordinary fellow in his home for a long while. It is important that we look closely at these matters.

I congratulate the Minister on the suggestion about handicapped people.

In his introductory remarks he referred very briefly to high-rise buildings. I draw the Committee's attention to the high-rise problems in Victoria. Indeed, Mr. Chipp said that among the worst monuments to Liberalism in Victoria were the high-rise blocks scattered throughout Melbourne, which led to a poor standard of living. We must not only look at the building standards to ensure that buildings will withstand cyclones, tornadoes and whirlwinds, but also endeavour to ensure good standards of living for people. Some people are concerned about high-rise buildings and the decision of the Housing Commission to bring old people together in sets of flats. Doubt has been expressed as to whether it is a good idea to lump them together in this way possibly creating a slum situation and it has been suggested that more enlightened planning would provide accommodation for them that would allow them to come into contact with other age-groups.

I congratulate the Minister for saying in his opening remarks that a summary of this Bill would be made available to members of the public.

Mr. Hinze: I did say that.

Mr. BURNS: That is a good idea. One problem today is that nominated builders' signs are placed on blocks of land, but in many instances the builder is nothing more than a salesman. In reality he says to the client, "This is the concept or design I have of a house in Canberra for sale for $17,000." He is virtually a salesman and he sells the client on the house. He then gets all his subcontractors together and eventually the house is built. When all the legal jargon is sorted out, many home buyers find on completion of their houses that they have a large number of complaints.

I know that the Builders' Registration Board can go a long way towards remedying them, but the big problem lies in the fact that initially potential buyers before becoming involved, are unaware of the requirements of councils, Governmnts and other parties. Eventually a building inspector from the council, the Housing Commission or a finance company says, "I don't care whether you agree with the builder or not on whether that is good brick-work. I don't agree. It is not up to our standards." If we lay down standards, it is very important that we make certain that they are available to the people involved, that is, those who finally have to pay off the house over 20 or 30 years. It is not the architect who really counts, nor the builder, nor any subcontractor, but the home buyer—the person paying the bill.

The Minister said that the Crown will not be required to apply to a local authority for approval to build. I would like to know why not. One of the rights I have as a citizen is the right to object to a development in my area that could adversely affect me. The term "the Crown" includes all the operations of the Crown. The Crown might intend to set up a building that could be injurious to the environment of the people in the area and objectionable to them. I have always argued that under normal town-planning requirements, people should have the right of objection. The intention to build should be advertised on the site and the local people should receive letters in the mail advising them of the facts. That requirement should be binding on everybody. We know that that does not happen.

I asked a question this session about the Government's assurance when the first Brisbane town plan was formulated that the Crown, though not bound by the town plan, would respect its provisions.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the honourable gentleman to keep his comments about the town plan to brief dimensions; otherwise his gambit might compel me to allow other comments, and I do not want to do that.

Mr. BURNS: I am sorry, Mr. Hewitt; but I am talking about site approval, which is one of the matters raised by the Minister in his introductory remarks.

Even though the Crown was not bound by the town plan, it indicated that it would accept its provisions. However, in Magazine Street, Sherwood, a residential "A" zone, the Crown decided to extend a Government operation against the wishes of the local citizens and in defiance of the plan. I raise that because the Minister said that the Crown will not be required to make an application to a local authority for approval to erect a building. I would like to know why not. The removal of a citizen's right to protect his home and his environment by the exclusion of that right of objection is very dangerous.

The Minister further said that a dispute between the Crown and the local authority is to be directed to the Minister for Local Government—that is, himself—and then to the Governor in Council. That is an appeal from Caesar to Caesar. The legislation proposes that a building advisory committee be set up. Why couldn't such disputes be determined by that committee? Why set the Crown apart? Aren't we part of the State of Queensland? Aren't we bound to accept the laws of the State of Queensland? Why should the Crown for some unknown reason be given a set of rules to suit it different from those required to be observed by the ordinary citizen? Why can't it be required to lodge an appeal with the building advisory committee just as the ordinary citizen is?

It seems to me that we have no strong objection to the composition of the building advisory committee, but why shouldn't representatives of the Building Workers' Industrial Union, or the people involved on the job, be included. A builder might say what he has put into a job, but afterwards many of the men who have worked on the site can recount completely different stories about the composition of the building and its type of construction. Why not include representatives from the Q.I.T. and the university departments of engineering where experimentation is being undertaken in an area where it could be expected that innovations, changes and modern ideas in building would be considered? Why shouldn't they be on the committee instead of representatives from the Housing Commission and a couple of councils?

The Minister said also that it has been thought desirable to have all the provisions relating to erection, demolition, repair and occupation brought within the one section. I am concerned about the provision that people who construct a building illegally can be fined $50 a day. But it is more than that: it is the occupation of the building.

I was given the example of a group of people who established a sand-blasting works at Lindum opposite the Iona College and the Lindum State School. They used an old shed on the site. In defiance of the State Government's Acts relating to working conditions and in defiance of the city council's planning laws, they continued to operate for about 30 days. They were not concerned that the city council was, at that time, entitled to charge them about $20 a day, because it was cheaper for them to pay the fine. However, when prosecution was considered, it was found to be impossible to have them fined because an inspector had to be sent down each day so that daily defiance of the Act could be proved. After the council representative went down the first time, the council would not send anyone down again. It decided it had caught him doing something illegal and that was the end of it.

The fellow continued to operate for 30 days disrupting the education of the kiddies in the school and nothing could be done about it. The Minister for Industrial Development and the Brisbane City Council tried to help. The fellow said to me, "I have 30 days to finish the job and I am going to finish it, and then you can worry about it later." I do not consider that $50 a day is a heavy enough fine to be imposed on a person who is working against the interests of the community and certainly not on a person who has a contract worth many thousands of dollars. He would be prepared to cop the $50 a day. It might be a big fine in the erection of a building, but many other aspects are covered by this Bill. The illegal use of a building and the building of an illegal edifice attract this low fine.

I do not think we have given the local authorities all the rights they should be given in this regard. While we certainly need a uniform building code, it might have been better to lay down a set of standards, send it out in the form of a White Paper and say, "Here is an opportunity for you to bring your standards up to these requirements."

I do not think that people in Townsville, on the Gold Coast, in Weipa, Betoota and Bedourie should all have to build homes to the same standards. We are putting more bureaucratic control over the ordinary working man in his biggest investment in life —his home. While we must support the idea that economies will flow to the community from uniform standards, I have my doubts and I shall read the Bill with interest.

Mr. GIBBS (Albert) (12.32 p.m.): I support the Bill. I congratulate the Minister on the drafting of it and on introducing it so early in this session. As Deputy Mayor of the Gold Coast and as chairman of the health department which handles these building matters, I can say that my council is very happy with the Bill. There is no doubt that it is very good. It has been studied thoroughly by all local authorities in Queensland and by the Local Government Association. They are very happy with it. We have been waiting for many years for a Bill such as this to come forward and at last it is here.

I do not think it represents centralism in any way. It merely co-ordinates the efforts of many shires and cities that have problems keeping up with the day-to-day changes in building concepts. The Bill sets minimum standards, not necessarily what can be done. All buildings, wherever they are built, should measure up to the minimum standards accepted by local authorities.

The honourable member for Bulimba said that the Crown should be covered by this law. What is in the Bill is very good, but fancy the Minister for Works and Housing having to go cap in hand to the Brisbane City Council and ask the Lord Mayor whether the Government could erect a building in George Street! He might get permission about two years hence. It just would not work.

Mr. Aikens: You would be all right if you gave a sling to the Lord Mayor.

Mr. GIBBS: That is right. If the Minister put $500,000 into the loan, he might get permission sooner.

I would hate to have the Department of Works required to go to the council in my area and ask for permission to erect a school. The school could be erected by the time the matter went through the various council departments and permission was given. Let us face up to it. The Crown would at least conform to minimum standards and I believe it would work well above them.

Mr. Hanson: You should go to the city council through Bruce Small. He would fix it.

Mr. GIBBS: That is right. Sir Bruce is a very good alderman on the Gold Coast City Council. We get on very well together. We are both very happy with this concept of building by-laws. There is no doubt about that.

A Government Member: So is every council in Queensland.

Mr. GIBBS: That's for sure.

I should like to congratulate the Minister on the way the Bill provides for objections and on the composition of the advisory committee. I think the matter has been very well considered, and I can find no fault whatever with the Bill. I can speak at least for the Albert Shire Council and the Gold Coast City Council in such matters. I know that it is sometimes hard for local authorities in the more remote areas to keep up with the latest developments in building by-laws. After changes are made, it sometimes takes 12 months to put them into effect.

I believe that the proposed by-laws will have a wonderful effect on the building industry throughout Queensland and indeed throughout Australia. It is interesting to see that all the States are introducing a similar Bill and that even the Labor States think it is pretty good. I cannot see in the Bill evidence of any centralist attitude.

The Leader of the Opposition asked in effect, "What about people who want to experiment?" I say that no company or firm has a right to experiment at the cost of others. No-one will stop them from experimenting at their own cost in their own factories. If they prove to the Government and to local authorities the merit of new concepts and types of buildings, there will be no trouble because their buildings will then comply with the minimum standards. Here again the Bill becomes a means of protecting the public against experimentation.

I commend the Bill as one of the best things that have ever happened to local authorities. I also congratulate the Minister on bringing it forward so early in the life of the Parliament.

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) (12.37 p.m.): I hope my few remarks will be succinct and that many honourable members will agree with them, because I find myself in a large measure of agreement with what was said by the Leader of the Opposition. At first glance—and I may alter my opinion when I see the Bill—I find it a Communist-style regimenting Bill, drawn up by theorists with very little knowledge of the practical problems confronting people who want to build a home. It may be a Bill that will be hailed with elation by large home-building firms that build in every State and naturally want to do all that they can to reduce their costs. By so doing, of course, they greatly increase their profits and dividends; certainly they do not reduce their rents or the prices that they charge.

Because of this Bill, I am very much afraid that many people will be forced to buy homes that they do not want or cannot afford. When we have before us a Bill that regiments people's ideas and plans, I think we should give it very careful consideration. I remember when I was a member of a local authority, as I was for 19 years (you yourself, Mr. Row, have similarly served, and with considerable honour), that many reputable, honest and sincere people approached the council and were given permission to build one or two rooms with the idea that when they were able to obtain finance, and as the opportunity presented itself, they would add to those rooms and finish up with a jolly good home, complete and to the satisfaction of everybody concerned.

I do not know if that will be possible under the Bill, and the little fellows may be crushed out of existence. Under every local authority that I know of, it seems to me that a person has to build a mansion or nothing at all. That produces a happy harvest time for back-room planners, architects and big builders.

Mr. Jensen: And building societies.

Mr. AIKENS: Yes, It is a happy harvest time for anyone who wants to make a few quid out of the little battler, who is the only one for whom I am concerned. I shall regard the Bill with a fair amount of scepticism until I see it and am then able to draw my own conclusions. There is an old legal saying that, if a racket can be worked under the law, it is only reasonable to assume that it will be worked. Consequently, we have to examine carefully every Bill brought before us, to ensure that that sort of thing does not happen.

I assume, too, that in the actual implementation of the Bill the legislative abortion known as the Builders' Registration Board will be brought into the picture. I do not know of any bigger mess for which this Parliament of Queensland is responsible than the one it made in passing a Bill to establish the Builders' Registration Board. People are still being fleeced; there is still any amount of jerry-building going on. Yet when one goes to the Builders' Registration Board and points out a shocking building that has been constructed, its first excuse is, "Oh, that building was erected before the board was set up." I say to the board, "That may be the case, but doesn't the building of that particular edifice show you very clearly that the person who built it is not a competent builder, that he is a crook, a shake-down man?" The representatives of the board wring their hands in holy horror and say, "Oh, we can't do anything about it."

Time and time again—and I am sure that I speak for most members when I say this—we have examples brought to us of shocking present-day jerry-building. If we complain to the Builders' Registration Board and the case is so blatant that it cannot do anything but take a prosecution, it does not prosecute that go-getter, that robber of the people, for jerry-building; it prosecutes him for having built the building without first obtaining a registration from the Builders' Registration Board. He might be fined $300 and costs. What does he care about that? The fine goes to the Government, but the unfortunate worker who has been fleeced, or the unfortunate tenant or owner who has been fleeced, gets no satisfaction. In fact, sometimes he is thousands of dollars down the drain.

In my opinion, the sooner we either wipe out the Builders' Registration Board or put the cleaner through the Act that established the board and make it a real Act, the sooner we compel the Builders' Registration Board to prosecute builders for jerry-building and for robbing and fleecing people, the better it will be for this Parliament and the better it will be for all of us.

I disagree violently with the statement of the Leader of the Opposition that if one person builds a home in a particular area—to use very blasphemous vernacular, one Jesus Christ Junior (and there are quite a number of them in the community)—he should be able to say, "I have built my home here; consequently, everybody else who builds his home in this particular locality must build a home that suits my idea, not the idea of the person who wishes to build it."

People who live on hillside lots have come to me and said, "There is a building being erected in front of my place. When it is finished, I won't be able to see the sea. It will block my view of Cleveland Bay." Half the time they would not look at Cleveland Bay; they would not bother to go onto their front veranda and see the sea more than once in every two years. However, they wish to determine the type of building that someone else is to be allowed to build in that particular area—and, strangely enough, they receive a lot of support.

One person came to me and wanted me to assist him to take legal action against a person who was building a home that, when completed, would prevent him from seeing his favourite view. I said to him, "Show me a law in any civilised country in the world which says that, when you buy a building allotment and erect a house on it, you also buy a view of the area within your eyesight, or even within the view of your binoculars." There are many people who believe that.

The Leader of the Opposition suggested—and I am surprised that he did—that if a person builds a home in a particular locality, even to the standards that will be set out in the Bill, he can then say, with some power vested in him by a supreme being, "I am going to see that nobody else builds a home in this particular locality unless I agree with the plan and the construction of that home." I do not agree with that. I do not agree, and never will agree, that once a man has built his home in a particular area he should dictate to other people what type of home they may build.

Mr. Burns: What I said was that the Government should not be able to build a building across the road to which such a person would object.

Mr. AIKENS: I do not know that any person should be entitled to tell the Government or anyone else what it should build.

Mr. Burns interjected.

Mr. AIKENS: I do believe that the Government should be amenable to its own laws. But what a problem we have when we try to implement that! It is just not done. This Parliament makes the laws, but if the relevant law was not acceptable to, say, the Minister for Local Government when he wanted to do something, we know what would happen. The Government would amend the law. It is as simple as that.

I am violently and vehemently opposed to any suggestion of a poll tax in this matter. A poll tax is an imposition on the little people, and it acts only in favour of the big people. What harm would it be to me or a wealthy man like the honourable member for Port Curtis and other honourable members in this Chamber to pay a poll tax of $10 a year? It would be just a flea-bite or chicken-feed. But to every member of a working class family a poll tax would be an imposition. Take the case of a man who has a wife and seven children. If those nine people were asked to pay $90 a year in poll tax, we would be imposing on them an iniquitous penalty. I will not develop that point any further, although I could say more about it.

I am going to have a close look at the Bill—not that it will make any difference, as the Government has already made up its mind. This so-called anti-Communist Government is doing things in almost every piece of legislation that are Communistic in their very essence. We have one example in the regimentation and control of people by back-room bureaucrats, by eggheads and by those with university degrees who have never handled a pick and shovel or driven a nail in their lives, and who have never known what it was like to live in a humble home. They are telling everybody, whether they have the money or not, "You are going to build your home as we tell you to build it." That does not go with me. I will not have it; I never have had it; and I am not going to start standing it now.

Thank you very much, Mr. Row, for giving me the opportunity to make those few remarks before I go back to my beloved Northland in a couple of hours, leaving the A.L.P. members and the National Party members to battle on. The Liberals have already gone up there; they have beaten me to it.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (12.47 p.m.): It is very difficult to make an objective judgment on such a huge piece of legislation from the Minister's introductory speech. I appreciate the fact that the Minister did make a copy of his speech available to members. Having had a chance to consider his speech, I believe that the Bill will be welcomed. That is my honest opinion. However, I think there are going to be dangers even though over all it is necessary legislation. In my opinion we will find eventually that it is in the general and specific interests of the general public, of good administration in this State, of the building industry itself, and of consumers. It is certainly a detailed and complex measure. I do hope it will achieve the uniformity that is desired not only in this State but throughout the nation.

I wish to speak about another aspect of uniformity that pertains to the whole question. I refer to the need for uniformity in the area of building specifications. Huge, unnecessary problems and costs of great magnitude are being experienced by consumers and by people in the building industry, including builders themselves, because of the lack of uniformity in that area. Many Queensland companies—and I think quickly of Hyne & Sons, but there are many others—are not bound by State boundaries because their sales operations are spread throughout the nation. Once those companies move outside certain areas and certain regions, they are faced with huge additional costs as a result of the variations in specifications laid down by housing authorities, the Federal Department of Housing and Construction, State Housing Commissions, local authorities and even lending institutions. Because of the variations in specifications, the companies are faced with wastage. The cost of wastage is eventually passed on to the home-owner.

Mr. Gunn: What about metrication?

Mr. WRIGHT: I think that has simplified it in some ways. But let us take the simple wall stud. In New South Wales the requirement is a 3 x 2. In Victoria the requirement is a 4 x 1½. I will not convert those into

metric. I think the Victorian Housing Commission states that all houses built by it must have 4 x 1½ wall studs. The spacing distances between studs vary from 18 ins. to 24 ins. All members will realise that this must create difficulties with sheeting and wall skins. Those are just some of the problems. The size of the stud is basic to all materials. It determines not only the size of the sheeting but also the size of the door-jambs. If in fitting a door-jamb a builder uses 4 x 1½ studs and affixes a particular type of building board—one type may be $\frac{3}{16}$ in. thick and another might be $\frac{1}{4}$ in.—he would need to install a door-jamb of a certain size. However, if he uses 3 x 2 studs and wall materials of another thickness the door-jamb has to be of a different size. The whole business is very complicated.

Mr. Casey: It is the over-all specification. The size and type and the placing of studs depend on the roof loading.

Mr. WRIGHT: I shall come back to details such as that. The point I am making is that specifications prepared by local authorities, the Defence Service Homes Division and the Housing Commission vary a great deal in stipulating timber sizes. They also differ in their requirements as to the spaces between studs.

Mr. Casey: But it's not just the studs. That is what I am saying.

Mr. WRIGHT: I will come onto that, and perhaps the honourable member might care to explain this point. As I have said, this is a complex matter.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! I hope that honourable members will not complicate the debate with too many technicalities.

Mr. WRIGHT: I shall try not to, Mr. Row. In fact I am trying very hard to understand it myself. I say again it is a complicated question, but it is also a very important question. The costs involved are phenomenal and, generally speaking, they are borne by the consumers. Of course, costs are also carried by the timber industry and by the builders. I have already spoken about this matter to the Minister, and I know that he is interested in it.

To revert to the point I was making—different thicknesses of wall sheeting and varying sizes of studs call for a huge variety of sizes in door-jambs. As to wall sheeting, hardboard may be $\frac{3}{16}$ in. in thickness, plasterboard varies from $\frac{1}{4}$ in. to $\frac{5}{16}$ in. and asbestos board is $\frac{3}{16}$ in. in thickness.

A case has been put forward by C. and H. Wood Products, a Tasmanian manufacturer of door-jambs—in fact the firm is one of the largest suppliers in this field—to arrive at some uniformity in stipulating the size of wall studs.

The Bill is the first step. Other States have introduced similar legislation, and Queensland is now falling into line. However, there is an urgent need to bring about some uniformity in timber sizes. I should like to see all people involved in the building industry—the lending authorities, the Housing Commission, the Commonwealth Department of Housing and Construction, the State Government and local authorities—get together to arrive at such uniformity on a national basis.

I accept the need for some variation, for example, in cyclone-prone areas. But I have discussed this matter with architects, and I have been told that the main problem in such areas is not the size of the timber used but the technique of construction. I accept that there should be variations in those areas; nevertheless such variations do not destroy the argument that I am putting forward in my call for uniformity in timber sizes. The problem is further aggravated by varying specifications for timber, brick-veneer and cavity-brick dwellings.

The State Government should consult with the Forestry Department to determine the extent of the timber resources that are available to it, with particular emphasis on timber sizes. What I am saying is that the Government should determine the most economic size of the timber that can be cut from our available stands of timber. Merchants in my area have stressed the fact that the State is wasting millions of dollars worth of timber by requiring timber used in home construction to be of certain sizes.

The Bill refers to structures, as such, but this matter could be given further consideration. As I said in answer to an interjection from the honourable member for Mackay, door-jambs and wall studs are not the only components of houses that are involved; there are also variations in thicknesses of window heads. It is all tied up with the ratio of thickness to length. Roof purlins, floor joists and other fittings are involved. In accordance with that ratio, if the length varies, so, too, must the thickness vary. The industry's problems are further compounded. Exterior timbers have different specifications, whether they be weatherboard or chamfer board.

There are further differences in seasoning requirements. The specified moisture content varies from 12 per cent in some authorities to 18 per cent in others. Floor thickness requirements vary. One man told me that most authorities accept $\frac{13}{16}$ in. dressed timber as inch flooring, while other authorities require it to be $\frac{3}{4}$ in. dressed. The difference is only $\frac{1}{16}$ in., but it is obvious that huge costs are involved when timber merchants and builders have to meet varying requirements. While Hyne & Son may be able to operate satisfactorily under the various local authorities and the Housing Commission in Queensland, the moment the firm becomes involved with Defence Service Homes, or in another State, it encounters difficulties.

Some authorities and lending groups allow 8 ft. ceilings. Others allow 7 ft. ceilings under the house, and 7 ft. 6 ins. in laundries. Other States say that none of these heights are satisfactory and that ceilings must be 8 ft. 3 ins.

Mr. Gunn: This Bill corrects all of that.

Mr. WRIGHT: In some ways it may, but I am not quite sure. It may contain general requirements but I do not think it will specify that ceilings must be 8 ft. and that that will be the over-all, uniform height in all the States, for all authorities, lending institutions and Housing Commission groups. Imagine the effect of such a move on the building industry.

Maybe the Minister can get his experts to consider if these variations are really necessary. Is the Defence Service Homes body correct in saying that its specifications are better than those of the Housing Commission? I do not think they are. All the authorities should get together, but they all seem to think that their ideas are best. I emphasise the effect on those in the industry and the consumers, and the fact that additional costs are passed onto intending home-owners.

I appreciate that the Minister is taking a forward step in bringing this legislation before us. I hope we will not be confronted with problems referred to by the Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member for Townsville South. Personally, I do not believe that we will be, but this is only the first step. The Minister should confer with the Minister for Police—the former Minister for Works—who obviously has expertise in these things. Together they should approach other members of Cabinet to consider ways in which timber sizes can be standardised. In this way they will be helping the State, the industry and builders and, above all, new home-owners.

Mr. FRAWLEY (Murrumba) (12.58 p.m.): This Bill to introduce standard building by-laws in Queensland will be acclaimed by the majority of local authorities, and certainly by those that are contiguous, because most builders operate in adjoining shires. I served for six years on the Redcliffe City Council's building committee and am conversant with some of the problems encountered by local authorities in their building by-laws. Although the Crown is to be bound by the new building by-laws, I am concerned in that it will not be required to make application to a local authority for approval to erect a building. Buildings erected by the Crown invariably conform to the local authority building standards. Nevertheless, the Crown should be required to apply for building permits.

The Redcliffe City Council has complained to me about the Crown's decision to erect a new primary school in West Redcliffe (which is in the electorate of Murrumba), without reference to the council. It has also complained about a pre-school which is to be erected at Clontarf, again without reference to the council. I believe that these projects are essential, and I certainly do not support the council's contention that they are in the wrong location. Local authorities should be consulted by all Governments when new buildings are contemplated, if only to ascertain if the local authority has a particular plan for the area.

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

Mr. FRAWLEY: When we adjourned for the luncheon recess I was about to mention that the Leader of the Opposition had attempted to raise the issue of centralism. We all know that that is a subject very dear to his heart and to the heart of his Federal Leader (Mr. Whitlam), who would be the greatest centralist of all time. This measure allows any local authority to administer its building by-laws. The only change now is that by-laws throughout the State will be uniform. Instead of each local authority having its own set of by-laws, there will now be a standard set for the whole State. I cannot see centralism creeping in under this proposal.

Returning to my point about the Crown's not having to apply for permission in any area to erect a building—late last year the State Government Insurance Office announced a plan to build a satellite city of 35,000 people in the Burpengary-Morayfield area, which is about 40 kilometres north of Brisbane.

The State Government Insurance Office is to be commended on envisaging such an undertaking, but surely the Caboolture Shire Council and I should have been consulted. The first we knew about the proposal was when we read it in the Saturday morning "Courier-Mail". I believe that any Government department intending to erect a building should have the decency to tell the local member and shire council.

The provision for a daily penalty of $50 when an owner fails to comply with a notice from the local authority to cease work on a building for which no permit has been granted is most commendable. As I said, I served for six years on the Redcliffe City Council building committee. We encountered no end of trouble with builders who commenced work before they were issued with a building permit. That practice should be stopped, and this may be one method of doing so.

I do not intend to widen the debate by referring to the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act, but it is mentioned in the Bill. Anyone who has read the report of Mr. Arnold Bennett, Q.C., on the dealings of the Brisbane City Council with landholders knows just what rackets and bribery exist in the Brisbane City Council on town-planning.

I hope provision will be made for local authorities to grant some form of dispensation for extensions to existing buildings. Although a dwelling may have been built many years ago under a different set of by-laws, some councils expect that it should be brought up to present-day standards when the owner applies to add a room or an extra toilet. It is unreasonable to expect any home-owner to bring an old building up to present-day specifications simply because he wants to extend it. I hope the Bill contains a provision to allow councils to include a by-law giving dispensation from that requirement.

I think the honourable member for Rockhampton said that every piece of timber used in constructing buildings throughout the country should be standard.

Mr. Wright: No I didn't, but go on.

Mr. FRAWLEY: If he did say that, it shows how little he knows about the building trade. Some flexibility must be allowed. Allowance must be made for materials oversize or undersize by a millimetre. Especially in cases where the difference is small, some flexibility is essential. I fail to see how there could be a hard-and-fast rule about exact measurements in everything. That is absolutely impossible.

The Bill is a genuine attempt to overcome some of the problems confronting local authorities. It will certainly give more protection to the home-owner. I commend the Minister and his committee for the work they have put into the Bill and I look forward to examining its clauses closely when it is printed.

Mr. CASEY (Mackay) (2.19 p.m.): I also would compliment the Minister on having brought this legislation before us. It is a measure that has long been awaited. The matter of standard by-laws has been raised many times by local authorities in the last decade and for many years before that. As the Minister said in his introductory remarks, a considerable amount of work has been done during the past 10 years. I can recall in the period in which I was in local authority prior to entering Parliament being handicapped in revisions of by-laws because no standard provision covered certain aspects of building requirements for all areas of the State as a guide to local authorities. I stress that this is what the Bill should be and should be considered to be. I sincerely hope that it is really a guide to local authorities and that in accepting its provisions they will still have the flexibility which is so necessary for their operations.

During the debate we have heard that the Bill has been considered for a number of months by several Government committees. The Minister said that it is a very technical Bill requiring a good deal of consideration. But, knowing the usual manner in which legislation is presented in this Parliament, I have no doubt that honourable members will have only something like a week and a half to peruse the Bill. We will be lucky if we are given as much time as that. I hope that we are allowed sufficient time to have a good look at it.

Honourable members represent various parts of Queensland, and even though the Local Government Association of Queensland is on side, that association is composed of members representing only certain areas. Its representation does not cover the 131 local authorities in Queensland. I think it is incumbent on honourable members to discuss the provisions of this Bill with the various local authorities in their electorates. After all, that is our function.

We have heard much during this debate and previously about the lack of liaison between the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments. Let us in this State Parliament set the example. Let the 82 members of this Parliament discuss this Bill with all local authorities in the State, not simply the few who are represented on the Local Government Association of Queensland. In that way honourable members could have full and frank discussion on these model by-laws that will concern those local authorities. All points of view could then be put forward.

I was concerned at the comment of the Minister during his introductory remarks that one of the main reasons for the introduction of this Bill was the fact that builders move interstate and national builders operate in all States. This may have been a reason but surely the main reason for adopting a standard building code would be the protection of the purchaser of a dwelling or of a major construction, as well as protection and safety of the public at all times. I think this is the major consideration—and it must be brought to the fore—rather than the convenience of major national building organisations and the benefits for them.

The Bill contains some long-awaited provisions such as that requiring the State Government to conform to certain building codes. I hope that this is the forerunner of many building provisions and that the State Government will accept this particular principle in a number of other avenues. Other honourable members would appreciate my comment that if the State Government adhered to the by-laws and Health Acts in the construction of schools and similar buildings, rather than override local authority by-laws covering these matters, the community would derive considerable benefit. I hope that the Minister will take note of that and endeavour to get some of his ministerial colleagues to look at the way in which they completely disregard various council and local authority by-laws on matters other than building.

It is all very well adopting standard by-laws on buildings, but local authorities are not properly supervising building construction and this neglect is becoming more prevalent. A local authority grants a building

permit for either a major construction or a dwelling-house. But what happens? The applicant pays the permit fees and has the plan approved, but in many cases the moment its cash register stops ringing the local authority does nothing more about the work.

Mr. Gunn: They are not doing their job.

Mr. CASEY: They are certainly not doing their job. I would say that the building supervisors of most local authorities in Queensland are not supervising building construction work. Again, it has become a costly operation. Local authorities are beginning to reach the stage where, instead of taking steps that are necessary to control their own finances, they are more content to sit back and seek additional hand-outs. I think they should take a very close look at themselves. There is a tendency for members of local authorities not to introduce unpopular measures.

Just as the Premier and other Ministers have a tendency to accuse the Commonwealth Government of everything that goes wrong, so local authorities like to blame both the State and Commonwealth Governments. They have power under their own by-laws to take whatever action is necessary in their own areas to deal with their own financial position, but they are not doing so. Members of local authorities are not prepared to make themselves unpopular in their own areas. What the community needs are many more men and women of integrity who are prepared to stand up and be frank in their communities and make the decisions that have to be made by local authorities. I may get an opportunity to deal further with that matter at a later date.

I hope that local authorities make use of the standard by-laws to insist on proper standards. I am not referring now to new buildings. The Bill apparently gives legal backing to local authorities should they wish to take action to remove old substandard buildings in their areas. In the major provincial cities, and even in Brisbane, one can see, among new public and commercial buildings, dilapidated, ramshackle, corrugated-iron structures that completely detract from the over-all standard of the area. I think that local authorities should use their powers to create a good environment and enforce their own by-laws, particularly on commercial enterprises, to ensure that substandard structures are removed in city areas.

The Minister mentioned that the Bill would include provisions dealing with structures in areas that are subject to strong winds. This is one matter that concerns me greatly. I live in a city that is one of the most vulnerable of all cities in Queensland, and indeed in Australia, to high wind damage. Mackay is in a cyclone area, and its residents, along with those of other North Queensland cities, each year sit in the cyclone corridor and wonder whether they will cop it. A lot of publicity has been given to cyclones, mainly as a result of the Darwin tragedy. I have been more fortunate than many others in that I have had an opportunity to visit Darwin since the cyclone struck, and to study the problems that arose there. The devastation was certainly far greater than any ever seen on the Queensland coastline, but similar destruction could take place in Queensland.

I have discussed the matter with people who were involved with technical aspects of the Bill, and it appears that its provisions were drafted and completed prior to the Darwin tragedy. I think that we have to take a much closer look at the contents of the Bill covering structures in areas of high wind. To the cyclone areas of North Queensland this will be one of its most vital provisions. I know that there have been many debates, rows, discussions and questions in this Chamber on storm and tempest insurance. We in the North are paying much higher premiums for such insurance cover than those paid by people in any other area in Australia. I do not want to introduce this argument——

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I was about to tell the honourable member that I would not allow it.

Mr. CASEY: The argument is rather long and complex but it is tied closely to building requirements in local authority areas in North Queensland.

Surely a person who builds his house in conformity with a by-law that lays down very stringent conditions for prevention of cyclone damage, or a building code that applies all the measures known to modern technology for preserving a building from cyclone damage, should be afforded some financial advantage in the premiums he pays for storm and tempest insurance over the person living next door, for example, who has not taken any precautions and who, under the circumstances now existing, enjoys equal protection if his house is damaged in a cyclone.

If the standard building by-laws set out very clearly and firmly what measures have to be taken in areas of high wind velocity—and I believe that people should be compelled to take them in their own interests—Governments must consider ways of assisting persons in those areas to bear the additional financial burden that is placed upon them. I refer specifically to persons building their own dwelling-houses.

The problem must be considered very carefully. After all, local authorities are not the only ones who are called upon to meet the cost of cyclone damage or wind damage in their areas. As we have seen from recent tragedies in Australia, Mr. Hewitt—for example, in the Brisbane floods and in the Darwin cyclone—the Commonwealth Government, through the public purse of the people of Australia, eventually is required to meet the cost. Therefore, if appropriate by-laws are to be applied in

areas of high wind velocity, they should be framed in such a way that they are not just general guide-lines under which local authorities will have power to make alterations or variations. To ensure the over-all protection of the public purse, they must be made very stringent.

Standard building by-laws are certainly not sufficient for areas of high wind velocity. The honourable member for Rockhampton spoke at some length about timber sizes. I do not agree completely with his comments, although standardisation of timber sizes does make sense. I wish to indicate to the Committee that some of the major problems in the construction of houses in areas of high wind velocity are associated with cladding. Once the roof of a building goes, the remainder of the house soon begins moving. I have in my hand an example of the type of spring-headed nail that is used fairly generally for fixing roofs in Queensland today. It has a very small head, and the skirting on the end of it, which in fact holds it to the nail, is made of very thin galvanised iron. There is no question that, once the wind becomes fairly strong, it tears the spring head over the small round head of the nail, and away goes the roof.

Mr. Gunn: What about lead-headed nails?

Mr. CASEY: They are in much the same category. The type of cladding that should be used these days is in fact screw cladding, and I have one of the screws here, too. In fact, screw cladding pulls the roof structure down into the timber. Of course, although it is much stronger, it is much more costly to use on the roof. Even the labour cost involved in screwing it down is considerable. This means that home-owners in areas subject to cyclone or wind damage, and also commercial builders in such areas, are liable for a great deal of additional cost. But unless standards of cladding in cyclone areas are laid down, we still will not achieve what we are attempting to achieve in over-all building standards. I agree that these may be very technical matters, but they are all of great importance.

It has been indicated that local authorities in cyclone areas can introduce by-laws in accordance with the relevant building standards, and I do not think that is good enough. Many types of wall board, for example, are useless in cyclone areas. Gyprock, which is a plasterboard, simply falls apart. It has no strength and will not hold together. All those matters must be looked at. Very stringent provisions must be laid down.

The Minister indicated that outhouse buildings in rural areas—even outhouse buildings like boat-sheds and greenhouses in normal urban areas—need not necessarily conform to the standards laid down. I disagree with that, particularly in the areas that are subject to high winds.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Honourable members will not loiter in the lobbies.

Mr. CASEY: In winds of high velocity, outhouses such as fowl houses and milk sheds are the first to go. Flying debris causes further damage. It has a snowballing effect. Debris hitting a house causes damage and dislodges more material to blow around in the wind. That aspect of the Bill needs to be looked at more closely.

The Minister indicated that those who feel that they have some grievance about the standards that have been laid down or who wish to appeal against a local authority decision can get a referee appointed or go before a body which I understand is to be known as the Building Advisory Committee. It is obvious from the Minister's comments that the decision of that body will be binding on all parties. There will still be a right of appeal to the Local Government Court, but such right of appeal will be allowable only when there has been an error in law or a misjudgment about jurisdiction. In actual fact the Building Advisory Committee will have the last say on the technical aspects of a problem, and nobody will have a right of appeal beyond that committee. That is a very grave denial of common justice to the people of Queensland. It is not in the best interests of the people because it means the loss of their normal right to take a decision of a local authority to the Local Government Court and to appeal in the proper way against that decision.

This outside body will be made up of selected persons who no doubt will be appointed by the Governor in Council. The Minister has not indicated that, but I feel sure that the Bill provides for appointments to be made by the Governor in Council. That selected group of persons will make a determination whether a person has the right in law or otherwise to have a building proposal accepted by a local authority. That is a strong denial of the rights of the people. Certainly it is a travesty of justice. That part of the Bill should be altered. People must retain their present rights. At the present time a person who is dissatisfied with a decision on an application for a building permit has the right to go to the Local Government Court. Requiring such a person to go before some side-tracking committee denies him normal justice and common rights.

One could talk on many other points when a Bill to amend the Local Government Act is being amended, particularly as the Minister has included in his motion the words "for related purposes." Reference has been made to poll tax. I do not think there is any need for the imposition of poll tax. Local authorities already have the power under their by-laws to levy a type of poll tax on persons who are not landowners. Local authorities register flats. Permits have to be obtained from local authorities for the building of flats. At the present time owners of flats pay about $1 a year to register them. Why not make it $50 a year? That is all

local authorities have to do, but, because it is an unpleasant decision, and one they do not wish to make, they steer clear of it.

(Time expired.)

Mr. AKERS (Pine Rivers) (2.40 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister on his introduction of this measure. As chairman of the Pine Rivers Shire Council Health, Building and Town Planning Committee and also as a practising architect, I strongly support it.

The opportunity to erect new forms of housing, as mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, will not be taken from the community, nor will fishermen's huts be any different. Local authorities will continue to deal with applications as before, and they will continue to exercise the same controls.

Mr. Hinze: At last we've got a sensible speaker.

Mr. AKERS: I thank the Minister.

The matters of builders' registration and contracts are not even contained in the Bill and therefore should not have been introduced by the Leader of the Opposition into the debate. Town-planning approvals do not come within the Bill as inferred by the Leader of the Opposition. His right to appeal against developments that he is not happy with will not be taken from him. There is no possibility whatever of his losing that right. It is quite wrong for him to infer otherwise.

The difficulty arising from varying local authority building by-laws is not as great in Queensland as it is in, say, Victoria or New South Wales. It is probably for this reason that Queensland is the last State to introduce standard building by-laws. Other capital cities have a multitude of building authorities with small areas of influence. For example, in Sydney the Lane Cove Council covers only four square miles, and the Bankstown Council, which controls one of the city's largest municipalities, exercises control over only 30 square miles. In contrast, the Pine Rivers Shire embraces an area of something like 300 square miles.

Because of the small areas of influence of local authorities in Sydney, building within 100 yards of each other are erected under a wide variety of building by-laws. Even though the city of Brisbane is approximately 900 square miles in area, similar difficulties are created by varying requirements. For example, in my office I found it necessary to prepare a chart depicting the various room sizes, side boundary clearances and frontage set-backs as well as notations as to whether the space under houses must be enclosed in certain areas. The whole matter of home construction is quite complicated. In relation to larger buildings, it is even frightening.

Like several previous speakers, I loathe the removal of any authority from local government, but I have looked deeply into this matter and come to the conclusion that these by-laws fall within the category of the standard sewerage and water supply regulations and for that reason, if for no other, should be implemented.

Over the years I have made applications to smaller local authorities to construct larger buildings or buildings of a different type, only to be told that they have no by-law covering such structures. Under this Bill every local authority, even the Woocoo and Murweh Shire Councils, will have by-laws to cover all types of buildings. Whereas at present they have no control in this field, they will be given it by this measure, and I strongly support it and commend it to the Committee.

Mr. DEAN (Sandgate) (2.43 p.m.): I do not have very much to say on this very important measure; I wish to make only a few observations on it. While the Leader of the Opposition was speaking to this Bill this morning, my thoughts turned to the criticism that has been levelled over the years by builders at the building code. One major complaint has been that builders were unable to obtain printed copies of that code. Excuses were offered for its non-availability. Applicants for copies were told, for example, that it was out of print.

I sincerely hope that the standard building code will be printed in the near future and will be put on sale to the public, because they, as well as builders, must be able to acquaint themselves with building requirements.

My leader expressed concern at the prospect of shortcomings in the Bill in relation to the rights of people in the community, particularly those who wish to erect small buildings, for example at seaside resorts or at other locations to which they choose to retire. He expressed the fear that the building requirements will force such people to erect palatial dwellings which they cannot possibly afford. At this stage I join in his criticism, believing it to be valid. Until we see the measure, we are quite entitled to make such observations. It may be said that we are trying to be clairvoyant, but I think the Minister will agree that these matters should be referred to at this stage. I sincerely hope that such restrictions will not apply.

The new code should make special reference to city buildings. From my lengthy local government experience, I believe that the main shortcomings in the present code relate to the use of city buildings by the general public. To clarify that point I emphasise that the present building code fails to recognise the difficulties confronting aged and infirm people. Young people and others who can move around freely can trip in and out of those buildings easily; but building codes in the United States and other countries cater for people with physical shortcomings. I sincerely hope that the new code provides for aged and infirm people. People who have to use wheelchairs experience great difficulty in getting from one floor to

another in buildings without lifts, ramps, or even a staircase railing. Many people, including paraplegics, are confined to wheelchairs. They must cope, or live with their difficulties, but they find it almost impossible to get around in some of the modern buildings that have no facilities to help them. I, and others, have raised these matters over the years. I hope that the new code makes provision for people in this situation, especially with reference to new commercial buildings.

Let me digress for a moment to point out that aged and infirm people experience great difficulty in getting to our beautiful City Square if the access ramp is blocked by traffic. The stairways have no rails and facilities are not provided for aged people or those who cannot move about freely. I suppose this matter was forgotten in planning the square.

It has been said that this measure will have some influence on the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act. Mr. Hewitt, you have already ruled that you do not want the town plan discussed, but we could talk about it for the rest of the day in a constructive way.

Many of the commercial buildings constructed recently on Gregory Terrace make no provision for car parking. That is another provision that I hope will be included in the building code. Provision must be made for sufficient parking space adjacent to a new structure. In this and many other cities in the Commonwealth it is difficult to find adequate parking space for those wanting to conduct business within the building.

I felt that those few observations were necessary. Perhaps when the time comes for the implementation of the legislation those suggestions will be considered.

Mr. M. D. HOOPER (Townsville West) (2.51 p.m.): I have much pleasure in supporting the introduction of the Bill. As so many speakers have already said, 131 local authorities in Queensland have been asking for it. In addition, many important people and organisations have been pressing for it for many years. I speak of those people who want their homes built in a hurry and have trouble finding finance. Till recently, organisations such as the Housing Commission, the Commonwealth Bank, building societies generally and Defence Service Homes had slightly different specifications. To look at, the homes were much the same, but the specifications differed somewhat.

Having been in real estate for the bulk of my life until some five or six years ago, I can speak with some authority about the time and effort wasted by many young people attempting to buy homes. They might have applied to Defence Service Homes, been put on the list to buy a home, and found one, but then discovered a slight fault or failure to comply with the specifications of Defence Service Homes and so been unable to buy the home. The same thing has happened with the Commonwealth Bank. All organisations appeared to have slightly different specifications. The builder himself would not know what specifications to use. All in all, a lot of time and effort was wasted by many people. The finance institutions and home buyers will be happy at the introduction of this legislation.

The Minister has said that the Crown will be bound by the provisions of the Bill. Of course, we all fully support that. Comment has been made that the Crown does not have to apply to local authorities for consent to build. Some speakers have mentioned that delays can occur in the issuing of permits in some local authority areas. I can say with confidence that the Minister would have found no delays occurring in the Townsville City Council. However, some local authorities suffering problems because of expansion have delays in issuing permits, and I can well understand why the Crown would not want to wait for a permit to be issued. However, I hope that the Crown will bind itself to the provisions of the Bill. That is most important.

I would like to see the Crown go one step further and bind itself to building in accordance with town-planning conditions laid down by city councils. In Townsville, State departments, particularly police and railways, have erected in an area of brick homes or concrete structures buildings which, though in themselves built reasonably well and to a good standard, have galvanised iron or fibro sheeting. Hence, they are not in character with the existing surroundings. I hope that in future the Crown will comply with town-planning requirements as well as building requirements.

Comment has been made that the legislation should provide standards in the size of timber and other materials. I am sure that it will. Naturally, they should be minimum standards and northern areas such as Townsville and Mackay affected by cyclones should be allowed to impose additional standards if they think fit.

The Leader of the Opposition—or it may have been the honourable member for Bulimba—mentioned damage to homes in Townsville during cyclone "Althea" three years ago. Although some instances were given of houses having insufficient cyclone bolts, most of the damage was done through roofing material being inferior or incorrectly fastened. Light aluminium sheeting and concrete and terracotta tiles were found to be very susceptible to breakage. Once there was one break in a roof, away went the whole roof and eventually it caused damage to the house next door. Then there was a snowballing effect all along the street.

Glass, too, is susceptible to cyclone damage. Unfortunately, today many homes are built with large, sliding, ranch-style windows opening onto front patios. The glass is so thin that it cannot withstand the impact of high-velocity winds. Once the glass goes, the wind gets inside the home and blows walls

out and the roof off. The items most susceptible to damage in the cyclone areas are glass and insecure roofing material. I am sure that local authorities will be given the right to insist on more stringent controls in this area.

The Leader of the Opposition felt that in the introduction of this legislation the Government was trying to introduce centralised control. I cannot agree with him. He must realise by now that local authorities throughout the State are behind this legislation. When it is passed, the actual administration and control of it will rest with the local authority.

The Bill provides that if any dispute arises between the local authority and the building contractor, the contractor can apply to the council to have the dispute heard by a referee or an advisory committee comprising reputable people in the profession in that city. He will not have to wait to go before the Local Government Court or incur the expense of legal representation. The matter can be resolved fairly quickly to the satisfaction of all parties. The Bill provides for justice and honesty and, as I said before, as so many people are in support of the legislation, I commend it to the Committee.

Hon. R. J. HINZE (South Coast—Minister for Local Government and Main Roads) (2.57 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions to the debate. I commend them particularly for their interest in this most important Bill and the way they have debated it. As I said at the introductory stage, this type of legislation has been or is being introduced in all other States. It will be good for the industry, the local authorities and the people living within the boundaries of the local authorities. It was pleasing to hear the worthy contributions to the debate made by honourable members with local government experience.

The honourable member for Bulimba, leading on behalf of the Opposition, referred to local autonomy. He pointed out that uniform building by-laws would take from local authorities a certain amount of local autonomy. That could be correct. It would occur in any avenue where it was sought to attain uniformity. However, the gains will more than outweigh the losses. The Local Government Association and the local authorities recognise this. However, local authorities will have more powers under this legislation than under the present legislation. The uniform by-laws are largely technical and provide minimum standards. Any person building in a particular area can build to a higher standard if he so desires.

The honourable member for Bulimba asked why the Building Advisory Committee did not include a union representative. The answer is simply that the committee is a technical one that will deal particularly with design and construction of buildings and the materials used in them. It is expected that all of the members will be experts in the building area. The committee will not be involved in any labour-relations aspect of building.

The Leader of the Opposition suggested that unionists and university researchers should be on the committee. The committee can seek outside expert advice if necessary but it is felt that there is a need to keep the committee to a reasonable working size. If union representation is to be considered, which union should be represented, and why? What expertise would he bring to the committee?

The honourable members for Bulimba and Sandgate supported the provision of facilities for handicapped persons in general. The by-laws cover such facilities as theatres and other places of public entertainment. For example, special provisions for access and toilet facilities are included for this type of building.

The honourable member for Bulimba raised the matter of penalties. The amounts mentioned at the introductory stage were maximums. The actual penalties will, of course, be at the discretion of the court in the particular circumstances of the case.

Virtually every speaker referred to the by-laws being binding on the Crown. The honourable member for Bulimba said that he is pleased that the uniform by-laws will be binding on the Crown. However, he is concerned that the Crown will not be required to apply to the local authority concerned for approval to erect a building. This provision is seen as consistent with the relative positions of the Crown and a local authority which, in any case, is a statutory body. I do not see why the Crown, in its building activities, should be subservient to local authorities. However, it is proposed that the Crown will provide the local authority concerned at an early stage—I emphasise "at an early stage"—with plans and other details of buildings proposed to be erected.

The Crown will itself ensure that buildings erected by it conform with the uniform by-laws. I do know that some of the things mentioned by some speakers in this debate have actually occurred. I think that it is necessary for both the Crown and the local authority to recognise the position. That is why I say that at an early stage the Crown will give to the local authority plans of any building proposed to be erected.

The honourable member for Bulimba referred to the need for provisions relating to safety in the construction of buildings. Safety is already covered by the Construction Safety Act.

The honourable member also referred to building materials, and said that a person having a building erected may not be aware of the real nature of the materials being used. He said that a person employing an

architect may not know if a new material, or a form of construction, is adequate for the proposed purpose. The by-laws provide for a local authority to obtain from the applicant, where necessary, documentary evidence to its satisfaction that the material to be used is satisfactory. The council may also test the material or the form of construction. A number of recognised testing authorities are also listed in the by-laws. An Australia-wide system of testing materials and forms of construction is being considered by the Interstate Standing Committee on Uniform Building Regulations.

The honourable member for Callide, in his usual boisterous way——

Mr. Jensen: He takes after you.

Mr. HINZE: I taught him.

The honourable member said that a set of standard by-laws would impose one standard throughout all parts of the State. He referred to Stanthorpe, Cooktown, and so on. The by-laws set minimum standards that a sensible owner or builder will exceed if necessary. He doubted if the standard building by-laws would improve the present situation. As mentioned at the introductory stage, most by-laws are now out of date, and local authorities do not have the time to amend them. Uniform building by-laws will be kept up to date by the Building Advisory Committee on the advice of departmental officers, by I.S.C.U.B.R., and by local authorities.

The honourable member for Callide, when referring to alterations of buildings, raised the matter of the power given to local authorities to require the whole building to be brought up to the standard of new buildings under the uniform building by-laws. The power referred to at the time of alteration of a building covers the situation where, in the opinion of the local authority, the building or structure is unsafe or structurally unsound. Where approval to carry out an alteration or addition is sought, the local authority may require that the whole building or structure be brought into conformity with such provisions of the by-law as will ensure that the building or structure is made safe and structurally sound. That does not seem to be an unreasonable requirement. Safety of persons would be the main criterion for action by a local authority in that case.

The honourable member for Somerset, who is chairman of my parliamentary local government and main roads committee, has been a local government representative and chairman of a local authority for many years.

Mr. Jensen: A good man.

Mr. HINZE: He would have to be to be a member of the National Party and to make the contributions to debates in this Chamber that we have become accustomed to hearing from him. The National Party is very lucky to have his services and those of gentlemen with experience similar to his. That is why its membership is growing so rapidly.

Mr. K. J. Hooper interjected.

Mr. HINZE: I like you, too.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If the mutual admiration society has quite finished, we will get back to the Bill.

Mr. HINZE: The honourable member for Somerset mentioned the need for action in the case of dangerous structures—in particular, awnings. The uniform by-laws will contain powers to enable the local authority to deal with dangerous structures.

The Leader of the Opposition said——

A Government Member: Who is he?

Mr. HINZE: "Tangalooma Tom". He said that the Bill was a blatant exercise in centralism. Imagine anybody on that side of the House, Mr. Hewitt, referring to centralism! What a joke! This is related to the reference by the honourable member for Bulimba to some loss of local autonomy. The remarks quoted, and attributed to the Mayor of Mackay, Alderman Albie Abbott, do not relate to the Building Bill.

It must be realised that action is being taken in all States to obtain some uniformity in building construction. It is not consistent with this move that Queensland local authorities retain the right to lay down minimum technical standards for buildings. Also, it is recognised in Queensland that local authorities are not in a position to maintain their building by-laws at a high level of technical excellence consistent with modern requirements and changing needs. However, the uniform by-laws will still leave with the local authority a considerable amount of local discretion, and this aspect will be dealt with further during the second-reading stage.

If a person desires to construct a building at a higher standard, there is nothing to stop him from doing so. I am not in accord with the suggestion that fishermen's shacks should be allowed willy-nilly throughout Queensland and without any form of control. However, the by-laws do have regard to the need for different types of buildings, and also for the exclusion of certain buildings from the uniform code. In that regard, I refer specifically to fishermen's shacks. A one-room dwelling with a minimum floor area of 18½ square metres—about 200 square feet—is allowable in certain circumstances, with council approval.

The Leader of the Opposition thought that $50 a day as the continuing penalty was not a very large fine, particularly in relation to a big project. I think that the daily fine is a reasonable one, particularly in view of other action that may be taken by the local authority. For example, if work done does not conform with the by-laws, the council may order the work to be demolished, or it may itself demolish the

work in case of default. The offender will also be liable to an initial fine as well as the daily penalty.

The honourable member for Townsville South, the "Voice of the North", referred to the Bill as a Communist move and regimentation. He also stated that the Bill was a theatrical exercise by persons who, he implied, were impractical. I stress that the by-laws were in fact drafted by people well aware of the problems in the building industry throughout Australia, people who are qualified in both the academic and the practical sense. They included persons engaged in research activities, such as officers of the Commonwealth Experimental Building Station.

The honourable member for Townsville South referred also to activities of the Builders' Registration Board. I stress that the Building Bill in no way affects the activities of the Builders' Registration Board, which will still be in a position to act in respect of all building work. However, at the same time, the local authority will have considerable powers to ensure that good building standards are maintained.

The Leader of the Opposition complimented me on my proposal that a booklet be produced for the information of the general public on the subject of the uniform by-laws. What is proposed is a booklet which will explain the requirements of the by-laws for the construction of a normal dwelling-house. Uniform by-laws make considerable reference to standard codes. Where appropriate these standard codes will be incorporated in the booklet to be produced. It is expected that the booklet will be freely available to all interested persons. However, some appropriate price may be charged in accordance with printing costs.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to the need for allowing experiments with the different types of buildings and building materials. The uniform by-laws will provide for that type of experiment, both in the development of new materials and the development of new methods of construction. Certain powers will remain with both the local authority and the Building Advisory Committee in this direction. Liaison will also be maintained with other States through I.S.C.U.B.R. regarding such developments throughout Australia.

The honourable gentleman referred to the need to obtain site approval. There has been a misinterpretation of my remarks regarding planning law, probably in my reference to the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act. I wish to make it clear that the Building Bill does not provide for the granting of site approval. Town-planning laws will still apply, and any necessary town-planning approvals must be obtained before a building permit can be granted.

The honourable member for Rockhampton raised the need for uniformity in building specifications. Uniform building by-laws will go a long way towards providing uniform building specifications and materials to be used in building. However, minimum standards are prescribed. Individual owners and builders will be able to construct to a higher standard of building if they desire. However, local authorities will not be allowed to insist on a higher standard. That is a most important point.

It is expected that all State authorities will not insist on higher standards than those prescribed in uniform by-laws. However organisations such as Defence Service Homes and lending institutions may continue to prescribe higher standards. It is hoped, and I am sure, that the Building Advisory Committee will endeavour to move in this direction, that all authorities will eventually recognise the minimum standards provided in the uniform by-laws. Preliminary discussions have already taken place with representatives from some of the lending authorities, and co-operation is expected as far as is technically possible.

The honourable member for Townsville South stated that the standard building by-laws had been drawn up by theorists. The The by-laws being adopted in Queensland are based on the A.M.U.B.C., which was prepared over a period of 10 years by the Interstate Standing Committee on Uniform Building Regulations. That committee comprises representatives of each of the States' Departments of Local Government and the Commonwealth Experimental Building Station. The State representatives are also members of each State's Building Advisory Committee, and in this way the experience in their own States is passed on to them by their own local authorities and other representatives of the building industry in those States. The Experimental Building Station carries out research into practical problems associated with building, and is respected throughout Australia. The A.M.U.B.C. contains considerable fire safety requirements which have been the subject of discussions with appropriate fire authorities throughout Australia.

The honourable member for Rockhampton claimed that there was a need for uniformity in the size of timber, and he referred to door-jambs as an example. Studies are currently being done by the timber industry concerning structural timber sizes, but at present they do not cover rationalising of timber trim sizes, for example, door-jambs. This will no doubt occur in the long term as present research and practices mature. At an appropriate time the Building Advisory Committee would consider amendments to the by-laws based on submissions by the timber industry.

The Metric Conversion Board and the Standards Association, with the timber industry, are actively pursuing the rationalising of building materials dimensions into preferred units, and this should lead to further rationalisation of the examples mentioned by the honourable member for Rockhampton.

The honourable member for Mackay referred to particular types of roofing nails. My only comment here is that this would be a matter for the local authority. He referred to the rights of the people. Objection is available to a referee, and an appeal then lies to the Building Advisory Committee. Objections and appeals will relate to technical issues only, and not a right to build. The right to build on a particular site still lies in town-planning law, and a right of appeal to the court will remain.

The honourable member for Sandgate, who always makes sensible contributions to debates, referred to car-parking. This is a town-planning matter and is dealt with by local authorities under their town-planning by-laws. He also referred to provision for physically handicapped persons. I have already referred to that matter.

Again I thank honourable members for their contributions to the debate, and I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Motion (Mr. Hinze) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

FARM WATER SUPPLIES ASSISTANCE ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(Mr. Gunn, Somerset, in the chair)

Hon. N. T. E. HEWITT (Auburn—Minister for Water Resources) (3.19 p.m.): I move—

"That a Bill be introduced to amend the Farm Water Supplies Assistance Acts 1958 to 1965 in certain particulars."

In introducing the Bill, I remind members of the circumstances in which the original Act was passed. In late 1957, when legislation was proposed in this respect, Queensland was suffering from drought. While large-scale water-conservation schemes would have helped, it was realised that many streams and water-courses are unsuitable for the provision of economical water-conservation works by Government action. In any case, development by Government works in all areas of the State would have taken a very long time.

These factors led to the approach that landholders could better their position by individual action to improve their existing facilities. As was then pointed out, landholders cannot be forced to improve their water supplies but can be encouraged and assisted to do so.

The Act was passed in 1958 to achieve the following purposes:—

(a) To improve the standard of stock and domestic water supply on individual holdings.

(b) To encourage greater development of individual irrigation schemes by:—

(i) Modern methods of water conservation and harvesting;

(ii) Development and utilisation of subsurface supplies where such supplies are known to exist; and

(iii) Ensuring that such development is soundly planned, technically and economically.

(c) To provide greater stability of, and generally increase, production and avoid losses in time of drought.

The Irrigation and Water Supply Commission provides the technical assistance, charging a small fee for plans and specifications, and makes recommendations to the Agricultural Bank when financial assistance is sought in accordance with the provisions of the Acts.

The original Act was amended in 1963 to provide for payment of Agricultural Bank management costs from the fund; for payment of interest and redemption from the fund to the Treasury; and for advances to be made under terms similar to those applying to advances made under the Agricultural Bank (Loans) Act. The Acts were further amended in 1965 to provide that, where an application has been made for financial assistance for works relating to the irrigation of sugar-cane, the commission refers the application for a report on the prospects of success to the Director of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations.

The Act has worked well and its success in achieving the purposes outlined, is shown by these figures:—from inception to 31 December 1974 a total of 3,373 applications for financial assistance were received and $9,583,338 was advanced in this period. Some 10,521 applications have been received and advice given for technical assistance only in this same period.

From time to time requests have been received from landholders for financial assistance for schemes that might be described as drainage works. The Act, as presently worded, enables advances to be made for drainage works which are a necessary part of a work of water supply or irrigation, but it is considered that advances cannot be made for works designed to drain wet lands to enable dry-land farming to be carried on.

The Queensland Cane Growers' Council has pointed out that there are areas in the State with high rainfall, such as in the area from Mossman to Ingham, where water shortage is not the problem. The problem is the inability of natural drainage to remove excess water rapidly enough to prevent crop damage or loss.

There is power under the Water Act to authorise community drainage schemes, by constituting drainage areas and drainage boards. However, we are dealing here with cases where a community scheme is not

needed, or is not economically warranted. The intention here is to enable financial advances to be given under the Farm Water Supplies Assistance Act to encourage and assist the individual farmer to improve by his own action his own position in regard to drainage of farm lands, other than for works of water supply and irrigation. This amending legislation, therefore, enables that objective to be achieved.

The amendments of the Act are not large, but involve including the word "drainage" in the preamble to the Act which expresses the intention and purpose of the Act. Similarly the definition of "Works" is broadened and a definition of "Drainage and drainage works" is inserted.

I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. JENSEN (Bundaberg) (3.24 p.m.): The Minister explained the reason for amending the Act, but he did not say that the Honourable A. G. Muller introduced the original measure on 11 March 1958 and outlined its purposes exactly. I did not hear the Minister refer to some of the conditions contained in that Bill, namely, that a farmer could obtain a loan of up to 90 per cent of the cost of the works, at an interest rate of only 5¼ per cent, over 12 years, including two years in which only interest would be paid. The conditions set out by the Minister in those days were excellent.

The Opposition at that time supported the Bill in toto. Its then leader (Mr. L. A. Wood) and other speakers from this side spoke in support of the measure because our party, as is well known, has always supported rural assistance for small farmers. The Labor Party has done everything possible to support them. In 1958 we welcomed the introduction of the legislation. Similarly, we welcome the present amendment.

Although the amendments of 1963 and 1965 were minor, in certain respects they were important. The one in 1965, introduced by the Hon. H. Richter, provided assistance to the sugar industry to ensure that irrigation of cane farms was referred to the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations and not to the Director-General of Primary Industries. That was a good amendment and it was supported completely by the Opposition. The honourable member for Port Curtis (Mr. Hanson) mentioned at that time that the Government should not require repayment of a loan until the farmer was using the stored water, that is, producing and in a position to commence repayments. The suggestion made when the legislation was originally enacted was that a farmer should be given a period of grace until the water was available and he was producing. We still believe that to be most important.

The Government gave quite a fair concession whereby for a period of two years interest only had to be repaid. I know that the honourable member for Port Curtis wanted that concession extended in an effort to further help the little farmer, which this party has always tried to do. The Labor Party has attempted to assist the farmer in every possible way, and when amendments are introduced we are on the side of those small farmers who require Government assistance.

As the Minister said, since the introduction of the measure the Government has paid out something like $9,263,000. In 1973-74, $393,822 was advanced. Applications for assistance, especially technical assistance, have increased. It is heartening to see small farmers seeking technical assistance for water conservation. They will now be able to receive help in their drainage problems. I trust that technical assistance is available in that field.

The Minister said that the assistance would not be directed towards community schemes. It is for the assistance of the individual farmer. He must be guided by the experts, for when he is draining his farm he must be sure that he does not divert the water to his neighbour's farm. I trust that the technical assistance will be directed at ensuring that drainage will be diverted into the natural waterways.

Technical assistance given by the Government has been excellent. In the 1973-74 report it can be seen that for technical assistance only there were 625 applications and for financial assistance 110 applications—a total of 735. The total outstanding is 403. This year 885 have been approved, 687 for technical assistance and 198 for financial assistance.

It augurs well for the farming community that concern is being shown about irrigation, water storage, water conservation and drainage. Therefore, on behalf of the Opposition I have much pleasure in supporting the measure. I know that its introduction has been influenced, as the Minister said, by the cane growers, probably to assist farmers in the North who have problems with high rainfall. Farmers in my area have problems with low rainfall, the reverse situation. Our problem is to get more water whereas theirs is to get rid of some of it. We on this side of the Chamber have always respected the sugar industry. The Labor Government more or less set it up in 1915 and successive Governments have supported it in every way possible. Today, we endorse the measure introduced by the Minister.

Mr. ROW (Hinchinbrook) (3.31 p.m.): I support the Bill. As I come from an area where water is frequently an embarrassment, I am qualified to make some comment on the proposal. When I say that water is an embarrassment to us, I mean not only during hotel sessions but also for many months of the year. I am very pleased that the Minister's committee, of which I am a member, has approved of this Bill. The reference made by the honourable member for Bundaberg to legislation introduced by

a previous Government did not give us very much encouragement. He referred only to the usual old approach to water that has been adopted in this State for so long—conservation. Nobody has given very much thought to the over-all picture of total water management.

I am pleased to see on the Business Paper that the Water Act is to be amended. It will take this whole question a lot further—indeed much further than any previous Government ever contemplated.

The disposal of surplus water, particularly in North Queensland, has been mainly by natural phenomena. The country has natural watercourses. For many generations in the development of the rural areas in the wetter parts of Queensland, we have relied entirely on the immense run off and natural wastage of water. This has caused erosion and either the deterioration or destruction of structures, roads and the many other things that go with human progress and that have cost us a lot of money. Because of lack of control in water disposal many buildings and houses have been damaged. Floods are another classic example of the lack of drainage control. In referring to drainage, we must also bear in mind the control required at certain times during the monsoonal season of huge volumes of water.

The Bill proposes to add drainage to the works already eligible for financial assistance. Many individuals have given sterling service in the development of the rural industry in Queensland and have spent a great deal of money on drainage which has eventually been of benefit to other members of the public, who would have been morally entitled to meet a good proportion of that expenditure on their own welfare. This aspect should be taken into consideration very seriously.

North Queensland has many pioneering people. A terrific amount of work in this field has been done by voluntary subscription. Some people have lived in a constant state of financial embarrassment because they have tried to improve their properties and thus create a better environment for their families, neighbours and people living around them.

Today, there is a greater awareness of the benefit of having communal schemes. I am pleased to see that this Parliament is giving more recognition to communal water schemes and water boards, and more encouragement to people to enter into such schemes if they can obtain the necessary financial assistance.

What the honourable member for Bundaberg said about the movement in the sugar industry is true. Although I do not want to appear parochial by referring constantly to the sugar industry, it is the largest agricultural industry in the Queensland coastal region. The problem that is arising is rather insidious and it is not accepted by all, but it is very real. I refer to the difference in profitability that is arising throughout the vast area of the coastal sugar belt of Queensland as a result of changing fortunes caused by nature. Water is, of course, very much tied up with this problem.

In days gone by, tropical regions enjoyed a vast potential for the growth of crops through natural rainfall. In latter years, the construction of dams and the development of water-conservation and irrigation schemes have created an imbalance in that the more arid areas have been able to control production to an extent which, based on the common concept of equal opportunity and equal payment for effort, has placed the wet tropical areas at a disadvantage. I hope that this amendment is only the beginning of a concerted and Government-supported move to bring about an awareness of the necessity for total water management by not only conservation and reticulation but also drainage.

Agricultural projects are now moving into many marginal areas in Queensland. In the first place, settlers concentrated on areas with good land and favourable conditions, and they set themselves up all over the State where those conditions applied. Marginal areas were largely ignored until this decade, or perhaps a little earlier. Now, particularly in this decade, it has been found necessary for a number of reasons to move into marginal areas. What used to be catchment areas for natural drainage are now being cultivated. It is therefore necessary to implement properly designed schemes to transform such areas into viable propositions. For that reason, I am very pleased to see that the Committee supports the Bill, and I have much pleasure in adding my support.

Mr. HANSON (Port Curtis) (3.39 p.m.): I acknowledge the wonderful contribution made by my colleague the honourable member for Bundaberg, and I thank him personally for reminding me of some statements that I have made previously on this important subject. The measure now being brought down is very desirable, and it is in keeping with the Minister's record over a number of years. I know that he will continue to look vigilantly into the administration of this Act and see that it is progressively amended. This attitude, of course, is completely different from the general approach of his colleagues in the National Party, who, year in and year out, have given only lip-service in this Assembly to the great rural producers of this State.

Mr. ROW: I rise to a point of order. The remarks of the honourable member for Port Curtis are offensive to me. I have served for many years in various organisations that have promoted the very things that he accused honourable members on this side of the Chamber of neglecting. I object to the inference, because I have done my share towards achieving those things.

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

Mr. HANSON: One has to acknowledge the honourable member for Hinchinbrook, who has taken a point of order so that his constituents will know that he is at least in the Chamber.

In sharp contrast to the silence of members of the National Party, who should be interested in matters such as this, we have heard in this debate from the rural section of the Liberal Party. What do we find, Mr. Gunn, when matters affecting rural policy are debated in this Parliament? We find great interest and submissions of great depth, even though they may be somewhat abstract, from some metropolitan members of the Liberal Party. The honourable member for Everton, who has no rural background, is very strongly to the fore in this regard. He probably fears the day when Mr. Gerry Jones lines up again and tries to bump him out of his seat. The honourable member for Everton knows nothing about agriculture and has no concern for the farmers of this State. In the latter respect he is like his colleagues in the Country Party.

I say quite emphatically that I have always supported the provisions of the Farm Water Supplies Assistance Act. I acknowledge that it was introduced by the late Mr. Alf Muller, the father of the present honourable member for Fassifern. He was a wonderful man, who gave great service to primary industries throughout the State over a long period.

The proposition that I have advanced is that an ordinary farmer who seeks an advance of $4,000 or $5,000 under the Farm Water Supplies Assistance Act should be able to expend the money on the construction of a dam that will be of some use on his property. When the property becomes viable, then—and only then—should he attempt to meet his commitments to the lending institution, the Agricultural Bank. I know that suggestion may be somewhat unorthodox, but it is in line with the thinking of the Australian Labor Party, the party to which I belong, and I suggest that it is quite correct. After all, although the mineral deposits in Queensland have exercised a great influence on the income of the State and, as there are many thousands of tons of certain minerals in the ground, they may do so for years, farms will be there for centuries to come. I have a considerable number of farmers in my electorate; I have earned their respect and I receive their votes. The honourable member for Everton and other pseudo-agriculturists now in this Assembly would find it very difficult to emulate my efforts in that field. In my opinion, it is right and proper that action of a radical nature should be taken to assist people seeking this form of assistance under the Farm Water Supplies Assistance Act.

The Minister, in his introductory remarks, mentioned drainage, and it is really complementary to some of the other very fine purposes of the Act. In some cases it was necessary to improve the standard of stock and domestic water supply installations on individual holdings, and modern methods of water conservation and water harvesting were made possible by the Act. It is a matter of great concern to the farmers of the State to find that their properties are inadequately drained. For example, mention has been made already of the sugar industry. There is no doubt that inefficient drainage can lead to the development of a big disease problem, and rot in sugar cane can cause individual farmers to suffer grave economic loss.

I have levelled criticism at the honourable member for Hinchinbrook and others who have come into the Chamber and advanced the the policies of the Queensland Cane Growers' Council. The honourable member knows as well as I do that for many years the question of drainage has been raised continually at meetings of cane-growers associations in many areas of the State. He says he is on different committees. He is on committees all right! He certainly has been noted for his silence on those committees. He has not strongly advanced the needs of his constituents.

Mr. ROW: I rise to a point of order. I take offence at the honourable member's remarks. "Hansard" will show that I have strongly advanced these principles recently in this Chamber.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Gunn): Order! Will the honourable member withdraw his remarks?

Mr. HANSON: If the honourable member could produce that to me I would love to look at it. Next election I will make a personal visit to his area. Off the stump I will tell his constituents just how inadequate he has been.

Mr. Frawley interjected.

Mr. HANSON: I might come to Redcliffe, too, and give the honourable member and other members of the N.C.C. a barrel as well.

Mr. ROW: I rise to a point of order. I ask that the honourable member withdraw those remarks about me.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the honourable member for Port Curtis to withdraw them.

Mr. HANSON: For the sake of peace, if the honourable member feels that I have been in any way offensive to him personally, I am only too happy to withdraw the remarks. I should not like to be personally offensive to any parliamentary colleague. But that will not deter me from going into the Hinchinbrook electorate and speaking in

the cause of the endorsed Labor candidate, who will win next time. I will show how inadequate the honourable member has been in advancing the cause of those particular people.

Mention has been made of the possibility of erosion. For the preservation of the soil so that agricultural farms will remain viable units for centuries ahead, it is very necessary to have a satisfactory amending Bill such as the one being introduced by the Minister. As usual, we in the Opposition, being men of great perception, indicate that on this occasion, too, we will await the printing of the Bill so that we can see if there is anything in it that is offensive to us. At this initial stage the Bill receives our approbation.

Hon. N. T. E. HEWITT (Auburn—Minister for Water Resources) (3.48 p.m.), in reply: I have very little to reply to. We have heard a great dissertation from our learned friend from Port Curtis about the sugar industry. Probably he would be better occupied if he kept to his hotel and let someone else look after the other side of things.

Motion (Mr. Hewitt) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

WATER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(Mr. Row, Hinchinbrook, in the chair)

Hon. N. T. E. HEWITT (Auburn—Minister for Water Resources) (3.50 p.m.): I move—

> "That a Bill be introduced to amend the Water Act 1926-1973 in certain particulars."

The amendments proposed include an amendment of section 9 to control excessive use of water from streams and water-courses under the guise of stock and domestic use, while still preserving a landholder's riparian rights.

Section 12 deals with licensing provisions generally. Subsection (3) of that section presently provides that an owner or occupier of land riparian to a water-course and situated within 8 kilometres of the applicant for a licence has a right to object. A point has been raised casting a doubt on the method of interpreting this distance. The amendment seeks both to clarify the interpretation of the distance and to increase the distance to 24 kilometres downstream, but to retain the distance of 8 kilometres upstream.

It is proposed to amend section 22 to enable a water board to accept, legally, the assignment of the liability of a debenture loan, previously raised by the Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply and spent in whole or in part to finance works also to be transferred to the board.

The present section also contains a subsection 22 (2), which limits the rate of interest payable to 6 per centum per annum, which is obviously not a practical rate in the present economic climate. It is proposed to remove this limit.

Water boards must borrow funds, often well in advance of their being required for construction purposes. As a result of the massive increase in interest rates, it is advisable for boards to have the power to invest such temporarily idle or surplus funds at the best available rates, whether in the short-term money market or elsewhere. A new section 46I has been inserted to give boards this power. There are similar provisions in the Local Government Act and the Harbours Act.

Section 63 in effect gives users of domestic and stock water a similar right to draw water from sub-artesian wells, as applies to surface water under section 9, referred to previously. Also for the same reason, it is proposed to amend section 63 to provide a means of control of possible excessive use without depriving genuine cases of the right to sufficient underground water for domestic use.

A most important purpose of this amending Bill is to insert new provisions in the Act to provide for the inspection and continued surveillance of large dams as a means of preventing failures of such dams and ensuring the safety of life and property.

Of more than 10,000 large dams existing throughout the world, it is known that about one in 23 has suffered accident involving appreciable difficulty and about one in 70 has failed, in some cases disastrously.

In recent years several countries, including Great Britain, U.S.A., and France, have had new or updated legislation under consideration.

UNESCO, in conjunction with the International Commission on Large Dams, prepared a document, "Recommendations Concerning Reservoirs", which sets out basic principles for regulations concerning the safe design, construction and operation of dams and reservoirs.

Members of the Australian National Committee on Large Dams (ANCOLD), which is affiliated with the international commission, have concluded that under existing legislation in all States the community is not adequately protected against possible dam failures.

ANCOLD prepared a report in 1972 on the safety and surveillance of dams. In 1973 the Premier advised the chairman of ANCOLD of the Government's support for the proposals and advised that consideration would be given to implementing necessary legislation to set up a control authority for dams in Queensland.

The principal recommendations of the ANCOLD report are as follows:—

(a) That a single control authority in each State should be responsible for ensuring the implementation of legislation and regulations for the design, construction, operation and maintenance of all dams and reservoirs defined as "referable" dams.

(b) That all such dams and reservoirs should be designed, constructed, operated and maintained under the supervision of suitably qualified and experienced engineers.

(c) That the control authority should be empowered to require the submission of sufficient data, drawings and reports to enable it to make decisions on the adequacy of such dams and reservoirs.

(d) That an advisory committee should be established to advise the control authority in technical and administrative matters.

(e) That the control authority should be empowered to delegate such of its functions as deemed fit in each case to suitably qualified organisations subject to adequate information and reports being required to enable over-all control to be maintained.

The Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply is the logical authority to administer the legislation providing for these controls and requirements. In this Bill use is made of his powers under the Water Act, and certain amendments are made to existing provisions so that these are adequate to cover supervision and control of dams.

Section 3 of the Act is amended to include a new definition of "Owner", and a definition of "referable dam" is added.

Section 4 vests natural water in the Crown. It authorises the commissioner to take such measures as thought fit for the conservation and supply of such water. A new section 4A has been inserted, giving to the commissioner control of the design, construction, alteration, repair, operation, maintenance, abandonment and removal of referable dams.

Section 11, which deals with licences granted to riparian owners to divert water and construct works, is being amended to provide for the licensing of referable dams. Section 11A, which gives a right to non-riparian landholders to obtain a licence to divert water, is also being amended to conform to the altered form of section 11. A new section 11C is inserted to provide that a person shall not build, alter, repair, operate, remove or abandon a referable dam save under the authority of, and in compliance with, the terms and conditions of a licence issued by the commissioner.

Section 12, which deals with licence applications and rights of appeal, is being amended to enable its use also in connection with referable dams. It also excludes right of appeal by an owner against a decision of the commissioner which concerns the safety of a referable dam or the protection of life and property in connection with a referable dam.

Section 15, which provides a penalty for unauthorised alterations to a licensed work or contravention of any condition of a licence, is being amended to provide a maximum penalty commensurate with the higher values of referable dams.

A new part VIII of the Act is being inserted and comprises new sections 64 to 69, all dealing specifically with referable dams.

Section 64 interprets dimensions and other terms used.

Section 65 lists the requirements of the commissioner in regard to referable dams. Section 66 empowers the commissioner to appoint an advisory committee to assist in the efficient discharge of his functions in this respect. Section 67 deals with the functions of the advisory committee.

Section 68 enables the commissioner to exempt the owner of a referable dam from all or any of the provisions of the Act, for such period and under such conditions as he decides.

Section 69 exempts the commissioner from liability by reason of total or partial failure or collapse of a dam in certain circumstances.

The proposed legislation in respect of referable dams has been discussed with departments concerned and general agreement has been reached.

I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. JENSEN (Bundaberg) (3.59 p.m.): We have no intention of opposing the Bill. As the Minister referred to many sections that are to be amended and new ones to be inserted, we will have to look closely at the legislation before saying very much about it. Unlike Government members, Opposition members have not had copies of the Bill. Government members at least know something about it, but we do not.

It appears from the Minister's outline that the legislation is quite sound as it relates to the construction and control of dams which, I believe, should have been controlled years ago. I have known people to construct dams across rivers which could cause serious damage to farms lower down in times of flood. As outlined by the Minister, the Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply has now power under the Act to have dams removed. We cannot allow farmers to construct dams just anywhere, nor can we allow dams to be constructed where they can flood a town or city. The construction of any dam or reservoir should be subject to stringent conditions. The Minister has mentioned the collapse of dams. Recently we have seen newsreels of the collapse of a large dam in America. The collapse of any dam will cause destruction. When the dams are large, the destruction to small cities or towns will be serious.

I remember a couple of years ago a complaint about a big landowner in North Queensland putting in his own dam without

asking for approval. It has been said that the dam is dangerous. I do not know whether that is true or not.

Mr. Lindsay: Name him.

Mr. JENSEN: I can't think of his name. He was a developer up there and tied up with big mining companies.

Mr. Lindsay: Your speech is full of innuendoes.

Mr. JENSEN: I would name him if I knew his name. You give us his name.

Mr. Frawley: What about the Lord Mayor? Shouldn't he be in control of the Somerset Dam?

Mr. JENSEN: Of course he should be in control. There should be control on any dam. You get up and tell us where the Lord Mayor should be controlling it. You tell us what you are going to do about controlling it. I do not want the honourable member to interject. He should get up and tell us where the Lord Mayor is wrong.

Mr. Frawley: I told you.

Mr. JENSEN: I know you told us about where——

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! Honourable members will address their remarks to the Chair.

Mr. JENSEN: I know that the honourable member told us that the land was rateable. I agree with him. I think it is a scandal for people to be paying rates on land that is under water, but that has nothing to do with this.

The legislation that the Minister has introduced is to prevent people from constructing dams without authority and control. I hope the department will have the authority to inspect every dam or reservoir in Queensland. People should be informed, if their dam is not up to specification, that it should be altered or demolished. That is our main point. When we see the Bill we will be looking to see that the Commissioner has the authority to ensure that a dam constructed without his authority reaches the prescribed specifications or else is demolished.

The Minister said the Bill contains many new sections as well as many amendments to existing sections. Until we study its ramifications, we cannot say much.

Mr. GUNN (Somerset) (4.4 p.m.): As my electorate covers the watersheds of the Brisbane and Lockyer Valleys, where a lot of water is stored for irrigation purposes, I welcome the legislation. It is long overdue. As you will know, Mr. Row, I have received many complaints about the Somerset Dam, for obvious reasons, although I will not elaborate on them now.

Mr. Marginson interjected.

Mr. GUNN: I am sure the honourable member for Wolston has not swallowed that one. I have more respect for him and his judgment than to think that.

This legislation will rectify a situation that over the years has got out of hand. We talk about riparian rights. I am not against a person being given riparian rights, but I think most honourable members will agree that these have been exploited over the years. I remember one farmer who was granted a licence to irrigate 4 acres of vegetables. That was the greatest rort of all time. He had a 4 in. centrifugal pump and anybody associated with irrigation knows that it will deliver up to 16,000 gallons of water an hour. It is easy to imagine what was happening. He was irrigating his vegetables and, as well, flooding about 10 acres of surrounding land.

Most of the smaller creeks, such as Laidley Creek and Lockyer Creek, run well at the top end but, with farmers such as the one I mentioned absolutely wasting the water, people in the lower reaches, who depend on water for their stock, got none. I am pleased that this problem is rectified under the Bill.

I can remember an inspector visiting another person who was exploiting this particular provision of the Act. He was allowed to irrigate 4 acres of vegetables. The farmer told the inspector, "I only have this 4 in. pump and I cannot afford a 2 in. pump." The inspector, being very easy-going, said, "When that one wears out you can buy a 2 in. pump." Coming from an irrigation area, you would know, Mr. Row, that these pumps never wear out. All that is required is another spindle and the pump is practically new. This went on for years and years; the irrigation inspector knew there was no way he could get out of it. We have waited a long time to have that situation rectified. Even though the hour is late, this is nevertheless a step in the right direction. Strangely enough, people have little respect for their neighbours. This was one area that was being exploited to the limit.

I commend the provision concerning the safety of dams. We read and see films of what has happened overseas and hope it will never happen here. However, we must accept that it is likely to happen. In my area, I am greatly interested in the Wivenhoe Dam which will be built in the 1980's.

Mr. Hartwig interjected.

Mr. GUNN: As the honourable member for Callide said, it will cover quite a lot of excellent country. I agree with him. The dam will serve a purpose other than the watering of lawns in Brisbane. It will serve industry, and this is an area of great industrialisation.

We must consider flood mitigation. The major flood in Brisbane last year caused great devastation. I have no engineering ability, but if Wivenhoe Dam—and this applies to Somerset Dam as well—is kept at

a reasonable level so that it can take a rush of water, it will be an excellent means of flood mitigation. Much depends on how it is managed. Somerset Dam was not managed well at the time of the Brisbane flood. It was almost full before the 20 ins. of rain fell on the headwaters near Kilcoy. As a flood-mitigation dam its value then was practically negative. Management has a good deal to do with this.

I do not wish to take up any further time of the Committee. I commend the proposal and I reserve further comments till the second-reading stage when I will have read the Bill.

Mr. HANSON (Port Curtis) (4.9 p.m.): I do not wish to take up much of the time of the Committee, but I am certain that Government members learn a little from the submissions made by Opposition members. The Bill contains some desirable features. One is that there will be greater stringency in the licensing provisions of the legislation, and, as honourable members have just intimated, this is a very sane course to pursue. There has been blatant dishonesty, and many rackets and rorts have been worked over a long period in connection with many rivers and streams. Unfortunately, many people have not acted generously towards their neighbours, and their avarice has caused concern and anxiety. I hope that the Bill will lead to a greater degree of common sense, and to a greater appreciation by members of the Minister's department of their role in seeing that the will of the Legislature is carried out rather than acting harshly as policemen.

For a long time the Government has unfortunately been noted for the way in which it has starved the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission of funds with which to carry out its charter. Very few rivers and streams have the gauges and other instruments necessary to provide effective information over the years for the benefit of the public generally. At times, a chaotic situation has developed when engineers of the Local Government Department have become involved in the construction of dams that should be the responsibility of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission. Naturally enough, there is confusion when there are interdepartmental jealousies, when engineers from different departments advance their ideas on dam construction, and when the Local Government Department approaches town councils and tells them stories about future water storage and use. If, as the Minister intimated, the Bill provides for an authority on dam construction that will settle once and for all any arguments and side issues, that provision alone will make it a very important piece of legislation indeed.

In the Gladstone area, the construction of the Awoonga Dam on the Boyne River has produced a period of great anxiety. Its construction was started in about 1965 or 1966, but the farmers and graziers upstream still do not know to what height the dam wall will rise, and naturally they have suffered great anxiety for a long time. I have led deputations to Ministers, including one to Mr. Rae when he was administering the Local Government Department, but we have repeatedly been unable to obtain the answers. One would think that one was dealing with some sort of secret society. Answers cannot be obtained by members of Parliament; nor can they be obtained by aldermen and others who are directly responsible for this work. I think that anyone who approached the newly created water board would also run up against a stone wall of silence.

The people are entitled to this information. The dam will be the basis of their future water supply. Some say that it will be up to 170 ft. high; others say that it will be 130 ft. God knows how high it will be! The eventual flooding that will take place upstream will cover properties, and people do not know where the waterline will be. The dam is also interfering with road construction in the area and with the very quality of life, because small townships do not know whether they will be flooded. The lime mine at Taragoola, for instance, could be flooded. All these side issues come into the matter. It is about time that some common sense was brought to bear on the whole issue. It has gone on for too long. I hope that this legislation will liven someone up so that we can get some form of sanity.

I am pleased to see that provision is being made under section 22 relative to investments in the short-term money market. Years ago, as chairman of a harbour authority, I, in company with my colleagues, was responsible for the first time in Queensland for having surplus Government funds and debenture funds that were allocated to us invested in the short-term money market. Not long afterwards the Treasury Department took a punt and made similar investments. Since then, of course, it has amassed an annual income of considerable proportions as a result of its investments in the short-term money market. It is a pity that it is not done by other Government and semi-government departments over the length and breadth of the State, because it allows funds to be conserved and increased with minimal risk. I believe that the provision is very desirable.

Having heard the Minister's introductory remarks, I agree with my colleague the honourable member for Bundaberg that the Opposition can give a form of affirmation to the proposed Bill. However, I sound a note of warning. The Minister's opening remarks indicate that the legislation is voluminous and makes a considerable number of amendments to the Act. These amendments, of course, will require careful scrutiny.

The Treasurer is not here at the moment. I suppose he backed Combo in the Weetwood. If he had anything to do with the legislation —and I hope he reads my remarks—he

would make a comment such as, "This is a simple piece of legislation." Unfortunately, much to the sorrow of the State, honourable members have repeatedly seen how simple some of the Government's legislation is. I might refer to the Harbours Act of 1967 —I think that is the correct year—which the Treasurer said was a simple piece of legislation. One could write chapters about that Act; in fact, one could fill a book. One thing is certain: other members of the Opposition and I are shown in the records as being opposed to that amendment and we have been proved correct. I say to the Minister who succeeded the Treasurer as Minister in charge of harbours that he did a very fine job and did not stoop to the snide operations that we saw from the Treasurer.

Because of the tidal influence in many streams in Queensland that will come within the ambit of the proposed Bill, it will affect the Harbours Act, the Local Government Act and others.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! I hope the honourable member will not go too far out to sea in this debate.

Mr. HANSON: No, Mr. Row. The tide is coming right in.

There is a differential, of course, in regard to the Awoonga Dam and a number of other dams because of tidal influence, and an amendment to the Water Act was brought down in this Chamber some time ago giving a lead to differential and stating where the authority of the Harbour Board ended and where the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission took over. That was very important, because in the Boyne River, as in many other rivers, are gravel beds that are very necessary to building operations throughout the State. The removal of gravel is a matter of serious concern to future water users. People who remove it indiscriminately can damage the banks of the river and affect their use as dam sites, and so on. One day I will write a long story about issues that caused great concern many years ago and on which some people might have thought I was somewhat blind.

I am very disappointed about the negligence shown by one Government department in failing to observe the provisions of the Act. One hears a great deal about dam construction. To improve its operations between Gladstone and Rockhampton and provide greater engine power for trains carrying coal from Blackwater to Gladstone, the Railway Department has upgraded the railway line. In several small communities it has removed old bridges that were sadly in need of repair. The engineers constructed box culverts and thus created dams which will flood the towns of Bajool, Marmor and Mt. Larcom. As a result untold injury will be caused to people along the length of the line. The department says that it will take no responsibility for any injury that is caused. It is very wrong that these dams should be allowed to cause injury and economic hardship.

It is about time the Act was brought before the notice of the department. It is about time there was liaison between Government departments instead of the present ministerial jealousy. What could we expect other than ministerial jealousy when the two political factions are so violently opposed to one another? We hear whisperings in the corridors. There are leaks to the Press and stabs in the back. Incidentally, where are the Liberals today? They are up in Townsville venting their hate against the Australian Labor Party.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the honourable member to stick to the provisions of the Bill.

Honourable Members interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I should like the honourable member to stick to the provisions of the Bill. I also remind other honourable members that I am not going to allow the debate to develop into a debacle of interjections on matters not related to the Bill.

Mr. HANSON: I regret it if I became upset. I am very emotional about the way the ship of State is being sailed at the present time.

The Railway Department atrociously inflicts itself on the people of the State by doing something that will eventually flood them out of their homes. I hope that the safety provisions of the Bill will be enforced and that the department will be told in no uncertain terms just where it gets off. I can smell the Co-ordinator General's Department throughout the measure. I sincerely hope that together the two departments will co-ordinate Government activities so that we will get some unanimity on the committees that will be created.

The Bill has considerable merit. It involves many side issues. A number of amendments have emanated from individual members of the Government caucus. I heartily congratulate some of them because they have the stomach to stand up and say what they think. Others of course remain silent while they wait hopefully for their next endorsement. They are robot members in their electorates and should be ashamed of themselves. Their electors will be told about this at the next election.

I am very sorry that the Liberal Party representation in the Chamber today is so poor. I should have liked Liberal members to make a contribution to this important debate. They have constantly belly-ached about the Brisbane River, Somerset Dam and the proposed Wivenhoe Dam. They have talked about Clem Jones's sins of omission and commission. But Liberal members are singularly silent this afternoon. Where are

they? They are up in Townsville at their meeting, not here in the Legislative Assembly Chamber. As a political party we hold our convention when Parliament is in recess or during a week when it is not sitting. They should do the same, and thus give service to the people.

Some of the proposals are very desirable and I am happy to support them. At the second-reading stage we will have much more to say.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (4.25 p.m.): After that dissertation it is very difficult for me to believe that we are living in the driest continent in the world. According to the honourable member for Port Curtis, wherever a small bank is raised there is a tremendous danger of thousands of people being drowned during the first downpour. I regard the submissions that have been made so far as being completely wide of the mark, and I am a little disappointed for that reason.

Owing to the development that has occurred in Queensland, and, for that matter, throughout Australia, it is necessary from time to time to make certain amendments to various Acts of Parliament. In this instance amendments are being made to the Water Act 1926–1973.

It is my intention to introduce my subjects in the order in which they were referred to by the Minister. He spoke firstly on the development that has occurred in Queensland as well as on the necessity to introduce this measure.

The south-eastern corner of the State, particularly the areas represented by my colleague the honourable member for Somerset and me, has been subject to large-scale subdivisional development, as a result of which a number of properties adjacent to watercourses have been reduced in area to five acres. This development has thrown a tremendous load on the natural water resources, particularly the smaller streams, in these localities.

Initially those persons who occupied small areas of land had the right to consume 3 acre-feet of water each year, and this right was given not to the property but to the individual. Many of those small areas have been subdivided, in some instances, into 20 allotments. The result is that, instead of one person having the right to consume that quantity of water, each of 20 landholders has the right to consume it annually. Water consumption of this magnitude is beyond the capacity of the streams. Fortunately, the Minister, in his wisdom, has decided to reduce the level of consumption of water. The honourable member for Port Curtis apparently is not aware of what the reduced quantity will be, but it is not my intention at this stage to tell him. I have no doubt that after the Bill is printed the Minister will indicate what it is.

Next the Minister referred to the licensing of underground water supplies. Throughout Queensland and particularly on the Darling Downs many persons are pumping large volumes of water from underground sources that are beyond the capacity of nature to replenish. Many years ago, when approval was given readily for the sinking of bores or the construction of wells, no major problem arose. Pumping equipment was then of such a nature as to limit the volume of water pumped from underground sources.

I suggest that it was not until the development of deep bore-hole pumps and similar equipment that the volume of water pumped from underground sources has become excessive. Some action must be taken in the near future to rectify this situation. It is the considered opinion of many persons who have the capacity to make such an assessment that, unless action is taken in the near future, our underground water reserves, which have been built up over hundreds and possibly thousands of years, will be pumped dry. In an attempt to prevent this the Bill provides that future underground water supplies may be licensed and controlled.

I am concerned, however, at the prospect of departmental officers not exercising their discretion when applications are made to them to use underground water. The Minister indicated very clearly that no restriction would be imposed on dams used for domestic or livestock purposes. When people apply for a permit to sink or develop a bore, I hope that they will not be questioned extensively or delayed unduly.

The honourable member for Port Curtis seemed to be very concerned about the possibility of thousands of people drowning. I think he is romancing when he talks in that way about referable dams, but I know that he does not know the contents of the Bill. After long and careful consideration as a member of the Minister's committee, I openly admit that I agreed reluctantly to some of the provisions in the Bill. That is what motivates me today in making my speech.

We believe that, in Australia, it is not desirable to impose difficult conditions on people who wish to construct dams, but we do understand that it is necessary to impose some measure of control. Reports are filtering through about a large number of dams fracturing in the wet season. On my understanding of the Bill, if dams are constructed in an area where they may endanger life or property, they become referable if they are over a certain capacity. If they are in isolated areas of Queensland where there is no possible chance of damage to life or property should they fracture in the wet season—and that, naturally, is the only time this damage is likely to occur—it will not be necessary to go into any great detail with departmental officers to obtain authority to proceed with construction. In localities where

there is definite danger it is essential that construction be supervised by people with the necessary capacity.

When discussing the merits and demerits of this measure, many Government members were inclined to be very concerned that conditions could be imposed on applicants which would be difficult to comply with. In all construction work these days, particularly in rural areas, it is esential to curtail costs as much as possible. It is not desirable—indeed, it is unnecessary—for a person with engineering qualifications to stand by and supervise the construction of certain dams.

As I understand it, I have referred to the main terms and provisions in the Bill. It covers many other minor administrative matters, but I believe I shall have an opportunity at the second-reading stage, after I have examined the Bill, to make further comments.

Members of the Minister's committee were so concerned that they insisted on examining regulations controlling the measures within the Bill before they were promulgated to ensure that a practical approach was adopted by departmental officers.

Mr. AHERN (Landsborough) (4.35 p.m.): This measure will provide for the inspection and continuing surveillance of large dams. That is the major thrust of the amendment introduced by the Minister. As a member of his committee who has been very largely associated with the legislation, I desire to support it.

The facts are, as has been outlined by the Minister, that one dam in 23 out of 10,000 dams that have been surveyed throughout the world has been found to contain serious faults about which concern is held for the safety of the public. In fact, of the 10,000 surveyed by international commissions, one in 70 has failed, some with disastrous results.

This legislation is the result of investigations by international commissions and a national commission appointed in Australia. The Minister spoke about ANCOLD—the Australian National Committee on Large Dams—which has been in operation for some time. The Premier gave an undertaking to that committee that we would honour our commitment on increasing safety standards for large dams constructed in Queensland. The committee's report suggested that an authority should be established to supervise dams from the planning stage through to construction, maintenance and operation and then to abandonment.

It seemed reasonable that the authority should be vested in the Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply, which is what the amending legislation does. The authority will be established under the Act and from now on all new dams will be subject to the scrutiny of experienced and qualified engineers. The commissioner will have the authority to supervise the effect on public safety of those referable dams presently in existence. I believe this to be a very worthwhile piece of legislation and one that should be welcomed by the Committee.

The Minister has indicated also that an advisory committee will be established. That, too, is welcomed. This legislation is overdue, and I am pleased that we are responding to the ANCOLD recommendations by its introduction. Supervision is required particularly here in South-east Queensland, where our water resources are becoming more and more committed for public use in one form or another. Most of them will be committed for urban use in the future. As urbanisation expands rapidly, public safety considerations will be more and more important as water resources in South-east Queensland are exploited.

It is important from the point of view of safety that the commissioner have wide powers over dams such as the Somerset Dam. After all, we in this Parliament could be drowned if some foolish action were taken or if sufficient surveillance to ensure public safety were not carried out. Hence, the commissioner will be vested with these powers over referable dams. He will also have the power to define as referable dams that are not so defined. As there may well be some small dams constructed that could be a hazard to a small township, that is a good idea. Under this Bill, the commissioner will have the power of overriding surveillance and power to inspect and advise the authority that has direct control over that dam in relation to public safety.

Concern could be expressed by some people at the impact this will have on farm dams. It is a subject for concern and we on the Minister's committee have given it detailed consideration. All dams on watercourses have to be permitted by the Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply and it would appear on the statistics available that fewer than 10 per cent—probably as few as 5 per cent—of farm dams will be referable dams, so it will be a subject of small concern to the farming community. This is probably very good, too.

I am not sure whether the Minister mentioned it, but the commissioner will have power to issue exemptions from the conditions of the legisation. I think this is a very worth-while move. If a dam is constructed, say, 50 miles from Isisford, the fact that it might be a referable dam will not submit the landowner to the great expense associated with preparing plans and specifications and constructing the dam under supervision, because it will not be a hazard to anybody. The legislation does not envisage that and I know that it will not be implemented that way. The commissioner will be given flexibility in the operation of the provision so that it actually controls public safety measures and is not a nuisance to people whose situation is of very little concern anyway. There is no real cause for concern in this

regard. We have gone to a great deal of trouble to see that the power to exempt is provided for.

Some eyebrows might be raised at the right-of-appeal provisions which the Minister outlined in his introduction. The right of appeal on referable dams would not be relevant to this because the right of appeal is to the Land Court. When an application is made to construct an ordinary dam, persons who might be affected have the right of appeal to the Land Court against the decision of the Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply. We do not believe that an appeal to the Land Court on public safety provisions would be desirable. I do not feel that the Land Court would be a court of competent jurisdiction to decide whether an order made by the commissioner is necessary or not. Those provisions have been excluded from orders on referable dams. I think it is right and proper that this proposal be included. It is the major matter before the Committee.

While this Act is being amended, the opportunity is being taken to consider other matters. The opportunity has been taken to restrict the as-of-use right of landholders to apply under section 63 of the Act for permission to put down a sub-artesian bore for domestic use. A person has only to make application and it will be granted. However, in several areas the aquifers are becoming fully committed. When an aquifer is overcommitted, there can be undesirable results. There could be an intrusion of salt water, and the position of other landholders in the area could be prejudiced. It is now proposed that, in areas that are declared by the Governor in Council, application will have to be made to the commission for permission, and that permission can be refused. I think it is proper that in such problem areas this power be given to the commissioner under the Act.

We have taken the opportunity also to restrict the rights of certain riparian landholders who, under section 9 of the Act, may, as of right, apply to the Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply for the right to pump a certain amount of water. Under the Act at present, that amount is defined as enough to irrigate three acres of fruit and vegetables for a person's own use but not for sale. This right has, in one or two cases, been abused. There has been an application by riparian landholders engaged in a lot-feeding enterprise, and this could lead to a situation in which a licence would be given as of right for the consumption of a quantity of water sufficient to irrigate 30 acres the year round. Obviously the "as of right" provisions have to be restricted in some way when one considers what is happening in small subdivisions in many areas right along the coastline. In the area of the honourable member for Somerset is the specific case that is causing concern at present. In this day and age, a restriction to three-quarters of an acre for fruit and vegetables for a person's own use is reasonable, and I do not think that any members will object to it.

With today's increased use of irrigation and the greater demands being made on natural water resources, which are quite finite, it is necessary to restrict the exploitation of the run-off, particularly from small streams. Today, they can very easily be overcommitted, and we are forced to give the commissioner extra powers to restrict landholders in their use of water. The output of modern pumps is so much greater than those designed say, 10 years ago, that the situation has been of increasing concern.

The Bill also validates certain actions in the transfer of debentures from the Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply acting as a board, as he is empowered to do under the Act. At a later date in construction, he can transfer such commitment to water boards throughout Queensland, and the Bill provides for that to be done with greater ease than, on legal advice, can be done at the present time.

The Bill also provides further rights of objection to landholders, and it extends the area downstream from five to 15 miles. I think that this is valid in the light of my previous statements about smaller streams, in particular, becoming more and more overcommitted. There are a couple of streams that are of special concern.

The Bill provides for the setting up of a dam-surveillance authority. It is of overriding importance, and I believe that it will be a very necessary public authority in this State. It will provide the commissioner with powers that will become more and more necessary, particularly in South-east Queensland.

Mr. HARTWIG (Callide) (4.50 p.m.): In offering my comments on the Bill, let me say first, as a member of this Assembly and a member of the Government, what a wonderful job the Minister and his department have done in the creation of water supplies and in the conservation of water in large dams throughout Queensland. Indeed, it was not until a National-Liberal Government came to power that any positive steps were taken to conserve water in this great State. Dams such as the Wuruma Dam near Abercorn, the Fairbairn Dam at Emerald, the Glebe Weir at Theodore, the Monduran Dam, the Callide Dam, the Awoonga Dam, and, in the pipeline, the Cania Dam, come to mind. These are all in Central Queensland, and the people in that area are grateful to the Minister and the Government for providing assured water supplies, thus affording relief to that somewhat dry part of Queensland.

Over the years, of course, droughts have lasted longer than good seasons. On my property I had surface water on one frontage, and I saw water-holes that had never before gone dry emptied by excessive pumping of the watercourse upstream from my

property. When I first went there in 1937, there were water-holes the best part of a mile long and 20 ft. deep. Within 10 years I saw the bottom of those water-holes, and they became a threat to weak cattle. That was caused by over-pumping of the watercourse by people who did not respect the requirements of others along the creek.

Apart from controlling excessive use, the Bill also extends the distance within which people may object. I wonder why the Minister has stuck to a distance of 8 kilometres upsteam and increased to 24 kilometres the distance downstream within which people may object. My knowledge and experience show me that it is the people upstream of a particular water supply who do the damage. If they cut off the underground water supply, the creek soon goes dry. I should like to see the position reversed. I think that the distance should be 24 kilometres upstream and 8 kilometres downstream.

The State Government, through the Minister, has devised various water schemes to serve properties throughout the State in areas in which it has not been possible to obtain either underground or surface water. In my electorate, for example, there is the Grevillea water scheme that serves the Lawgi Plateau. The people in that area would not be in business today if the Government had not created water boards. I am pleased to see that the 6 per cent interest payable on water-board loans has been reduced. The boards often have to borrow money, and if they have a surplus at any time they will be able to invest the money at the best available rate of interest.

I commend the provision for a means of control of possible excessive use of water, without depriving genuine cases of the right to sufficient underground water for domestic use. It is very important that that water be available. Many people depend on watercourses for their stock. We should not prevent people from using water from creeks for their stock. They might need to pump and reticulate it to back paddocks up to 2 or 3 miles from the watercourse. The size of the pumps can be regulated. I notice that the Bill does not deprive stockowners of the use of the water for that purpose.

I notice that a single control authority in each State is responsible for the implementation of legislation and regulations for the design, construction, operation and maintenance of all dams and reserves defined as referable dams. It is rather surprising to me that at this stage we should be talking about the design of engineers. I have been associated with the construction of dams in my area. I was always of the opinion that unless dams were approved by the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply and constructed under supervision, they would not be allowed to be built. I cannot quite follow why we should have to do something about that aspect of it now. I should hate to think that, after spending $35,000,000-odd on the Fairbairn Dam, it might be suggested that we had not taken advantage of the best engineering brains or that it had not been constructed under the best supervision in the State. I should like to know why it is stipulated that the design and everything else must be under the strict supervision of qualified engineers. Every dam that has been built in Queensland over the last few years looks pretty good to me.

I should like to comment on the proposed Wivenhoe Dam. Water storage is a wonderful thing and it has helped Queensland greatly, but it riles me when I see some of the best land in the State being covered by dam waters. I refer particularly to the Brisbane River country. It it some of the best cattle country in the State.

I have been talking about qualified engineers designing dams. I have nothing against their designing a dam, but it is the location of the dam that concerns me. When I see a dam located in an area where the water will cover some of the best fattening country in the State—land that will fatten a bullock to the acre—I become greatly concerned. We have the engineers and technicians to build good dams. We saw that at Wuruma and Fairbairn—two magnificent structures that impound a tremendous amount of water. The Fairbairn Dam is the greatest water conservation dam in Queensland, storing over 1,000,000 acre-feet of water. At this time we are importing into Australia more canned and frozen vegetables than ever before. It is a sad state of affairs. We spend millions of dollars on a facility to conserve water for irrigation purposes, but somewhere along the line we seem to break down. Whether it is because we do not have the know-how or do not reward our producers sufficiently to induce them to produce food, I do not know. The fact remains that Australia is being flooded with such imports. In fact, today the South Australian Premier (Mr. Dunstan) objected to the importation of thousands of tons of potatoes into his State.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! The level of conversation in the Chamber is continually rising. I ask honourable members to allow the member for Callide to be heard in silence.

Mr. HARTWIG: Thank you, Mr. Row. Recently I was advised that in the seven-month period from July 1973 to January 1974 Australia imported 5,000,000 kilograms of canned and frozen vegetables, and that in the same period 12 months later, that is, from July 1974 to January 1975, the imports rose to 21,000,000 kilograms. This represents an increase of 16,000,000 kilograms.

Perhaps the cause of all this is that the Australian Government's policies have forced farmers off their properties. The primary producers have to contend not only with inflation and high costs but also with the

loss of income tax concessions, and so on. They are given no incentive whatever to produce. The tragedy of it all is that, instead of staying on the land, the people are leaving it.

Mr. Frawley: The Commonwealth Government is trying to break the farmers.

Mr. HARTWIG: It has certainly broken the spirit of many farmers.

A fact that causes grave concern is that the majority of landholders are over the age of 50 years. It is bad enough when parents leave the land; it is worse when their children go with them. Farmers cannot be created overnight.

An Opposition Member: I have never seen you looking so well.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The conversation in the Chamber is far too loud.

Mr. HARTWIG: A man can become a doctor after five years of study at medical school; a farmer is made only after a lifetime of experience. A man cannot be taken off Queen Street, put on a block of land, and be expected to make a success of it.

An Opposition Member: Are you a Queen Street farmer?

Mr. HARTWIG: Opposition members would not know.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I trust that the interjections will be reasonable and will be directed through the Chair.

Mr. HARTWIG: Thank you again, Mr. Row. As I say, it takes a lifetime of knowledge to become a farmer. We must ensure that we have the farmers who can use the water provided by the Fairbairn Dam and other irrigation projects to produce the goods.

The Minister has been very active in my electorate. He is about to implement a reticulation scheme, under Stage II of the Callide Dam project, to Grevillea Creek. In fact I saw the pipes last Sunday.

Honourable Members interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! Honourable members will cease cross-firing in the Chamber.

Mr. HARTWIG: We look forward to the placing on the Callide Dam of flood-gates that will double its capacity. A tremendous amount of irrigation is carried out in the Callide Valley. A large volume of water is pumped from underground sources and the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply has to keep an eye on the underground water levels. Good seasons have raised the water level considerably. I trust that before the next drought occurs in the Callide Valley the reticulation scheme from the Callide Dam will be implemented.

Mr. FRAWLEY (Murrumba) (5.6 p.m.): I enter the debate only to give the honourable member for Bundaberg information about Somerset Dam. He challenged me to make a statement about it and I intend to do so.

Mr. Jensen interjected.

Mr. FRAWLEY: This debate allows us to range far and wide, from Somerset Dam, to Kilcoy, to Woodford and back to the North Pine Dam, and I intend to do that.

This measure is not before time. In fact greater control of dams has been needed in Queensland for many years. A perfect example of the need for control was found in the actions of the Lord Mayor in January 1974, when he ordered the flood-gates closed on Somerset Dam and flooded Kilcoy—he cut Kilcoy off—and towns 20 miles away, as far back as Woodford.

Mr. Alison: He's a crook.

Mr. FRAWLEY: Of course he is. I have said that on more than one occasion.

When Somerset Dam was completed, it was decided that the water-storage level would be 315 ft. above sea level and it was built mainly as a flood-mitigation measure. One-quarter of the storage capacity was reserved for water storage and three-quarters was to be available for flood mitigation. In 1965, when the Brisbane City Council proposed to raise the level of the dam by 10 ft. (to 325 ft. above sea level), a group of farmers in Woodford, Kilcoy and Neurum issued a writ on the Brisbane City Council to make it raise the level of bridges in the area because they knew that some day they would be flooded by the waters of Somerset Dam backing up. On 29 January 1974 all their fears were realised. Thanks to the decision of the Lord Mayor to close the flood-gates, a great deal of inconvenience was caused to the people of Kilcoy, Woodford and Neurum. We are all aware of the disastrous flooding in Brisbane in January-February 1974. We know that heavy financial losses were suffered by the people. We are also aware of the prompt, unstinting aid given to the people by the Government.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I am also aware that, during the flood, when people were trying to find the honourable member for Archerfield they could not do so because he had crawled into a big funk-hole that he dug. The Minister for Community and Welfare Services had to look after his electorate.

Mr. Marginson: You have said that six times.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I will say it a further six times. In the next election I may even go to Archerfield to campaign and tell the people there the truth.

On Friday, 25 January 1974, the level of the water in Somerset Dam rose rapidly to 340 ft. It was supposed to be held at 325 ft., but the Lord Mayor kept it at 340 ft. I do not know why he did that unless it was to give some of the people in Brisbane the right to use a water sprinkler. The water level then rose to 350 ft. The accepted flood level was supposed to be 343 ft. The back-up water from the dam caused flooding at a place known as Marysmokes Creek. For the benefit of members of the Opposition, Marysmokes Creek is on the border between the electorates of Murrumba and Somerset. It is on the D'Aguilar Highway between Woodford and Kilcoy. When I refer to Marysmokes Creek honourable members opposite will know exactly where it is.

Mr. Marginson interjected.

Mr. FRAWLEY: The honourable member for Wolston would not even know where it is.

The town of Kilcoy was isolated when the water level rose 14 ft. above the bridge at Marysmokes Creek.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! There is far too much frivolity on my left.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I thank you, Mr. Row. I place myself under your protection against some of the unnecessary interjections by Opposition members.

This was a serious situation. Farmers lost thousands of gallons of milk simply because the Lord Mayor, a member of the Australian Labor Party, a man who is supposed to stand for the working man, caused a great deal of hardship because he did not give a hoot for the farmers. And why would he? He would not get a vote out there. If he went to Dayboro, they would string him from the highest tree.

Mr. Gunn interjected.

Mr. FRAWLEY: Of course they don't get a vote.

Mr. Jensen interjected.

Mr. FRAWLEY: What a lot of rubbish.

I have the exact figures here. 29,930 gallons of milk, worth $12,000 to the farmers, was lost through the inability of tanker drivers to reach Kilcoy to collect milk for the Caboolture co-operative factory.

I contend that the situation in Kilcoy and the surrounding district was created by the unnecessary action of the Lord Mayor. If we had more control over the Somerset Dam—and we should have more control over the North Pine Dam, too—such situations would not occur.

An Opposition Member: You've lost your place.

Mr. FRAWLEY: No I haven't. I don't read Trades Hall briefs as some members opposite do, like parrots.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! The member will address the Chair.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I prepare my own. The honourable member is a Trades Hall parrot who reads his brief every day. Some days they give him the wrong brief in the shuffle. Honourable members will notice the way he stumbles over the words.

The level of the Somerset Dam reached 350 ft. above sea level though it was recognised that it should have been kept at 343 ft. If the water had been kept at a reasonable level of 340 to 343 ft.—the Marysmokes Creek bridge is 336 ft. above sea level—the water would have receded fairly quickly.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: I'll give you an interjection. How is your water level?

Mr. FRAWLEY: Judging by the honourable member's stomach, my water level is a lot lower than his.

Had the Somerset Dam been kept at 336 ft. above sea level, the water would have cleared from Marysmokes Creek bridge much more quickly and the enormous damage suffered by the D'Aguilar Highway would not have occurred.

The Water Act should give more control over not only future dams and small dams but also some of the big ones in our area. I suggest that the water level at Somerset Dam should be kept to the acceptable level of 325 ft. above sea level at all times so that it can be used for its rightful purpose of flood mitigation.

Mr. Gunn: There would be enough water for Brisbane.

Mr. FRAWLEY: Of course there would. There would be enough water for Brisbane and Ipswich for many years.

The control of the water in the Somerset Dam and the North Pine Dam should be taken from the Brisbane City Council. If my colleague the honourable member for Pine Rivers were here, he would corroborate that statement.

Mr. Jensen: He is a better speaker than you are.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The Chair will tolerate only a limited number of frivolous interjections.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I acknowledge that the member for Pine Rivers is a brilliant speaker.

On 15 September 1972 the Deputy Mayor of Brisbane (Ald. Bryan Walsh) said that he wished the Brisbane City Council could wash its hands of the North Pine Dam. He said that only because I have got up and

belted hell out of the council over its dealings with people in land resumption for the North Pine Dam. Some of the transactions when people were forced out of their homes for ridiculous prices for their rich lands constituted downright robbery and thievery. Land in the Samsonvale Valley will be inundated by the waters of the North Pine Dam. The farmers realise this. People in the North Pine areas of Samsonvale and Dayboro accept that progress cannot be denied. They do not begrudge the people of Brisbane and surrounding areas their water. They are prepared to allow their rich, fertile lands to be inundated, but they expect a reasonable price.

Had this Government not handed over control of the resumption of land for the North Pine Dam to the Brisbane City Council, the people in those areas would have received a far better deal. The Wivenhoe Dam resumptions bear out that contention.

Mr. Casey: Wasn't the land resumed under the provisions of the Acquisition of Land Act?

Mr. Jensen interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I will tolerate only one interjection at a time.

Mr. FRAWLEY: Yes, the land was resumed under the Acquisition of Land Act. As is well known, valuers of the Brisbane City Council valued the land at a certain figure and the people who owned it wanted more. They wrote to the Brisbane City Council asking for its payment and indicating they would negotiate about the difference or go to court. Under the Acquisition of Land Act that money should have been paid within 90 days. It never was. People who were willing to accept the amount offered and negotiate for the difference were denied the use of the money. They still did not get it under the Acquisition of Land Act. I have raised this matter in this Chamber on more than one occasion.

Mr. Casey: Surely the Brisbane City Council could have been prosecuted under the Act.

Mr. FRAWLEY: It was not prosecuted under the Act.

It cost people as much as $3,000 to go to court. Of six cases that went to court in which I took an interest, with one exception the court gave a higher valuation than the Brisbane City Council had offered. I instanced the case of a Miss Bell, who was a spinster living in that area. She was offered, I think, $39,000 for her land and she wanted $60,000. The Brisbane City Council valuer met her outside the door of the Land Court and said, "We will up our offer by $5,000." When he was asked in court why he had increased the offer by $5,000 he said, "That was always my valuation but I was instructed by the Brisbane City Council to offer less." That was a shocking example of trying to rob an old lady of her heritage. The court awarded her $50,000 so it was well worth her spending $3,000 to get an extra $13,000. With one exception, everybody who went to court was awarded a higher valuation than had been offered. In the other case the court valuation was the same. It was a small amount of about $10,000 or $15,000.

Mr. Casey interjected.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I do not want to talk about railway resumptions.

I shall now deal with dams that supply water to another local authority area. The North Pine Dam is in the Pine Rivers Shire. Water from that dam is supplied to the Redcliffe City Council and the water for Deception Bay is taken from the trunk line leading to Redcliffe. Deception Bay is in the shire of Caboolture and the Caboolture Shire Council pays the Redcliffe City Council for that water and, in turn, the Redcliffe City Council pays the Pine Rivers Shire Council. An additional 1,250,000 gallons of water is taken under the Hornibrook Highway from the Brisbane City Council reservoir at Bracken Ridge. The Redcliffe City Council has been well treated by the Pine Rivers Shire Council. All the dealings between them have not caused any problems. At present, the water for Redcliffe comes from Lake Kurwongbah Dam, which is in the Pine Rivers Shire.

Mr. Casey interjected.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I agree with the honourable member for Mackay. I am in favour of a water board to control all of this water, particularly when a shire or city obtains water from a dam situated outside its boundaries. Redcliffe has no fresh water supply of its own. It has plenty of salt water, but its fresh water supply is negligible. Several bores have been sunk in various years in Redcliffe, but an acceptable water supply has never been found. The bore water is rather brackish and, although it is fit for human consumption, it is not pleasant to drink.

The control of the North Pine Dam should be taken from the Brisbane City Council and given to a water board. I do not intend to waste the time of the Committee. I have not wasted any so far. I have made a reasonable contribution and I hope that I have enlightened the honourable member for Bundaberg on Somerset Dam. His ignorance about it is absolutely appalling.

I commend the Minister on introducing this Bill. I hope it goes further and takes from the Brisbane City Council control of any dam.

Motion (Mr. Hewitt) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

RURAL FIRES ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. W. D. Hewitt, Chatsworth, in the chair)

Hon. A. M. HODGES (Gympie—Leader of the House) (5.21 p.m.): I move—

"That a Bill be introduced to amend the Rural Fires Act 1946-1973 in certain particulars."

The Bill is aimed primarily at correcting anomalies or covering changes which legal opinion and experience have indicated are necessary for the proper implementation of the Act.

Section 13 of the Act, which is probably the most important and certainly the most used section, is being amended by the Bill to establish clearly—

(i) which fires come within its provisions;

(ii) the powers of the board to make regulations governing the use of fire in the sugar cane industry;

(iii) the authority of an inspector of the board to arbitrate, where necessary, if dispute arises over permits to burn; and

(iv) facilitating burning where adjoining properties are owned by absentee landlords.

It is obvious that the provisions should not apply to those types of fires which are properly household fires, or to the types of fires covered by other sections of the Act. It is equally clear that the burning requirements within the cane industry require specific provisions which will allow burning to achieve the objects of the exercise within a framework of reasonable safety. It is proposed in another clause of the Bill (clause 4) to allow an extension of the present limits on board membership, and it is anticipated that the cane industry will be invited to be represented on the board.

Absentee landholders cause considerable troubles in rural areas both in regard to normal burning within the Act and in fire hazards. A landholder living on and working his property should not be unduly restricted in his burning programme because the neighbouring property is owned by someone in another State. Safeguards are already existing through the permit provisions, and the amendment facilitates burning within the law.

Some attention has been given to the operations of sawmills both by definition and by reference to the stacking and storage of timber—in other words, fire safety within the mill.

The authority of rural fires inspectors has been specifically defined both in respect of issue of permits mentioned above and in taking control of fire operations.

It is proposed to increase the penalties under the Act. The normal penalty will rise from a maximum of $200 to $400, and in emergency periods from $400 to $800. The additional terms of imprisonment (six months and twelve months respectively) are unchanged. It is pointed out that the penalties under the Act have not been altered since 1955, and bear little relationship to today's values. There is no proposal to introduce a minimum penalty under the Act, but undoubtedly the maximum figure comes into consideration when a reasonable fine is being considered.

The remaining clauses are procedural and machinery amendments. They include the declaration of rural fire districts by notification instead of Order in Council; the extension of the authority of a forest officer at a fire to a distance of three kilometres from his reserve; clarifying the position re permits for fireworks; and permitting the board to dispose of material removed from a fire-hazardous area subsequent to a refusal of the occupier to comply with an order.

I commend the Bill for favourable consideration.

Mr. JENSEN (Bundaberg) (5.25 p.m.): The Minister said that the Bill makes only certain minor amendments to the Act, and that they are designed mainly to effect changes that legal opinion and experience have indicated are necessary. I assume that that is correct.

The Minister referred to cane fires, or burning, in the sugar industry. I should like to know more about the powers of the board to make regulations governing the use of fires in the sugar industry. It is interesting to note that a representative of the cane-growers will be on the board, and that is very necessary when one remembers that regulations are to be made to control cane fires.

Although certain regulations are in force at the moment, additional ones are needed. When people burn indiscriminately or fail to take notice of the cane-firing forecasts that are issued each day to the sugar industry, another person's cane may be burnt. In fact, incidents of that type occur almost every day of the week in sugar-growing areas of the State.

I think that the proposal to allow burning on properties adjoining those owned by absentee landowners is quite sound. In some instances it is impossible to defer the burning until absentee landowners are contacted. A serious situation may arise and it may be necessary to burn certain areas to save the crops in other areas. In circumstances such as that, one cannot worry about absentee landowners.

The amendments proposed appear to be only minor ones. Although the Opposition may have to consider some of them more carefully when the Bill is printed, at the moment it agrees to them.

Mr. HANSON (Port Curtis) (5.28 p.m.): In recent times, the defined areas of responsibility of inspectors under the provisions of the Rural Fires Act have been a matter

of grave disputation. Unfortunately, antagonism has been created and, at times, considerable dissension has arisen in rural areas about the administrative powers of people filling the role of inspectors and acting more or less as supervisors and other people in authority who administer the provisions of the Act. Much of that has been created by the inspectors themselves, some of whom, because they have a small title bestowed upon them, assume a Napoleonic type of attitude and strut the stage and cause considerable anxiety to people performing their ordinary daily chores.

It is high time that the Act was amended to define clearly the authority of inspectors. Although certain individuals may find it difficult to stomach such a change, I hope that, in the interests of the service, they will be told bluntly and plainly what the aims of the Legislature and the Minister are, so that they will deal amicably with people in rural areas. It is very refreshing to see the provisions that the Minister has proposed relative to the making of regulations governing the use of fire in the sugar industry.

Many of my relatives were engaged in the sugar industry in years gone by. They came from the Old Country to face the onerous task of working in the cane fields. They cut significant tonnages of green cane and loaded it onto trucks. Naturally they suffered considerable privation and hardship. To their credit they joined a very fine body within the union movement—the Australian Workers' Association which eventually became part and parcel of the Australian Workers' Union. Much of the early union movement in this State sprang up in the cane fields. A great camaraderie and spirit of unionism prevailed in the cane fields. Many of those working in the cane fields in those early days were eventually able to acquire farms of their own.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Unfortunately this has nothing to do with rural fires. I ask the honourable member to come back to them.

Mr. HANSON: Very much so, with due respect. In those days, as members of the sugar industry here will know, unfortunately there were people who were referred to as "fire sticks". A very grave penalty was imposed on anyone who was caught lighting up a cane field. Of course, there were accidental fires.

Mr. Casey: A former National Party Minister in this House was known by the nickname "Firestick".

Mr. HANSON: May the Lord bless his soul! I say it quite frankly and openly: I knew him as a gentleman. He worked in the same cane field——

The CHAIRMAN: Order! With the greatest tolerance in the world I am not allowing any dodge like that. The honourable member will get back to the Bill.

Mr. HANSON: As common sense has come into play over the years, as legislation has been improved and as new techniques have been developed—and the sugar industry has always been to the fore with new techniques—we have formulated this very adequate provision covering the burning of cane, and I am very happy about it. Naturally from time to time in country areas there is grave concern on neighbouring farms when cane is fired. Without the permission of the Rural Fires Board some people decide to put the "red steer" through their cane and consequently cause considerable damage on the properties of neighbours. When a strong south-easterly or westerly wind is blowing, a fire can easily spread into a neighbour's paddock.

It is good to realise that provision has been made for a representative of the sugar industry to be a member of the Rural Fires Board. This is something that has been desired by the Cane Growers' Council for many years. Requests for this representation have fallen on deaf ears even though this is the Government that says it is on the side of the rural producer and is the great friend of the man in the sugar industry. Finally the Government has got the message, largely because of the pleadings of members of the Opposition and people in the sugar industry with good Labor thoughts who have said, "It is about time you got a little bit of common sense." Common sense has finally prevailed.

I wish to look very carefully at the provision mentioned by the Minister which gives authority to an inspector of the board to arbitrate if a dispute arises over permits. It is a very touchy provision and one that will receive the very close scrutiny of the committee headed by the honourable member for Bundaberg, a man who is well versed in the sugar industry. The honourable member is well qualified. He is a technologist in the industry and a man of very high standing and qualifications.

It is high time something was done about the absentee-landlord provisions. While talking about rural fires I will give the Government some food for thought. I can take Government members to a rural area where a fire could easily occur, and if it did there could be wholesale tragedy. This is a matter that concerns not only the Minister responsible for the Rural Fires Board but also the Minister for Health. I am referring to a certain rural area in this State where three deserted farm houses are used for the storage of dynamite. It is indeed an explosive situation! I doubt whether the doors on the buildings have keys. Any criminal who wished to break and enter the houses and steal the dynamite would have an open go.

But the Government has turned a blind eye to this situation simply because certain persons in authority have not got the guts to enforce the provisions of the Rural Fires Act. They have no stomach whatever.

Mr. Katter interjected.

Mr. HANSON: There is no point in the verbose member for Flinders interjecting. He is here only because his dear daddy stood over the mob at the selection tribunal. However, that is by the way, and this is a very serious matter.

I intend to reveal in private to the Minister concerned the location of these three houses. For obvious reasons I will not divulge it in the Chamber. It is not that I mistrust Government members—apart from their political affiliations I have the greatest respect for them all—but if this matter were highlighted in the Press wholesale tragedy could result. This situation has existed for a lengthy period, yet the Government has turned a deaf ear towards it. I hope that I have got my message across.

I turn now to fire safety in sawmills. It is unfortunate that in recent years the numbers of sawmills in the State have been depleted. Many sawmills have gone out of business. In my area, however, there is one of the most modern sawmills in Australia. It has been constructed by a consortium of small millers with expertise in the industry. I have no doubt whatever that they have adopted a responsible attitude and taken adequate precautions to prevent the outbreak of fire at that mill.

Unfortunately, owing to the economic decline that has occurred since this Government came into office——

Mr. Alison: Yes, this Federal Government.

Mr. HANSON: The honourable member for Maryborough interjects. Since this State Government has been in office and since he has represented the Maryborough area, the number of licensed sawmills there has decreased sharply. If the people in Maryborough are not aware of that fact, I shall certainly acquaint them with it in the next election campaign. It is a disgrace, and it is a pity that the honourable member has not dedicated himself to the interests of his electors.

As I said initially, we do not wish to see inspectors in Napoleonic garb patrolling the State inflicting unnecessary provisions on people or going outside the provisions and telling them what they should or should not do. Common sense must prevail in the implementation of the provisions of this measure so that the State of Queensland as a whole will benefit from it.

Mr. GUNN (Somerset) (5.39 p.m.): As a member of the Minister's committee I commend this Bill as one of some importance, particularly to country people. It embodies 26 amendments to the Act and therefore should not be treated lightly. The Minister's committee first began to discuss the proposed amendments prior to the recent election. It is only now that we have come up with what we regard as satisfactory amendments to the Act.

The importance of the rural fires boards scattered throughout Queensland becomes obvious now that the countryside is heavily grassed. All of Queensland is divided into rural fires districts. The important districts are the fire wardens' districts that are already gazetted by the much simpler notification method. The amendment merely obviates unnecessary procedures.

In the past there has been a great deal of confusion. We are clarifying the making of regulations for the variation-of-notice provisions relative to burning, including trash and tops, etc., because trash and tops are not mentioned in the existing legislation. At present, section 13 gives authority for the making of regulations in respect of preharvest burning, but not the burning of trash and tops. Regulation 29, which grants a concession concerning trash and tops, is actually ultra vires the Act.

The only thing that I see against the Rural Fires Act is the inability to get a conviction under it. It is virtually impossible to do so. One requires a lot of evidence and it is almost necessary to actually see a person dropping a match. At various party meetings I drew attention to the fact that very few convictions had been entered.

I am disappointed that the legislation does not bind the Crown. Anybody on the land knows what damage can be done by fires, but quite a number of fires are caused by the Crown and semi-governmental authorities, which are also exempt. I know that under the Rural Fires Act a small committee regulates this but I believe that the Crown should be bound in the same way as landowners. I am sure that binding the Crown would go a long way to remedying a situation that has caused a great deal of concern in country areas.

I am pleased that penalties have been increased. At present they are of no great consequence. A person may be brought before a court and fined a couple of hundred dollars, but, by the same token, a man with a match can cause thousands of dollars damage to neighbouring properties. While it may be said that in such cases we have redress in common law, it often costs a lot of money to take action in court. And what happens if the person concerned has no money? It does not give much satisfaction to send him to gaol, even if that could be done.

I appreciate the job that fire wardens are doing in various areas, but to a certain extent their hands are tied. Because I cannot see any way around it, I do not blame the Minister. It is very hard to get a conviction against a person. That is the only fault I can find in the amendments. I commend them, believing that they are absolutely necessary because this year could be the busiest year for rural fires authorities. No-one has to go far into rural areas to see the strong growth of grass. Some of the fiercest fires have occurred in bushland surrounding

Brisbane. It is ironic that some of the heaviest bushland is within a few miles of the G.P.O.

I do not intend to speak further at this stage, but shall probably take part in the second-reading debate. I commend the measure to honourable members.

Hon. A. M. HODGES (Gympie—Leader of the House) (5.44 p.m.), in reply: As I introduced this measure on behalf of a Minister who is away on parliamentary business at the moment, I have had a note taken of the points raised, especially the emotional explosion of the honourable member for Port Curtis. No doubt, in his reply at the second-reading stage, the Minister will dampen the honourable member's fears and fires, and I am sure that he will cover all other points raised.

Motion (Mr. Hodges) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

LAND ACT AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. W. D. Hewitt, Chatsworth, in the chair)

Hon. A. M. HODGES (Gympie—Leader of the House) (5.47 p.m.): On behalf of the Minister for Lands, Forestry, National Parks and Wildlife Service, I move—

> "That a Bill be introduced to amend the Land Act 1962-1974 in certain particulars and the Forestry Act 1959-1974 in a certain particular."

This Bill is being introduced primarly to initiate a new concept of conversion of grazing selections to a grazing homestead perpetual lease tenure. Opportunity has been taken to include minor adjustments considered essential and to relate similar entitlements as to leave and pensions held by industrial commissioners to members of the Land Court.

After the passing of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act Amendment Act 1974, it became evident that, although salary basis was the same, the parity that previously existed between Land Court members and industrial commissioners in relation to leave of absence and pension entitlements had disappeared to the disadvantage of Land Court members.

The amendment Act mentioned equates an industrial commissioner's leave of absence to those of a District Courts judge and to those of a fairly recently appointed Supreme Court judge and enables a commissioner to become entitled to a non-contributory pension with certain rights in respect of any contributions made to the State Service Superannuation Fund.

In the interest of uniformity and in order to attract suitably qualified appointees to the bench of the Land Court, the proposed amendment restores the parity previously existing between industrial commissioners and Land Court members and in addition preserves the rights of existing court members in respect of accrued leave of absence already due to members who have been in office more than 10 years.

Members of the Land Court in office at the passing of this Bill who elect to remain contributors to the State Service Superannuation Fund will remain entitled to take leave of absence as prescribed by section 3 of the Supreme Court Acts Amendment Act of 1944, namely 12 months after 10 years' completed service and one and one-fifth months for every further year of service. There will be no restriction as to when such leave can be taken. It will make no difference whether such service was before or after the passing of the Bill.

Members at the passing of the Bill who take a non-contributory pension will be entitled to leave of absence as prescribed by section 15 (1) of the Judges Pensions Act 1957-1974, namely six months after seven years' completed service and six-sevenths of a month for every further year of service, and must take such leave within three years after completing any period of seven years' service unless the Governor in Council approves otherwise. This applies to service both before and after the passing of the Bill.

However, members who, at the passing of the Bill, take a non-contributory pension and have an accured entitlement in that they have served 10 or more years do not lose their accrued entitlement (that is, 12 months' leave for 10 years' service) but after the passing of the Bill their entitlement becomes six months after seven years' service.

Members appointed after the passing of the Bill will be entitled to leave of absence as prescribed by section 15 (1) of the Judges Pensions Act 1957–1974, namely, six months after seven years' service, and such leave must be taken within three years unless the Governor in Council otherwise approves.

Turning now to the amendments of the Act whereby lessees of grazing selections are to be given the choice of applying for conversion to freeholding tenure or a right to apply for conversion to a perpetual lease tenure, I make the following observations.

As distinct from pastoral lease zones further out, the process of settlement in grazing areas west of the 20 in. rainfall line is virtually complete. Within that area, there are no grazing selections which warrant further fragmentation; hence there is no reason to continue a policy of limiting such grazing selections to terms of 30 years.

The proposed new tenure, namely, grazing homestead perpetual lease, will be better

understood on the property market, will be welcomed by banks and brokers and will be better security for lending authorities.

Additionally, there will be a saving in administrative resources and costs involved in inspections, valuation, processing and recording normally associated with conversion or renewal of leases.

Grazing selections in other parts of the State will be eligible for similar conversion on the basis that the holding does not substantially exceed a living area.

Upon conversion to grazing homestead perpetual lease, all law and practice relating to timber, quarry material, rental, transfers, transmissions, mortgages, subleases and other encumbrances, maximum areas, development conditions, occupation and personal residence, agistment and fencing shall apply as if the grazing homestead perpetual lease were a grazing selection. This proposal is a major land tenure policy change and constitutes a significant modern approach to Crown land management in the State's grazing districts.

Minor amendments previously referred to concern—

(1) The authorisation of the Governor in Council to prescribe the interest rate to be charged on the balance of purchase price of land sold at auction for an estate in fee simple or special leases converted to freehold upon terms over a period up to 10 years;

(2) The competency of certain companies to hold leasehold land; and

(3) The limit of the amount of gross value of a deceased estate at which transmission by death may be entered without the expense involved in applying for grant of probate or administration.

In view of fluctuations in money values and the price the State is required to pay on its own borrowings, it is considered that interest charged on the type of freehold purchases mentioned should bear some relationship to the current price of money. It is proposed that the Governor in Council be authorised to prescribe such interest rates as may be necessary from time to time depending upon the prevailing economic climate. Interest rates on similar past contracts are fixed at 5 per cent and this proposed authority will not interfere with such interest rate.

Following agreement by the States of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, the Companies Act Amendment Act 1974 became law and section 27 thereof dealt with a new term, namely, "recognised company". Although section 27 of the Companies Act Amendment Act 1974 provides that "a recognised company shall have power to hold land in the State", opinion has been expressed that this power does not apply to leasehold land.

Where the Land Act merely provides that a company registered in Queensland under the Companies Act is competent to hold certain leasehold tenures, it is proposed to provide that a recognised company as defined in the Companies Act shall also have the same competency.

It is considered that a recognised company should not be disadvantaged should it desire to acquire or hold certain leasehold tenures under the Land Act which are capable of being acquired or held by a company registered under the Queensland Companies Act.

The Land Act presently provides for transmission by death of leasehold tenures to be entered in the records of the department without the expense entailed in applying for a grant of probate or grant of administration, provided the gross value of the estate does not exceed $12,000. This figure has stood since 1962. Inflationary trends, increased improvement costs and depreciation in money values since that time suggest that the figure should be increased to a more realistic level of $50,000. No loss of Crown revenue will occur as a result of this amendment, and a considerable saving of legal expenses will accrue to many more deceased estates.

Finally, an amendment to the Forestry Act is necessary by including the new tenure grazing homestead perpetual lease in the definition of "Crown holding" in that Act so that all forest products and quarry material will remain the property of the Crown as provided in section 45 of the Forestry Act.

I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER (Archerfield) (5.56 p.m.): The Opposition views with suspicion this legislation amending the Land Act. After the election of 7 December, we wondered how long it would be before the National Party put forward a Bill for the pay-off to the big companies for their help in that election campaign. I know, from personal experience in the West during that campaign, the extent of this assistance. In the electorates of Gregory and Belyando, there was no dearth of wealthy graziers and mining company representatives who made their aircraft available to take those who are now the honourable members for Gregory and Belyando round their electorates.

Mr. Lester: He's on the dole.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member for Belyando will contain himself a little.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: If that grazier is on the dole, it is because of the excessive use made of his aircraft by the honourable member for Belyando during the election campaign.

We have only to cast our minds back to December to remember the incursions of the National Party into city electorates.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! National Party incursions into city electorates have nothing whatever to do with the Land Act which is now under consideration. If the honourable member continues in this strain, he will not get very far with his speech.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: The present National Party——

Mr. FRAWLEY: I rise to a point of order. I draw your attention, Mr. Hewitt, to the fact that the honourable member is reading a prepared brief from the Trades Hall. He should be using notes.

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

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: The present National Party member for Wynnum, for example, who spent a massive amount of money in fighting for his seat and now finds himself in this Parliament——

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I have already warned the honourable member. He chooses to ignore my ruling, so he will now resume his seat.

Mr. AHERN (Landsborough) (5.58 p.m.): It is my intention to say a few words on the Bill, and I rise now for the specific purpose of keeping the debate going because there are a couple of National Party members who wish to take the opportunity of speaking to such an important amendment to the Land Act. I do not think it proper that, when such a Bill as this comes before the Parliament, some members should be deprived of the opportunity to debate the measure simply because of the events that have just happened so swiftly. I think the honourable members for Somerset, Cunningham and Hinchinbrook would like to say something about these important amendments to the Land Act.

The amendments that the Leader of the House has introduced on behalf of the Minister for Lands, who is attending an important conference in Canberra, have been detailed by him. They relate to certain pension entitlements of members of the Land Court. I think honourable members will see that those amendments are reasonable. They relate to the disadvantage that Land Court members have suffered compared with others in similar positions.

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

Mr. AHERN: Before dealing in a little more detail with some of the matters that I mentioned before the dinner recess, I wish to make some comment on the effort of the honourable member of the Opposition who endeavoured to address himself to the motion now before the Committee. A dreadful situation will arise in this Parliament if no-one on the Opposition benches rises to address himself to a matter of such importance as a Bill to amend the Land Act. Some of the great debates in the history of this Assembly have been on the Land Act.

Mr. Marginson interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope that the honourable member for Wolston is not reflecting on my ruling. I have power at my disposal, and I will not hesitate to use it.

Mr. Marginson interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member for Wolston will contain himself. If he wishes to reflect on the Chairman's ruling, let him do so, and then let him face my authority for doing it.

Mr. AHERN: I am sure that the honourable member's exuberance is affecting him, Mr. Hewitt.

As I said, some of the great debates in the history of this Assembly have been on the Land Act. It seems that the Government can now do virtually what it likes in amending the Land Act and the amendments are passed almost by default by the Opposition in this Chamber. I inform the Committee that I do not intend to allow that to happen. The Land Act has been such a significant part of the State's history that meaningful amendments to it should not be allowed to be passed unnoticed when they are brought before the Parliament of this State. These are meaningful amendments, and I wish to make some comments on them and make it quite clear that, although I will support them, I am not completely happy about them.

The amendments proposed inevitably represent a further weakening of the traditional policies—and I emphasise the word "traditional"—of what was the Country Party and what is now the National Party. These policies were conceived in good conscience in the early days of the Country-Liberal Government and were applied by men of principle. They led to a standard of development in the pastoral and grazing lands that has given many young people an opportunity to own and develop land in this State and also encouraged the development of many western towns. These policies, which have been described on many occasions as owner-driver policies, were good for Queensland and were, in fact, the basis of the development of towns in Western Queensland. I pay tribute to those who were conscientious enough to resist the pressures and insist that development of that type took place.

It is understandable that these policies would be under attack by the holders of larger areas of land who inevitably would have to surrender some of it at the expiry of their lease in order to give effect to them. But the party of which I am a member had a commitment to give the smaller man and the younger man that opportunity, and it has honoured its commitment to do that. In the early days of the Country-Liberal Government, men such as Alan Fletcher

and Alf Muller came under considerable criticism for these policies. Happily, they cannot now be reversed, and I believe that those men deserve a tribute from this Parliament.

The amending Bill now before the Committee proposes, firstly, to enable existing grazing selections in the under 20 in. rainfall areas to be converted to perpetual leases and to enable people in these areas to apply for restricted freehold. I ask for clarification on that point.

The Minister said in his introductory remarks that the holders of grazing selections will be entitled to freehold. I ask him to qualify that statement. Is it to be restricted or unrestricted freehold? If it is restricted freehold, I have no argument with it because the major settlement in that area has occurred. It is in such a dry part of the State that I think the holders of those leases are entitled to some continuity in their planning. I believe that the management of that area is handled best that way and I welcome that part of the Bill.

Provision is made for companies to hold leasehold land. As the Minister said, under the Companies Act companies at the moment are allowed to own freehold land in the State, but there is some doubt as to the position of recognised companies holding leasehold land. I suppose it was inevitable that one day we would allow this to happen. What we are doing is opening the gates further for companies in western areas. I believe this will tend to operate to the detriment of the people we have traditionally represented in those towns and areas. As I said, I feel it was inevitable that this would occur, and it has occurred. It is something that we should not resist for ever.

The probate provision is an excellent one, and one that will be well received in the western areas. Some absolutely ridiculous situations were occurring because probate was being required before a transfer could be registered.

Let no-one be confused—I am sure no-one is confused—about the measure of disagreement between the members of the lands committee of the National Party organisation and members of this Parliament on living-area standards and associated matters. The cattle situation as it is today, the wool situation and the dreadful situation with inflation as it exists in this country have tended to soothe the differences that exist between us. I certainly now recognise the need for more generous standards, although many moves have been made administratively in recent times to palliate the situation. So I will be voting in favour of the Bill.

Before taking my seat I take the opportunity to voice publicly an exception and protest at major changes in land policy that are from time to time included in a Premier's policy speech, without reference to the members of our party, and in the knowledge that they would not be completely happy about them. At the time, it would be known that members would be trying to avoid controversy, and after the election it is said that we have to honour the commitments on which we went to the people. That is not good enough. New and old members are open-minded enough to have these matters discussed with them. I believe we can come up with a satisfactory solution. In the past, fortunately, the major settlement of the State under the land policies I previously discussed has been achieved. Fortunately not a great deal can be done to interfere with the situation that was brought about. My thanks certainly go to previous Ministers for Lands, who did such sterling work in the early days of this Government.

Mr. KATTER (Flinders) (7.25 p.m.): This Bill is probably the most important measure that I will see introduced into this Chamber. It concerns the ownership of the most basic productive resource in this country, that is, land. Every significant revolution that has taken place in the long history of nations has been a redistribution revolution. No matter what glorious titles might be given to the Chinese and other revolutions, and no matter what reasons might be put forward for them, such as the drive toward nationalism or Communism, the fact remains that they all concerned the redistribution of land.

As times goes on, land and accumulated wealth belong to fewer and fewer people. In other words, fewer and fewer people own the most basic and most productive resource of any nation. When that occurs we see what we have witnessed throughout the world recently, a series of revolutions.

To turn to the Bill—our present land system is socialist in concept in that it tells people what land they shall own and the length of time for which they will own it. This system was introduced by persons with good intentions. They felt that as many people as possible should be put onto the land. The Katter family has lived in my area for almost a century, and with knowledge of what has gone on in earlier years I claim that this land policy has, to a very large degree, failed miserably.

In the first week of my term of office in this Parliament I prepared a five or six foolscap page submission to the Minister concerned indicating that in the shire council areas of Cloncurry and Julia Creek nearly one-quarter of the land had passed from private to company ownership. I see this as an unhappy development and a sad reflection on our present land policies. This Bill is aimed at changing the fundamentals of our present land policies, so we must look closely at the possible effects that will flow from such a change.

Over the past few years there have been approximately 30 or 40 families in the Cloncurry and Julia Creek shire areas who, until the recent crash, had sufficient cattle to enable them to earn a handsome living from their

small blocks of land but who, under the present system, could not obtain additional land on which to graze their cattle. It is a sad reflection on our present social order that they were deprived of the opportunity of doing their own thing in their own time.

This Bill provides, in effect, that a person who owns a block of land will so own it until the end of time. It will give a landowner a territorial relationship with his holding—something that he has not enjoyed to date.

Recently a friend of mine in my area, Doug Logan—a member of an old pioneering family—asked me, "Have you been to the New England district?" I replied, "Yes." He asked, "What struck you about it?" I said, "I was stunned when I first went there to see that people developed properties and erected houses as if they would be there for a century." By comparison, in my area no-one builds a house or develops a property with the intention of staying there very long. People in my area seem ashamed of the fact that they live there. They tend to build with the objective of leaving the area in about 10 years and retreating to the cool security of the coastal towns and cities. This is a sad reflection indeed on our land development policies, and would break the hearts of the brave pioneers who went into that area.

Doug Logan also asked, "Why do you think people in the New England district built as if they were to be there for 100 years, and why do you think people build out here in corrugated iron and wood?" I hadn't given the matter very much thought and I gave a very facile answer. I said, "The climate is better and they have better rainfall." I added a number of similar reasons. He said, "I think you are wrong. It relates to the land-tenure system." I went home and thought about it.

When one considers a 30-year period and thinks in terms of the money required to develop, stock and finance a property properly, one realises one is talking about a lot of money. It is very difficult in a lifetime to pay off a $200,000 mortgage. Thirty years is a very short time for a one-man operation to pay off such a debt. In a period of 30 years it is very difficult for people to develop country in the way it should be developed. I am very pleased to note the changes effected here.

After listening to the honourable member for Landsborough, I view the future with apprehension and I should not like to say cold bloodedly that the issues are as clear cut as I make them out to be at the moment. It is with great concern that I view the changes in the area surrounding Julia Creek-Cloncurry. When I spoke to the Minister for Lands about it, he said to me, "They could not possibly have done that. These are grazing selections which simply cannot be given to companies." I had done my homework well and I could quote to him the names of the properties involved. I said, "All I know is that they have passed from private hands to public hands." When I went into the individual cases I found that all the properties had passed because the owners were desperate. The transfers occurred during the 15-year drought or the wool-price crash, times when men who had worked hard all their lives had no-one to sell their properties to other than companies.

Ministers, and departmental officials, in their wisdom and humanity—I stress the word humanity—enabled these people to change the land tenure so that the companies would buy the blocks. The net result is very sad for the State of Queensland. In a number of instances the blocks were perhaps too small, while others were undercapitalised. But the major reason would be disasters like the 15-year drought or the sudden, inexplicable crash of the wool market, which, again, is mirrored in the beef market. We must help people to develop on a long-term basis, and make money available on a long-term basis so that they will be covered in times of disaster.

The 30 or 40 families in the Julia Creek-Cloncurry area will now have a very good chance of getting together by pooling their resources, buying a number of the very large properties and then cutting them up. A number of large properties need cutting up. This will benefit the town, the district and the State. I am sure that if these persons approach the Minister the properties will be cut up and we will see genuine development of the land in the area which could not possibly take place under the old leasehold system. I strongly favour freehold and perpetual lease.

Under this legislation we are moving from a socialist situation into a private-ownership situation. On the benches on my right are members of the party which has socialism as its major tenet, that is, ownership of production and the means of production. That is one of the first items in that party's little policy booklet, and it is one of the major tenets or driving forces behind the Labor Party in Canberra. If ever Labor gets the seats on my left it will be a similar socialist force here. I point out relative to socialism that some very interesting experiments have been carried out in a new field called ethology.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable gentleman will relate his comments to the Bill under discussion. I will not allow a broad dissertation on socialism.

Mr. KATTER: With respect, we are moving from a socialist situation, under which land is owned by the Government and leased to private persons, to one in which the Government has little to do with it. It belongs to the individual. Consequently, I think my remarks are pertinent. Will the Chair accept that?

The CHAIRMAN: Proceed.

Mr. KATTER: I return to this experiment, a very interesting one that was conducted with rats. A big pavilion was divided into four parts. Each of four Alpha rats, which were able to hold, occupy and I would use the expression "own" land, held a territory of approximately one-quarter of the pavilion. More and more rats were then fed into the pavilion. Those rats constituted a random sample and could not hold territory. There was no ownership concept.

The rats in the centre of the arena, which could not hold territory, constantly fought. The expression "rat race" was very relevant to what occurred in the middle of the pavilion. There was rampant cannibalism, indiscriminate mating, infanticide, with eating of the baby rats, and disorder and mayhem. Yet out on the boundary, where the concept of ownership existed, there was peace, tranquility and the right to be able to develop as rats.

Honourable Members interjected.

Mr. KATTER: Whilst a certain amount of mirth might enter into this, the implications of the experiment were profound.

By land tenure we are trying to achieve two objectives: to maximise production of such items as food while minimising their cost and, secondly, to enable the individual to do his own thing in his own time.

I now reflect on the first point, maximisation of production. I illustrate my point by quoting two great laboratories in the world—the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. A gentleman called Lenin turned the U.S.S.R. into a huge laboratory experiment in socialism. The land in Russia is owned by the State and worked by employees of the State.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: I rise to a point of order. What has this to do with the Bill?

Mr. KATTER: Everything.

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

Mr. KATTER: In the United States of America, Lincoln introduced the Lincoln Homestead Act, which is similar to what we have today. It was a concept of ownership under which the little man was entitled to a square mile of territory on three bases: occupation, cultivation and production. As long as he conformed with those three requirements, he was entitled to his mile by mile.

They were the two great laboratories. The people on my right would advocate socialism, ownership by the State. Their Federal colleagues are presently attempting to reduce home ownership in every capital city in Australia to leasehold instead of private ownership. I would like to see them attempt to deny that. God forbid that they ever get their hands on the country over the Great Dividing Range!

Let us see how these two laboratory experiments have turned out. In Russia there is the same amount of arable land for the same period of the year as there is in the United States. Therefore, we could expect approximately the same production figures. In the United States one man at the plough releases 12 men for work in the factories. In Russia it takes one man at the plough to release one man for production in factories. Its agricultural production under socialist ownership has been a total disaster. I would be ashamed to be associated with any party or political philsophy that would have anything to do with socialism.

If that is not conclusive evidence of the superiority of the private ownership system, let me point out further that in Russia the peasants could not even feed themselves. In a desperate effort to keep at least the peasants alive Stalin turned over to each family half an acre. On a collective farm, a family worked roughly 50 acres. Staggeringly, each family produced almost the same amount on its half acre as it produced on 50 acres. The same is true of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Rumania.

I conclude by saying that I would be ashamed to be associated with any party or political ideology that would have the hide to put in its little booklet, "I am a socialist and want to socialise Australia." All I can say is, "Shame on them!"

Mr. MELLOY (Nudgee) (7.41 p.m.): The honourable member for Landsborough took some time off to chide the Opposition for the absence of speakers to this Bill. I draw the attention of the Committee to the absence of the Minister for Lands, who should be present in the House during the debate.

Mr. HODGES: I rise to a point of order. I explained the reason for the absence of the Minister for Lands. He is in Canberra attending a special conference.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member is nevertheless entitled to comment upon it. There is no point of order.

Mr. MELLOY: Thank you, Mr. Hewitt. That still does not get over the fact that the Minister for Lands has not been in the Chamber during the debate on his Bill. He has denied himself the opportunity of listening to speakers and their opinions on its provisions.

The honourable member for Flinders expressed concern at the possibility of the ownership of land passing from private individuals to companies. I think he has good ground for being concerned about this matter because, under the terms of this legislation, we will have a much greater team of Gold Coast or Queen Street graziers than we have ever had before.

The suggestion has been made that there are sinister undertones to the introduction of this legislation; that it is in the nature

of a pay-off to huge organisations that contributed greatly to the funds of the National Party for the last election.

When Mr. Daly recently introduced in the Federal Parliament amendments to the electoral law under which it was sought to find out from all political parties where their funds came from——

An Opposition Member interjected.

Mr. MELLOY: Not just the National Party in this case, although it would be the wealthiest party in Australia.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member knows my previous ruling with regard to discussions on political parties. I ask him to keep to the Bill before the Committee.

Mr. MELLOY: I shall do that, Mr. Hewitt, because it seems to be a case of we must look after those people who look after us, and this Bill is very important in this regard. It will achieve much towards that end.

On that occasion, Mr. Daly's amendment, Mr. Anthony, a member of the National Party, did a double somersault in his attitude to the Bill introduced by Mr. Daly. At first he said he would support it and then, apparently having received pressure from somebody, said he would not support it. Now the National Party introduces a Bill in this Assembly to amend the Land Act to enable large companies to acquire in this State freehold and leasehold land. It is quite obvious to the Opposition that this will lead to great aggregations of small properties. If they were allowed to express a true opinion on the provisions contained in the Bill, many members of the National Party would go along with this view.

Is the Government's land policy—to put it in the words once used by Mr. John McEwen, the then Federal Country Party leader—"to sell the farm bit by bit to overseas interests?" It seems to the Opposition that parts of this State are going to be sold to large companies that do not have any connection with Queensland. It seems to us that overseas organisations will be able to come in on the deal, and that in future years our rural industries will be owned and controlled by overseas interests. We in the Labor Party will not be a party to anything in the nature of a sell-out of our land.

The Labor Party's policy on the holding of land in Queensland is quite clear. We believe in the principle of leasehold tenure in order to protect the interests of the individual and the community.

Mr. Chinchen: Do you own your own home?

Mr. MELLOY: I am one of the largest landholders in Banyo!

There are two parts to the Bill. I have already mentioned the first, and the Opposition is vigorously opposed to allowing companies or their subsidiaries to take over small properties. And we are not the only ones who oppose that principle. Sir Alan Fletcher, a former Lands Minister, vigorously opposed it, as did the former Minister for Local Government, Mr. McKechnie. They both opposed the present proposal because they could see that it would lead to small farmers being gradually pushed to the wall. The Labor Party stands firmly for a viable and vigorous rural community made up of ordinary people who work hard for their living and want to see the benefits of that work. All those who read the Bill will be able to see what will now happen.

The other matter of importance is that grazing selection lessees are now going to have the right to apply to convert their leases to freehold tenure. The Opposition is sceptical of this proposal, too. Why on earth does the Government always seek to downgrade the interests of the community in deference to large organisations?

Mr. Frawley: That's rot.

Mr. MELLOY: It is not rot. If the honourable member reads the Bill, he will see that that is what will happen to land ownership. Why does the Government always seek to sell its interests in the community to individuals? The land belongs to the people of Queensland, and that seems to be abhorrent to the Government, particularly the National Party. The Opposition is entitled to ask why it is that the Government seeks at every opportunity to freehold the land that belongs to the people. One of the first acts of the Government after attaining office in 1957 was to hand Crown leasehold land to freehold interests. That policy was immediately put into effect when the coalition parties had the opportunity to legislate on land holdings. We in the Labor Party believe that the Government of the State should have a vital interest in the use of the State's land. When the Government relinquishes control of it and hands it over to overseas interests, it is virtually giving our country away. That is what will be done under the proposed legislation.

The interests of conservationists come into it, too. Without any Government interest in the matter, freeholders can do what they like with their land. The Opposition does not believe in that procedure. It believes that the community, through Government departments, has the right to lay down the conditions on which people shall hold land. Once the Government gives it away, it abdicates control.

Many people are concerned about the Iwasaki proposal near Yeppoon. The Government is prepared to give Iwasaki land up there which, no doubt, in time he will convert to freehold, provided he meets the conditions laid down.

Mr. HARTWIG: I rise to a point of order. Iwasaki does not hold any leasehold.

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

Mr. MELLOY: Iwasaki is looking for leasehold land in the area. He owns land there, and he wants more leasehold land.

Mr. Hartwig: Don't try to bring in leasehold. The Government has knocked him back on leasehold.

Mr. MELLOY: It has not given him a lease of any land yet, but that issue is not dead. We will see in due course whether or not Iwasaki gets any leasehold land in the Yeppoon area. For the information of the honourable member, I point out that I would like to see the land developed as long as the Government retained control over what happened up there.

Mr. Hartwig: I agree with you.

Mr. MELLOY: I think it would improve the area.

In "The Courier-Mail" of 8 April 1975 appeared a report indicating that the Government parties themselves are unhappy about the Bill. However, as happens on all matters, no doubt the Premier will click his fingers and Government members will stand up and toe the party line.

Government Members interjected.

Mr. MELLOY: That is a fact. If we are to have stable government in a country, that is necessary to some degree, but it must not be abused. There will never be stable government unless there is discipline in the Government that controls the country.

On every occasion on which a contentious matter comes before this Assembly, one or two back-bench members of the Government parties stand up in the party room and say they are unhappy about the proposed legislation. But what do they do when the Bill comes before the Assembly? They either vote with the Government or, if they have a little bit of spine, walk out and do not vote on it. One never sees any of them crossing the floor. Their strength, or lack of it, shows up in their actions in this Chamber. Walking out is a coward's way of facing up to his conscience.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Could we get back to the good earth?

Mr. MELLOY: They line up weakly behind the Premier, Mr. Sparkes, Mr. Moore or any other influences that control the Government coalition parties, and they vote the party line. I do not mind their being overshadowed in their party room, but I do object to Mr. Moore or Mr. Sparkes interfering and telling members of Parliament what to do.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable gentleman knows that has nothing to do with the matter before the Committee. I ask him to return to the Bill.

Mr. MELLOY: It has something to do with the result of the vote on the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I would like the honourable gentleman to relate his comments to the Bill.

Mr. MELLOY: I am trying to do that, Mr. Hewitt.

The CHAIRMAN: Not with much success.

Mr. MELLOY: The Bill is not a very good one, from the Opposition's point of view, and it is rather difficult to relate any common sense to it.

It seems that the leaders of the National Party and the Liberal Party have decided that this legislation will be brought down as a reward to those people who assisted the Government back into office. People from Tasmania and Victoria who seek to buy into the political scene in those States have expressed the wish to buy into Queensland rural land. The area of rural land available in Victoria and Tasmania is limited, and I have no doubt that southern companies will come into Queensland and take control of large tracts of land. We have always said that the National Party is not a party that supports small people on the land at all. That has been demonstrated by its incursion into the metropolitan area and provincial cities. It no longer seeks to stand before the people as a rural party. It wants to become a metropolitan party. Behind it all, of course, is the inane desire to crush the Liberal Party. My God, it nearly did it last time, too!

The CHAIRMAN: Order! For the last time I ask the honourable member to come back to the Bill. If he does not, I will ask him to resume his seat.

A Government Member: He knows nothing about it.

Mr. MELLOY: I am doing a lot better than some honourable members opposite. God knows how much they know about it!

The objection we have to the Bill is that it provides an opportunity for the take-over of large areas in Queensland, not only by Queenslanders—we would not object to that so much—but also by overseas and interstate companies. I referred earlier to the former leader of the Country Party, Sir John McEwen. He was gravely upset at the idea of multi-national corporations buying up farms each year and gradually getting control in that way. What would he think of this National-Party-controlled Government now if he saw what was included in the Bill? He would be shocked to learn that the party of which he was once the leader had got down to this sort of thing.

We expected this sort of sell-out sooner or later. We expected it would be done either in the mining field or in rural industry, by the Government just handing over large chunks of Queensland land to corporations with interests outside the State. We oppose the handing over of Queensland to outside interests. We wait to see whether those who voiced their opposition to this legislation on 7 April will now come forward and vote in accordance with their conscience.

We do approve of the provision to bring the pensions and leave provisions of Land Court members into line with those of the Industrial Commissioners. They are entitled to that. We go along with anything that provides better conditions and terms of employment for anybody in the community as long as it is in line with what is common to other sections of the community.

The Opposition has made it quite clear that we oppose the Bill because of the principles that have been outlined. It is not a matter of whether we are graziers or city slickers. It is because of the principles of the Bill that we oppose it.

Mr. GUNN (Somerset) (7.59 p.m.): After listening to the honourable member for Nudgee we can well understand the lack of interest shown by the Opposition in this Bill. I heard a rumour that the honourable member's name was drawn out of the hat during the luncheon recess. That was unfortunate for him, because we would not expect him to know a great deal about land matters, and that was very noticeable from his speech.

Living-area standards are the greatest fallacy of all times. After all, what is a living-area standard? What is a living-area standard this year certainly might not be a living-area standard next year. As the honourable member for Landsborough pointed out, we did not treat the proposed amendments lightly. We have had a lot of meetings and debate on them. Our party has never been hasty in amending legislation. But circumstances alter cases, and circumstances at the present time warrant the proposed amendments. We make no apology for them. Certainly years ago there was a time when people in the Outback had enough land and did quite well; but the situation has changed. Once-proud people have been reduced to the lowest level of poverty. This is a very unhappy situation. The conditions under which these people live are vastly different from those under which honourable members live.

I have always been opposed to leasehold tenure; I have always considered it to be repugnant. To me, it has always been socialistic in concept. Fortunately, all the land in my area is freehold.

With freehold tenure there is a pride of ownership that does not exist in leaseholding. Tenants do not know what will happen to the land they lease, and there is always the possibility that they will lose the lease. The two systems are not comparable.

In the area that I represent, the Lockyer Valley—I admit it can be termed a select area—there are people who produce enormous quantities of foodstuffs from small areas of land. Furthermore, they construct beautiful homes. There are not the tin shacks that can be seen in the back country. One of the reasons why people in the Outback erect tin shacks is, of course, that they do not own their land. It is for this reason as well as for many others that I applaud these amendments.

The people of the Outback live and work under very difficult conditions. Many of them do not have telephones, and a lot of them do not have access to medical services. Those members who represent these people appeal regularly for the appointment of doctors to towns in the Far West as well as the establishment of schools. Many parents in the Far West are forced to send their children away from home for their education. This is both a personal and a financial hardship. They deserve some recognition for the work they do under these trying conditions, and such recognition could be given by converting their leases to freehold tenure so that they will be able to pass on their land to their children.

Both the National Party and the Liberal Party are in favour of free enterprise. There is no greater free-enterprise system than that of landholding. Every large and every small farmer who owns his land does so under a free-enterprise system. He has this pride of ownership to which I have referred and this keeps him going.

To give an example of the production that can be obtained from freehold land in the Lockyer Valley—I know farmers there who have 60 acres of land and in reasonably good seasons have harvested as much as 200 to 300 tons of potatoes in one crop and have grown double crops to obtain a crop of onions from the same ground. Of course they have to work hard to do this. But we do not need to confine ourselves to my area; this can be seen in any area where there is freeholding of land.

Certain Cabinet Ministers own their own properties, which are veritable show places. Furthermore, the honourable members for Callide and Balonne have successfully developed their properties under a freehold system.

As to the members of the Land Court—no-one has done more for Crown employees than this Government. I am sure that the State Service Union and other bodies representing Crown employees are completely satisfied with the retirement benefits that have been given by this Government to its employees. Compared with what they received prior to 1957 they have moved forward tremendously in this area.

I turn now to the leasing of land in the below 20 in. rainfall belt. Whenever Labor members speak on land matters, we hear the same old cry about companies taking

over large tracts of land. It has peen proved over the years that conditions in the West and low prices hit everybody. The landowner, whether it be a company or a single person, is cut down to size by drought. Many large pastoral companies are presently in financial difficulties. No company that employs labour and sells its cattle for as little as 10c a lb. or its wool for the meagre current prices will last for long. History will repeat itself. The rather large aggregations will be cut up soon into small parcels once again.

The Land Act provides for the transmission on death of leasehold tenures to be entered into the records of the Lands Department without entailing the expense of applying for a grant of probate or administration provided the gross value of the estate does not exceed $12,000. With inflation running as it is it is fair and reasonable to increase that amount to $50,000. It should be made clear that this will mean no loss to the Crown but will mean a great saving in legal expenses for the many estates involved. I have seen instances in many country areas of estates having to be sold to pay probate expenses.

I do not think anybody can argue against the final amendment relative to the Forestry Act.

I am very pleased to see younger members taking part in the debate on this very important measure. Although the Opposition has shown that it is not at all interested in it, it is of great interest to Queensland. I hope to see the day when we have little or no leasehold land—when all land is freehold. That is the policy of my party and it has always been my policy. I have always been opposed to leasehold and hope to see the day when Queensland will be free of the leasehold system.

Mr. CASEY (Mackay) (8.8 p.m.): I congratulate the honourable member for Flinders on some of the comments he made. I was very interested in his thoughts on encouraging people to settle permanently in the area referred to constantly tonight, which the Minister recognised in his introductory speech, that is, the area west of the 24 in. rainfall line. The honourable member for Flinders gave a good summary of the problems encountered there. Much of this area constitutes a big portion of his electorate. The area running from Hughenden to Julia Creek and almost to Cloncurry is very well known for its rainfall and land tenure problems. From travelling through the area, I know that it is very difficult to get people to settle there permanently

I thought that the honourable member for Flinders outlined clearly some of the main reasons why leasehold tenure in most Western areas has been the policy of successive Governments in Queensland since the early settlement days. I commend him on his depth of thought and expression.

The amendment to the Land Act will bring considerable changes in land tenure. The grazing homestead perpetual lease tenures referred to by the Minister can be compared somewhat with what are well known to many honourable members, that is, the old worker's home perpetual town leases. That was a landholding policy introduced some 50 years ago, I think it would be, to enable Queenslanders to obtain a piece of land on which they could build and settle in permanent residency in the urban areas of the community, in the little townships or on the fringes of those townships. It was only through that type of land policy that workers in the early days could obtain a piece of land on which to build a home.

Unfortunately, several years ago that legislation was rescinded. It is no longer the policy in Queensland. The type of policy now being administered under the Land Act in relation to grazing homestead perpetual leases could well be reintroduced for urban land.

Mr. Ahern: It worked against them.

Mr. CASEY: It did and it didn't. The honourable member for Landsborough used the expression that it worked against them. I agree that the stage was reached where it worked against people, particularly those who may have been transferred, in the matter of rentals.

Mr. Ahern: Rents of $400.

Mr. CASEY: Increased rents with increases in valuations, yes, but the same problem could be encountered under this legislation. The main reason why there were big increases in the rentals of these workers home perpetual town leases was that the surrounding land was freehold. Subsequently, a large increase occurred in valuations. There is the distinct and inherent danger of the same thing happening under this legislation, particularly on the better country of the lands to which we are referring. There will be those who prefer to take perpetual leasehold tenure. The way is made quite clear, too—and I will refer to this a little later—for others to get freehold tenure in the same area. Increases in valuations will follow because there will be competition for the land—competition to an extent not experienced under the old leasehold balloting provisions that we had in Queensland.

If the legislation is similar to that introduced in years gone by for another type of land tenure and since rescinded, we have to be wary. If members look at the reasons why that was rescinded, they will see the dangers possibly inherent in this piece of legislation. That is something we have to seriously consider. Nonetheless, if this legislation achieves for the families living in those areas, or for the families who want to live in those areas, the same benefits as were achieved for the workers of Queensland living in townships

in the 1920's and 1930's, in that it gave them their only opportunity of settling permanently somewhere, building a home, raising a family and contributing to the community, whether as an employee or as a grazier, I commend the legislation and compliment the Government. I would be quite happy to support it. However, I find it to be my duty as a member of Parliament to point out the inherent pitfalls. It is important for us to compare the two concepts and the reasoning behind different aspects of legislation.

Actually, we have turned a complete circle. I believe there is a need for the reintroduction of the worker's home perpetual town lease scheme. A great deal of Crown land is being split up by the Lands Department in suburban, urban and rural areas throughout Queensland and sold at auction for very high prices. An increasing number of these blocks have been bought by the wealthy in the community. The worker or battler who is trying to set himself and his family up in a home and obtain permanent residency somewhere in the State finds it impossible to do so.

There is not as much evidence of it in Brisbane as there is in the provincial cities and country towns. That is where we are trying to encourage people to settle. If we are to practise some sort of decentralisation policy, we must encourage people to get out and settle in the townships and provincial cities rather than congregate round this great monstrosity that Brisbane is becoming, with all the problems that accompany the development of a major urban community. For those very reasons, I believe that there is a need to encourage settlement in provincial cities as well as grazing areas.

The proposals in the Bill will aggravate the situation. Even though land is being auctioned by the Land Administration Commission in various developments in Queensland, the one saving grace is that the battler or small person is able to bid at the auction and get a lease, even at a high price, because he gets it at a good interest rate of 5 per cent over a term of 10 years. That seems a long time for somebody to pay off the price of a piece of urban land where he can settle down with his family. The officers of the Lands Department would know that a tremendous number of people in Queensland are still doing this today. They have purchased land in the past 10 years and are trying to pay off the purchase price.

The one thing saving them is that, in purchasing this land, they are not subject to the exorbitant interest rates of 11½ per cent through banks or 15 or 20 per cent through hire-purchase companies. I sincerely hope that the provisions in the Bill do not open the way for this Government or the Land Administration Commission to become just another money-grubbing money-lender within the community and put up its interest rate from 5 per cent to 11½ per cent or 15 per cent, thus absolutely denying the average person in this State his inherent right to own a block of land on which he can erect a dwelling and rear a family of Queenslanders with the permanent residency they are entitled to.

Because it means such a lot to the people of Queensland who are battling to buy blocks of land, I counsel Government members to look carefully at the provision deleting the interest rate of 5 per cent. We certainly do not want the Lands Department to be charging them the same rates as hire-purchase companies. This must be watched very closely.

According to the Minister's introduction, much is being done to alter the tenure of land held by companies. I believe the policy that has existed in this State during the past 10 or 15 years of freeholding some of the major grazing selections has helped to contribute to high costs in the beef industry. Different families and groups have had to borrow considerable sums of money to pay for freeholding. On top of that, the land is not transferred on death at the old valuation under leasehold but at the increased valuation arrived at on the basis of the freehold tenure of the land. Subsequently many families have had to borrow additional moneys to pay probate. They have had to use the land as security to borrow more money to develop the property. Again, because of the 11½ per cent interest that I referred to earlier, this has led to considerable borrowing, which in turn has led to a large increase in costs. This has contributed to the problems confronting the beef industry. It has been one of the contributing factors that have kept costs so high and brought about the current economic problems.

In his introduction, the Minister said that one of the reasons for the conversion of grazing homestead leases to perpetual town lease tenures is that there are no grazing leases left for further fragmentation in the areas concerned. First of all, I do not like the word "fragmentation"; nor do the people who have been able to settle on the land under the policy of the Lands Department over the years—not only under this Government but also under previous Governments—of taking back the major grazing leases and dividing them into suitable living areas. Those people would not have had an opportunity to settle on the land had it not been for the type of legislation we have had in this State, and they certainly would not accept the use of the word "fragmentation". That legislation gave them the opportunity that they wanted.

It is unfortunate that in the areas that we are discussing now so many of these pieces of land are owned by companies. I think the Minister said that these provisions were being welcomed by banks and brokers. We certainly know that they would welcome them, because they will now have the opportunity of making a little money out of

graziers from whom they now make nothing. They also look upon these provisions as a means of obtaining control of other areas in Queensland that they do not now control. With leasehold provisions, they know that when land is forfeited to them they will not obtain the renewal of the lease. It will go to someone else under those circumstances. This is how empires such as the Stanbroke empire have been built up in Queensland.

I could dwell at great lengths this evening on the way in which the Stanbroke organisation acquired so much land through Western Queensland and in the Gulf area, and what is now done with the land. I could also speak of the way in which that organisation controls cattle prices, and of the strong influence that it has on wool prices and the general economy of grazing areas. This is a very important matter to consider when amendments are being made to any Acts concerning the land. When we are altering any type of land tenure, we have to look behind it to see who will benefit from it. Is the benefit to go to the small battlers, or the graziers who want pieces of land for their sons? Is the benefit to go to young fellows who want to go on the land? Or is it to go to the vast empires that we have seen in the West and that are a great deal stronger than old Kidman and Tyson were in days gone by?

There are many aspects of the Land Act that need consideration when we start to think about the shortage of land. There is insufficient land now surrounding urban areas and set aside under special lease provisions to be made available for public purposes at the end of the normal 30 years' tenure that has been referred to by the Minister. There have been pieces of land held under special leases of 30 years close to fast-developing provincial areas. As those areas have developed, those who held this land have, under the new policies, been able to obtain freehold tenure. They have then been able to subdivide the land and make substantial profits from it. The local authorities in those areas now face great problems in acquiring sufficient land for parks and other recreational purposes.

When we are considering the Land Act, we have to see that some provision is made under which such special lease areas in close proximity to areas that are expected to develop into urban areas are not allowed to be freeholded, but are retained in perpetuity or under special leases that may be renewed for perhaps 10 years. They should be maintained under some suitable tenure so that they can ultimately be handed over for public purposes.

There is one final point that I should like to make.

Mr. Neal: Outside the 20 in. rainfall belt.

Mr. CASEY: The honourable member for Balonne interjects, "Outside the 20 in. rainfall belt." The provisions introduced by the Minister cover lands other than those outside the 20 in. rainfall belt.

There are many other provisions. The Minister mentioned an alteration in the way in which companies can apply for land in Queensland. I certainly hope that this does not again open the door for international purchases of leasehold land in Queensland, or for things I saw a couple of years ago, such as large advertisements in the "Fiji Times" and newspapers in South-east Asia of land for sale in Queensland. People were told in those advertisements, "This is your opportunity to buy in a developing State. Come over and buy land here." Queensland real estate interests were not involved. Some of the bigger real estate companies in Sydney and in Melbourne were advertising in newspapers in the South Pacific area and in South-east Asia for investors to come and take control of land in Queensland.

It should be remembered, Mr. Hewitt, that he who owns the land owns the country, and we must look hard at that when we think of opening the door and allowing in registered companies, rather than only companies that are registered in Queensland. As the law now stands, only certain companies in Queensland may own leasehold tenures. The proposal now before the Committee will open the door to the whole gamut of international enterprises wishing to acquire land in Queensland. If they acquire it on a leasehold basis, in no time at all they will freehold it and control major portions of the lands of this State. The only way we can control our land is through the Land Act, and I suggest that we must look very closely at the consequences of the Bill.

Mr. ROW (Hinchinbrook) (8.26 p.m.): I wish to refer mainly to the part of the Bill that relates to the proposed amendments to the land tenure provisions of the Act. The first part of the Bill is of a machinery nature and does not call for much debate, and I certainly support it.

I was very interested to hear the remarks of other honourable members about the land tenure provisions of the Bill, and particularly the reference by the honourable member for Mackay, in his closing remarks, to his fear that land may come into the possession of large institutions that would not be inclined to carry out practices that are most desirable in the interests of the people of this State. All I can suggest to him is that, over the development period, there have been some very clear examples of large institutions accepting their responsibilities. Indeed, they have been responsible for giving Queensland many of its developed industries.

Although there may be many and varied opinions on the question of land tenure and on what is desirable in particular circumstances, I do not think a perfect system will ever be found for anything. I also believe in

the old philosophy that, no matter what system is in operation, if the people are good people, the system will work; if they are bad and irresponsible people, the system will fail. I think that the people of Queensland have proved over several generations that that is basically a good belief, and I think it is a belief that is held by honourable members on both sides of the Chamber.

I was interested to hear the honourable member for Nudgee refer to his interest in the Bill as it relates to people. I think it is fundamental that honourable members should bear in mind continually the question, "How can we best serve the people in the conditions or circumstances prevailing or in the geographical situation in Queensland?" The geographical situation is probably the most pertinent factor of all in this Sate, with its vast areas, poor communications, remoteness, dry conditions and so on. From time to time we find ourselves obliged to cater for all these factors in legislation such as this. The fortunes of people vary so much in times of economic fluctuation that I think it would be virtually impossible to cater for the best interests of the people in all circumstances and at all times. However, I believe that the Government has always shown foresight and made a very genuine effort to act in the best interests of the people of this State, and I think that the land legislation and its administration has been the most important of the bases on which enterprises in this State have been founded.

I am a little concerned at the attitude of a couple of members of the Opposition who spoke early in the debate. It is rather regrettable that they attempted to turn it into something of a political campaign. No doubt they are still wrapped up in the dramatic events that affected their party's fortunes at the last State elections. I am disappointed that they tried to turn the debate into a personal, vindictive attack on political philosophies instead of getting down to the meat of the Bill.

People in this State who have been obliged by the decision of their forebears to go into remote areas to live and pull their weight in society deserve consideration, particularly those in areas west of the 20 in. rainfall belt. It is very pertinent to say that there is no more room for fragmentation or subdivision of living areas in that region.

When the concept of living areas is being taken into consideration, no-one would have had more experience than the honourable member for Mackay and possibly myself and others in the Chamber with experience in the sugar industry. The sugar industry is based on land about 99 per cent of which is held under freehold tenure. In that industry, over a very short period of time the concept of a living area changes very rapidly. What was a living area in the sugar industry, say, five years ago is no longer a living area. It is a vicious, dog-chasing-tail type of circle. Unless we are prepared to legislate to cope with changing circumstances, we simply will not have people surviving in the rural areas. It is useless to propound a land philosophy that does not fit the circumstances. I believe the circumstances were very much to the fore in the framing of this legislation.

We are basically dealing with people. When we talk about the conditions under which people are obliged to occupy land in Queensland, we have to remember that they are not occupying land entirely for their own benefit. This State is largely dependent upon the efforts of people who are prepared to do pioneering work. In the development of the rural regions, the concept of pioneering still largely exists. We have had rather unbalanced development in Queensland. Our fertile coastal strip with its capital city and provincial city areas has developed rather rapidly leaving behind both in social amenities and in financial opportunities the State's rural areas. So we must accept that we have to improve land tenure opportunities for those people who are prepared to accept a less desirable way of life and actually produce what for many generations have been our major exports. Only in very recent times has there been anything approaching an equal balance between manufactured and rural exports. In view of the fluctuations in commercial fortunes we cannot foresee the time where one will be more important than the other. Therefore we have to protect them both.

Reference has been made to the fear of lining the pockets of wealthy segments of the community. I do not think anyone has taken into consideration the effect of taxation and various social levies that are imposed upon those whose incomes rise as a result of their own efforts. All these contributions go back to the benefit and welfare of all the people.

The acquisition of land in any circumstances calls for some payment to the State. Nobody can obtain a block of land without paying for it in one way or another. If he leases it, he has to pay rent and local authority rates; if he purchases it on freehold tenure, he must buy it from the Crown, and not for a mere pittance; he must pay a price based on a valuation, and in some instances the price might be more than he can afford to pay. Having acquired the land, he must earn his living by producing goods. Furthermore he has to meet the heavy quality demands that are made upon him. For example, our rural industries have to meet quality demands made on them by customers not only overseas but also in Australia. No producer who does not have security of tenure is capable of meeting those demands. All these matters are fundamental to this legislation.

I do not want to engage in undue repetition but, following other speakers as I do,

I find it difficult to speak about any matter that has not already been touched upon. I must however, stress the risks involved. Whether they are taken by the individual or by the State, they must be accepted. Of course, they fluctuate from time to time, so I do not see that we can arrive at a better solution than that projected in this legislation. The Minister's committee has put its best foot forward in framing the Bill for the benefit of all concerned.

The provisions relating to probate duty will be applauded by all honourable members. I do not think anyone would disagree with my contention that the level of exemption from probate duty was at one time quite acceptable. After all, probate duty is a recognised means of obtaining revenue. However, the situation has been reached where many heirs to estates, particularly widows with families, are financially embarrassed by the impact of probate duty. In fact, many are nearly forced out of business. I am pleased to see that this matter has received consideration in the Bill. It is the intention of this Government to eliminate probate duty gradually, so I hope we will continue to work in that direction until it is abolished.

The honourable member for Nudgee expressed concern at what he terms the aggregation of small properties. This gets back to my previous remarks about fluctuations in living standards. I do not think the aggregation of small properties can always be avoided, particularly if industries based on small properties are to survive. In many instances the aggregation of small properties has resulted in a better rationalisation of facilities and finance. The administration and management of properties frequently benefits to some extent from such aggregation. This will be limited by natural factors. The fear that multi-national organisations will take over all our land is groundless because there are provisions in the intent of the legislation preventing corporations from jeopardising the welfare and land rights of the people of the State. Members of the Opposition may rest assured that the efforts of the Land Administration Commission will be aimed at guarding against this.

What is the popular concept of land tenure in the minds of the people of Queensland? It is all very well to propound philosophies aimed at guarding against aggregations of land by speculators, and to say that everyone should get a fair share of what is available. Everyone in this State wants to own his own piece of dirt, wherever it is. The most successful land tenure is private ownership, whether it is the humble domestic household allotment, a small farm or a large stud. Private ownership generates far greater potential for development and production by reason of incentive. Man is the master of his own fate when he has responsibility and reward for effort. He does not care how great the effort so long as he reaps the reward, and the benefits that flow from his efforts are advantageous to the State and the community. In the long run this is the best way to view our land tenure proposals. I heartily support the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. ELLIOTT (Cunningham) (8.42 p.m.): In the light of the line of attack made by the honourable member for Archerfield in introducing many red herrings before being cut down to size, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to take part in this debate. He might have achieved something if he had talked about the Bill. However, his approach was typical. He tried to discredit the National Party in this legislative area of land tenure.

I wish to dwell mainly on the land tenure amendments contained in the Bill, designed to give lessees of grazing selections the choice of converting to freehold or to grazing homestead perpetual leases if they do not substantially exceed a living area. While I agree with the Bill, I wish to make a few points, particularly about freehold land tenure.

The bogy that has been brought out about vast aggregations disappears when we look at the tenure system. Firstly, on the freehold-tenure system Opposition members say that vast holdings will be aggregated by these companies. I speak very strongly against that assertion because the living-area qualifications very strongly protect us from aggregation. If we allowed companies to aggregate large areas of freehold land, we should be doing ourselves and the whole of Queensland a tremendous disservice. Not only would we affect land holding, but also we would work to the detriment of the whole community.

In areas where the owner-operator concept is practical—and let us be practical; I am talking about freehold land—a tremendous community spirit permeates the society. Everyone in the community takes part in all its functions—not just the older members of families but the children as well. That applies to balls, shows, and charitable efforts alike. At balls, for instance, little children run around and play on the dance floor. In the country everyone is involved in community activities.

It is my belief that that type of participation is lacking in the big cities, particularly in the more unfortunate ghetto areas and others of poor living standards. Country areas lead the way in the development of family life. Wealth does not enter into it. That has no relevance whatsoever. It is not a case of the haves and the have-nots. It is more a case of outlook and ability to adapt to their situation. If it were a case of the haves and the have-nots, country people these days would come within the latter category; but in other ways, such as in community spirit, country people are more fortunate than city dwellers. They suffer hardships, of course; but they have a freedom of choice to go out there in the

first place and, unless they become over-committed, they do not have to stay there. On the other hand, city people who fall on bad times are able to go to the country and start life afresh when new jobs become available.

I believe that this system is most important. We must fight tooth and nail to make sure that it is not destroyed. If it is allowed to be destroyed, the very social problems that have permeated life in the larger cities will find their way into society in the country areas and provincial centres.

Mr. Melloy: Isn't that more relevant to a Bill on family life?

Mr. ELLIOTT: It is very relevant to this Bill because it is all part of the land tenure system, which can definitely be affected by it.

Let me deal with the owner-operators versus the corporate farm concept. Before coming here, as well as being a farmer I engaged in consulting work. I have seen a lot of large corporate farms. There is no doubt whatsoever in my mind that the corporate farm system will never take over from the family farm concept. The idea of "get big or get out" is absolute rot. We cannot allow it to happen. We must fight it at every juncture because it is my belief that, once the person who is running the property does not believe in what he is doing but is doing it only for remunerative reward in the form of a salary, he does not have his heart in it and will not do the same job. He will not get the production that flows from the family farm concept. Let us make sure we never allow that situation to develop.

Mr. Melloy: That is what you are doing.

Mr. ELLIOTT: No. That is wrong. I am talking about freehold land. A ceiling has been set beyond which corporations will not be allowed to go. The Bill contains a provision requiring the Minister's consent on a living area. Limits are set beyond which they cannot go. The honourable member is right off the beam.

I would also like to see the freehold land tenure system examined from the point of view of private ownership and the feeling that an owner has for his land. He looks after it. For example, he takes positive steps to prevent soil erosion. Tenants on land are there only for the purpose of exploiting it. That is why we must stick to freehold land tenure. If we allow people merely to exploit land, they will destroy it and it will not be there for future generations. We must be very, very careful not to allow that to happen. A man on freehold land tenure looks after his property. He knows that if he does not, it will not be there for future generations; he will not have the opportunity to pass it on to those who follow him. This is most important.

Opposition members spoke about aggregation. We must be realistic. We must consider some of the Gulf country and some of the Channel country. Mention has been made of the Stanbroke Pastoral Company. As I have just indicated, I am not here to defend big corporations. But we must be realistic enough to realise there are certain situations where large companies, because of their size and their ability to weather the very harsh conditions that prevail for long periods, are able to stand up where others would fail. This is purely and simply because of their resources. This will be the case in certain situations, but only in those cases. I disagree with the extension of the system to any other area where it can be avoided.

Mr. Casey: Many families in the Channel Country sold out to companies such as Stanbroke.

Mr. ELLIOTT: This is true because, as I said, they could not make a go of it. I am not against big families holding large areas any more than I am against companies holding large areas. However, if aggregation is permitted further inland where there is good agricultural land, the communities and towns will be destroyed.

The Bill provides also for an increase from $12,000 to $50,000 in the amount of exemption in a probated estate. This is most necessary. As the honourable member for Somerset said, this will have no effect on the amount of revenue the Government receives. It is simply a procedure to speed up the finalisation of an estate. It is a very humanitarian step and, in the light of inflation, I believe it is most important.

I do not wish to take up any more time. I know that other honourable members will cover other aspects of the Bill but I felt very strongly about the particular matters I have dealt with.

Mr. HARTWIG (Callide) (8.53 p.m.): Like many other Land Bills introduced by the National-Liberal Government in the past 18 or 20 years, this Bill will be of benefit and an asset to people occupying land in various areas of this great State of Queensland. Years ago, under another type of Government, some 6 per cent of the land in Queensland was freeholded. I am very pleased to say that at the end of 1973 it had been increased to something like 14.9 per cent.

I am a third generation Australian, of which I am very proud. I have known the frustrations and worries of a grazing homestead lease with a special tenure. The lease was originally for 21 years. I remember when I was on "Tellebang" and had seven years to run. Mr. Foley issued a new lease for 14 years. I was a third generation Australian with 14 years of security. With a lease for a period as short as that, landowners have not either the capacity or the incentive to improve their properties. We were having a period of stagnation and, to a great extent, a period of non-productivity.

In 1967, the freehold area stood at 37,672,000 acres. In 1971, four years later,

an area of 60,026,000 acres was either held under freehold tenure or was in the process of conversion.

The general policy on leasehold tenure is to make each property sufficiently large to permit a reasonable living to be made from it after providing a reserve for bad seasons, and to make the lease sufficiently long to encourage the lessee to make permanent improvements commensurate with the capacity of the property. That is what leasehold tenure is all about. Many leases are subject to conditions of improvement such as land clearing, ringbarking, water facilities, and eradication of animal pests and noxious weeds. In some instances, leases are subject to personal residence.

The Queensland and Commonwealth Governments introduced a brigalow land development scheme which saw the development of approximately 13,000,000 acres of brigalow land in the State of Queensland. This has brought about a considerable increase in beef cattle numbers. In 1973, for instance, there were 9,190,067 beef cattle in Queensland. Twelve months later, the figure was 9,486,017, which represented an increase of 296,000 in that period.

If we look at the dairying industry, we find a pathetic story. I think that this is relevant to the early subdivision of the land, when farmers were put on areas that were far too small and on which they literally starved. With 200 or 300 acres they had no chance of providing a living for their families and making a profit. In 1943, there were 23,000 dairy farms in Queensland. Thirty-one years later, in 1974, there were 4,500 dairy farms in the State. Therein lies a tale.

I feel that the reason for this situation is to be found in the bad policies of earlier Governments as shown in the closer settlement schemes of the mid-1920's and early 1930's. They certainly brought about closer settlement but the areas were totally inadequate. It has been proven over the years that those policies were completely wrong. The areas were not living areas, and the farmers did not have sufficient security of tenure. I am pleased to see that the amendments proposed in the Bill will do much to provide security of tenure, with a capacity to make a living. That is the story of leasehold land and land development.

I should like to say that the Government has given consideration to the whole of Queensland. There is the coastal belt, where there is intensive farming and dairying. There are the Central Highlands, where there is grain-growing and sheep and cattle raising. In the arid and semi-arid western areas, there are sheep.

Climatic conditions, too, are a factor that has to be taken into consideration. From time to time erratic rainfall causes great stress and frustration, and it takes many landholders years to recover from long periods of drought and semi-drought. Some honourable members, particularly those on the Opposition benches, have the idea that people engaged in rural and primary industries make a fortune whenever they have a couple of good seasons. They do not think about the years of drought and semi-drought, or about periods of great depression such as we are now seeing in the beef-cattle industry.

I remember that a little over 18 months ago the Housewives' Association called for meatless days because the price of meat was too high. I admit that it was too high. The situation has now been reversed and beef producers are getting virtually nothing for their product, but we do not hear any support from that same Housewives' Association for their sisters in the country whose children are literally starving. I believe that city people could do a great deal to assist the beef industry at this time by promoting the sale and consumption of beef. I spoke to the Housewives' Association recently, and I am pleased to see that it is taking steps to promote the sale of beef. It is to be hoped that it continues to do so.

The question of foreign ownership has been mentioned in the debate, and I should like to give my thoughts on it. Since I first entered this Chamber, I have been concerned about foreign ownership. In New South Wales one American owns more than 11,000,000 acres. Thank God we do not have anything like that in Queensland! If we are to be fair dinkum about restricting foreign ownership, I believe that action must be taken across the board, and it is incumbent upon the Federal Government to see that it applies throughout the nation. I certainly do not want to see all our land taken up by foreign interests.

Let me refer to Thailand, where peasants are now farming on six, eight or 10 acres of ground. As some honourable members saw round Chainat, the Thai Government is legislating to enable people who have occupied land and worked for landlords—and, after all, the Government is nothing more than the landlord of leasehold land—to own a small area.

Mr. Casey: They have first to take the land from the absentee landlord.

Mr. HARTWIG: That is what I said. The peasants have only a lease; they do not own it. They have to obtain security of tenure. That is what we see happening in this State, where the Government is trying to give landholders security of tenure. They are entitled to it because they have worked hard for anything they have obtained from the soil.

I am concerned about foreign ownership. In my opinion, anybody who comes here from another country should indicate to the Government what he wants to do. The Government should then decide what area that person requires for the project. It should not allow people to go out and take

up thousands and thousands of acres of land. I am sure that such a system would work very satisfactorily for all concerned.

I commend the Minister for introducing the Bill.

Mr. GLASSON (Gregory) (9.4 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister and all those responsible for the drafting of the amendments proposed in the Bill. After listening to the speeches made by some honourable members in this debate, I think it is obvious that they do not understand the actual implications of the proposals, otherwise the concern they expressed would not be as great as it appeared to be.

Enough has been said about the conditions of Land Court members being brought into line with those of industrial commissioners, so I will not touch on those provisions. But let me refer to the freeholding provisions under which areas of country known as grazing selections or grazing farms can be converted to freehold tenure. Living areas vary in size.

Since the introduction of the legislation in the early 1960's very little freeholding has actually taken place in the 20 in. rainfall area. Those who have taken advantage of freehold tenure are still paying for their land. Freeholding is not just an automatic step that is taken overnight. The land is paid for over the term of the lease. Many of those who have taken advantage of the conversion to freehold tenure have to some extent regretted their decision. Once a person takes steps to freehold his land he loses the privileges or concessions that are extended to the holder of leasehold land during a time of disaster, such as a drought, when the Lands Department allows half rent to leaseholders. It is an indisputable fact that in the 20 in. rainfall area a person lives with drought and expects a drought on an average of three times a decade.

As I have heard it said tonight by various speakers, it is only fair that the person who is prepared to take the risk in the 20 in. rainfall area should know that he has what he can term his own piece of land. Land is our greatest national asset. I have seen improvements on land fall to pieces towards the end of the lease period. Leaseholders fear that they may lose their lease and consequently do not make further improvements or maintain existing improvements. That was very evident on the old properties before they were cut up.

On the bigger holdings improvements would fall right back as the term of the lease drew to a close. The leeway had to be made up when the new tenant came in. It is a retrograde step to allow our national asset to deteriorate. Now that the land has been cut down to living areas the same thing is going to happen at the end of the 30-year term because leaseholders will fear that they are going to lose their land. I do not think that any of us in our sane moments would ever believe that that was going to happen. But a run of a few years of good prices accompanied by a run of good seasons could reverse the thinking of people in authority so that they could make the decision to cut the areas down.

A former member of this Parliament made the statement that if he had 20,000 acres in the Longreach district he would be a very happy man. He later became Minister for Lands. He very quickly learned that at the time he made that statement there was a combination of a boom and good seasons. At that time only 20,000 acres of country was required, but not much later 60,000 acres was not enough to keep anyone. Even a person with 160,000 acres would have gone broke.

The honourable member for Cunningham referred to the fallacy of the statement "Get big or get out" which was made by a man who held a very responsible position in this nation. That is the greatest fallacy of all time. My own experience proves that because I got into the greatest mess in my life. A landholder who has a debt hanging over his head and who is faced with interest and redemption payments hits the deck after two bad seasons. The State would benefit more from one well-managed small living area than it would from three properties that are not looked after properly.

The members of the Minister's committee are totally opposed to any take-over by great corporations of this State's land. If the Bill does not contain a provision to prevent such take-over, it most certainly will get the knock from me.

The honourable member for Nudgee has claimed that Government members will toe the line and do what the Premier tells us to do. I told the people of Gregory in my policy speech that I would cross the floor and vote with the Opposition on any measure that reacts to their detriment, and I will stick by my promise.

Mr. Melloy: We shall see.

Mr. GLASSON: Indeed we shall.

The raising of the exemption level from $12,000 to $50,000 is a common-sense move by the department and the Minister. I congratulate them on their introduction of this provision.

Hon. A. M. HODGES (Gympie—Leader of the House) (9.12 p.m.), in reply: In the absence of the Minister for Lands, notes have been taken of the suggestions and propositions put forward as well as of the questions that have been asked by members. I have no doubt that he will reply at the second-reading stage. In the meantime, I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Motion (Mr. Hodges) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

The House adjourned at 9.15 p.m.