Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 19 AUGUST 1975

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Legislative Assembly

SECOND SESSION OF THE FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT

Appointed to meet

AT BRISBANE ON THE NINETEENTH DAY OF AUGUST, IN THE TWENTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II, IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1975

TUESDAY, 19 AUGUST 1975

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

Pursuant to the proclamation by His Excellency the Governor, dated 17 July 1975, appointing Parliament to meet this day for the dispatch of business, the House met at 11 a.m. in the Legislative Assembly Chamber.

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

The Clerk read the proclamation.

COMMISSION TO OPEN PARLIAMENT

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that I have received from His Excellency the Governor a commission appointing me and Mr. W. D. Hewitt, Chairman of Committees, or either of us, Commissioners to open this session of Parliament.

I now call on the Clerk to read the commission.

The Clerk read the commission.

Mr. SPEAKER, as the Senior Commissioner, said: Honourable members, we have it in command from His Excellency the Governor of Queensland to communicate to you that Parliament has been summoned to meet this day to consider legislation, the granting of Supply to Her Majesty and such other matters as may be brought before you; that the customary Speech will not be delivered at the Opening of this the Second Session of the Forty-first Parliament of Queensland and that, nevertheless, it is His Excellency's desire that you proceed forthwith to the consideration of the aforementioned business.

VACANCY IN SENATE OF COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to report that I have received the following message from His Excellency the Governor:—

"C. T. HANNAH,
"Governor.

"Message No. 4.

"The Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly a copy of a dispatch which he has received from the President of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia, notifying that a vacancy has occurred in the representation of the State of Queensland in the said Senate.

"Government House,
Brisbane, July 9, 1975."

(Copy)

"President of the Senate,
"Parliament House,
"Canberra.
"July 1, 1975.

"His Excellency the Governor of the State of Queensland,
"Government House,
"Brisbane, Queensland.

"Your Excellency,

"Pursuant to the provisions of section 21 of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution, I have to notify Your Excellency that a vacancy has happened in the representation of the State of Queensland in

the Senate, through the death of Senator Bertie Richard Milliner, which occurred on June 30, 1975.

"I have the honour to be,
"Your Excellency's obedient
Servant,
"JUSTIN O'BYRNE,
"President of the Senate."

In pursuance of the provisions of Standing Order No. 331—Casual Vacancy in the Senate—I propose to summon honourable members to meet in the Legislative Assembly Chamber on 27 August 1975, at 2.15 p.m., for the purpose of electing a senator as provided by section 15 of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

HER MAJESTY'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that I have received the following letter from His Excellency the Governor:—

"Government House,
"Brisbane, May 15, 1975.

"Sir,

"I have the honour to inform you that the Message of Loyalty from the Legislative Assembly of Queensland dated March 20, 1975, has been laid before The Queen.

"I am commanded by Her Majesty to convey her thanks to the members of the Legislature of Queensland.

"Yours faithfully,
"COLIN HANNAH,
"Governor."

"The Honourable the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly,
"Parliament House,
"Brisbane."

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S SEPARATE REPORT

STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE (QUEENSLAND)

Mr. SPEAKER announced the receipt from the Auditor-General of his separate report on the accounts of the State Government Insurance Office (Queensland) for the year 1973-74.

Ordered to be printed.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY; MINISTER FOR WORKS AND HOUSING

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier) (11.13 a.m.): I desire to inform the House that in pursuance of the provisions of section 8 of the Officials in Parliament Act 1896-1975 I have signed a delegation of authority authorising and empowering the Honourable Frederick Alexander Campbell, Minister for Industrial Development, Labour Relations and Consumer Affairs, to perform and exercise all or any of the duties, powers and authorities imposed or conferred upon the Minister for Works and Housing on and from 11 August 1975, and during Mr. Lee's absence.

PAPERS

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

Reports—
- Public Accountants Registration Board of Queensland, for the year 1974.
- Under Secretary for Mines, for the year 1974.
- President of the Industrial Court of Queensland, for the year 1974–75.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Proclamations under—
- Acquisition of Land Act 1967–1969 and the State Regional Planning and Development, Public Works Organization and Environmental Control Act 1971–1974.
- Acquisition of Land Act 1967–1969 and The Petroleum Acts, 1923 to 1967.
- Traffic Act Amendment Act 1974.

Orders in Council under—
- State and Regional Planning and Development, Public Works Organization and Environmental Control Act 1971–1974 and the Local Bodies' Loans Guarantee Act 1923–1973.
- State and Regional Planning and Development, Public Works Organization and Environmental Control Act 1971–1974.
- Public Service Superannuation Act 1958–1975 and the State Service Superannuation Act 1972–1975.
- Audit Acts Amendment Act 1926–1971.
- Industrial Development Act 1963–1973.
- Co-operative Housing Societies Act 1958–1971.
- Harbours Act 1955–1972.
- Explosives Act 1952–1974.
- Medical Act 1939–1973.
- Fisheries Act 1957–1974.
- Fish Supply Management Act 1972.
- Valuation of Land Act 1944–1974.

Regulations under—
- Mining Act 1968–1974.
- The Coal Industry (Control) Acts, 1948 to 1965.
- Children's Services Act 1965–1973.
- Offenders Probation and Parole Act 1959–1974.
- Consumer Affairs Act 1970–1974.
- Factories and Shops Act 1960–1973.

Apprenticeship Act 1964–1974.
Traffic Act 1949–1975.
Harbours Act 1955–1972.
Queensland Marine Act 1958–1972.
Chiropodists Act 1969.
Health Act 1937–1974.
Hospitals Act 1936–1971.
Valuation of Land Act 1944–1974.

By-laws under—
Railways Act 1914–1974, 1055 to 1058.
Harbours Act 1955–1972.
Optometrists Act 1974.

Report of the Queensland National Fitness Council for Sport and Physical Recreation for the year 1974–75

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

SESSIONAL ORDER

Hon. A. M. HODGES (Gympie—Leader of the House), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That during this session, unless otherwise ordered, and notwithstanding the provision of Standing Order No. 68, questions may be asked by members without notice being given. The period allotted each day for the asking of questions upon notice and without notice and for the answering of questions shall not exceed one hour."

Motion agreed to.

TIME LIMIT OF SPEECHES

SESSIONAL ORDER

Hon. A. M. HODGES (Gympie—Leader of the House), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That during this session, unless otherwise ordered, the following amendments to the times allowed for certain speeches shall apply—

(1) Under Standing Order No. 37A (Disallowance of Proclamations, Orders in Council, Regulations or Rules):

Mover of the motion, fifteen minutes; seconder of the motion and any other member, ten minutes; Minister in reply, twenty minutes. Total time allowed, two hours.

(2) Under Standing Order No. 109 (Time Limit of Speeches):

(a) Paragraph 4—In Committee on a Bill, Motion or Estimate—substitute 'ten minutes' for 'fifteen minutes'.

(b) Paragraph 8—In Committee on the introduction of a Bill—substitute 'twenty minutes' for 'twenty-five minutes'.

All other provisions of Standing Orders Nos. 37A and 109 shall continue to apply."

Motion agreed to.

DISCONTINUANCE OF PRINTING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS IN VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

Hon. A. M. HODGES (Gympie—Leader of the House), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That the printing in the Votes and Proceedings of questions on notice and the answers thereto be discontinued."

Motion agreed to.

DEATH OF MR. W. J. COPLEY

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier) (11.21 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this State by the late William John Copley, Esquire, a former member of the Parliament of Queensland.

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

The late William John Copley's parliamentary career of nearly six years ended in 1938, before any of us entered Parliament. However, Mr. Copley continued for another 34 years to give service to Queensland as a Government employee. Furthermore, his door always remained open to the electors of Bulimba whenever they wanted advice or assistance. He resided in that electorate until his recent death.

William John Copley was born at Ipswich in 1906, and was educated at Maryborough and Brisbane. On leaving school, he joined the Queensland Public Service in the Department of Agriculture and Stock. He was elected president of the Queensland State Service Union in 1929 at the age of 22, and held this position until his entry into Parliament. At 25 years of age, Mr. Copley was one of the youngest candidates when he won the seat of Bulimba for the A.L.P. in the general election of June 1932. His brother, the late Patrick Kerry Copley, entered Parliament at the same election as the member for Kurilpa, and died in office in July 1949. I am sure honourable members appreciate the fact that it is almost unique for brothers to enter and serve this Parliament at the same time. Mr. William Copley remained the member for Bulimba until April 1938, specialising in industrial affairs and the welfare of the working man.

On leaving Parliament, he returned to the State Public Service. He was first employed in the Agricultural Bank, and then for 27 years he was an industrial inspector with the Department of Labour and Industry. In this latter capacity Mr. Copley gave dedicated

service, impressing upon younger inspectors that their first duty was assisting industry wherever possible whilst at the same time ensuring that employees received their just entitlements. He was the architect of a fair and impartial petrol-roster system that operates at week-ends in Brisbane and other principal cities.

The late Mr. Copley was a man of courage, for he suffered gravely in health, particularly in 1963 and 1964, from throat and neck cancer. He underwent major surgery several times and suffered a heart attack during this period. He retired from the Department of Industrial Affairs in 1972, and his death occurred on 24 April this year.

The late gentleman is survived by his widow and five children, and on behalf of the Government and, indeed, all members of this Parliament I extend sincere sympathy to them.

Hon. Sir GORDON CHALK (Lockyer—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (11.25 a.m.): I second the motion of condolence moved by the Honourable the Premier. It is true that the name Copley has been associated with public life in this State over a long period. As the Honourable the Premier indicated, William John Copley retired from this Chamber before any of us now here were elected. However, his brother continued to take part in the business of the Queensland Parliament after quite a few of us here had been elected. As I have said before, one of the first things we do on each and every occasion we reassemble here is to pay tribute to those who have in their lifetime served the Parliament and State. I associate the Liberal Party with the motion of condolence to the members of Mr. Copley's family.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (11.26 a.m.): I desire to associate the Labor Party with this motion of condolence. The Copley family were well-known figures in the Labor movement and, as was mentioned by both previous speakers, Jack Copley served in this Parliament before any of us were elected. Jack Copley did not gain pre-selection after the expiration of his second term in the Parliament. Although after a plebiscite he was not re-endorsed by the Labor Party, he remained loyal to the party until the 1957 split when he left the Labor Party. In later years, however, he supported the honourable member for Bulimba.

He was very active as a union official and in that area my Party knew him as a delegate to the Queensland Central Executive of the Labor Party and to Labor-in-Politics conventions. On one occasion he sought pre-selection as a Labor Party candidate for the Senate but did not receive the nod.

The Opposition would like to be associated with the motion of condolence and would like his wife and family to know that we of the Labor Party, and indeed all members of Parliament, appreciate the work that he did over the years. We realise that the families of members lose a lot as a result of the hours of effort of members in the performance of their duties.

Motion (Mr. Bjelke-Petersen) agreed to, honourable members standing in silence.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

PUBLIC LIBRARY, NEW FARM PARK

Mr. LANE: I ask the Minister for Local Government and Main Roads: As he is aware of the great need that has existed for a number of years, under a Labor administration in the Brisbane City Council, for public library facilities to be made available to the residents of the New Farm area, is he also aware that a building constructed for this purpose has now been completed in New Farm Park? Does any provision now exist in the city of Brisbane Town Plan that would prevent the Brisbane City Council from opening the library in New Farm Park to the many people who are waiting to use it?

Mr. HINZE: I am aware that a building has been constructed in New Farm Park for use as a library. It is my intention to introduce validating legislation within the next couple of weeks. I intend to do this because of discussions I have had with the honourable member for Merthyr, who has his finger on the pulse of his electorate to such an extent that he was able to increase his majority by some thousands at the last State election. He obviously understands what the people in the area want. The validating legislation will make it possible for the building that has been built illegally by the Brisbane City Council to be used as a library.

RETURN OF INCOME-TAXING POWERS TO STATES

Mr. BURNS: I ask the Premier: In view of the fact that the newly announced policy of the Federal Liberal Party is to return some income-taxing powers to the States and that a Queensland Liberal M.P., Mr. Kevin Cairns, has said that this policy will disadvantage the smaller States, including Queensland, what is the attitude of the Government of Queensland to this suggested National-Liberal policy, which could result in reduced funds or increased taxes for Queensland citizens?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: The Leader of the Opposition need not have any concern or worry about the Leader of the Federal Opposition or members of the Federal Opposition parties. The States will have some say in the arrangements that are ultimately made with the States by a Liberal-National Country Party Government, so the honourable gentleman need not be concerned in the slightest.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN STATE DRUG SQUAD AND FEDERAL NARCOTICS BUREAU

Mr. BURNS: I ask the Minister for Police: Is he aware of the statement of Detective Sergeant K. L. Dorries in the Wardrop murder trial that there was no collaboration between the State Drug Squad and the Federal Narcotics Bureau because the Commissioner had instructed his squad not to collaborate with the Federal body but to carry out its own investigations? In view of the widespread public alarm over the recent report of drug taking by school-age children, will he now see that the closest collaboration between the State and Federal squads is made possible?

Mr. HODGES: The whole matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition is subject to appeal, and I refuse to answer the question.

FINANCIAL AID TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Mr. HARTWIG: I ask the Premier: As Mr. Whitlam's Government is reputed to have denied further financial assistance to our near neighbour in the North—Papua New Guinea —at a very crucial time when it is approaching independence, could this have a detrimental effect on relations between the State of Queensland and Papua New Guinea, particularly as it would appear that Chief Minister Somare could turn to Soviet Russia for this much-needed financial assistance?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: It does concern me a great deal that the Commonwealth Government appears to be reneging on arrangements originally made under which, according to Mr. Somare, $500,000,000 was to be made available over a period of time. That is a comparatively small sum when one recalls that just one item of Commonwealth expenditure—Medibank—runs into $2½ billion over 12 months.

One remembers also the assistance given to Communist countries such as Vietnam and Cambodia. The Commonwealth Government is prepared to give millions of dollars to the black revolutionaries in Africa. When it comes to our near neighbour, Papua New Guinea, it shirks its responsibility and sidesteps the issue. It indicates to me the accuracy of the statement attributed the other day to Denis Warner that half the members of the Commonwealth Cabinet are listed as being supporters of the Peace Council of the Communist Party. I am sure that every honourable member has read Mr. Warner's Press article. This organisation has been set up in Australia by the Soviet Union as a front for Communism. So it is easy to understand why the Commonwealth Government is not interested in helping Papua New Guinea whereas it is assisting Communist countries farther afield.

INCREASED POSTAL AND TELEPHONE CHARGES

Mr. LESTER: I ask the Premier: In view of the fact that the Prime Minister is hell-bent on increasing postal and telephone charges, and also in view of the fact that he has not answered two telegrams I have sent him protesting against these increases, what action does the Premier think we as Queenslanders can take to lodge strong protests against these intolerable impositions?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: The increased charges confronting people generally in the various areas of postal and telephone charges concern every member of the community. Cabinet has discussed them and decided on many courses to reduce postal expenditure as far as possible, such as including more than one letter in an envelope.

The Commonwealth's policy, as reiterated to the Treasurer and me in Canberra again and again by the Prime Minister himself, is that the user must pay. When I protested after the Prime Minister abolished the petrol-price differential throughout the nation, he said, "Mr. Premier, our policy is that the user must pay." When he abolished the superphosphate bounty, he said to us again that it was his policy that the user must pay. On the matter of airport charges and the registration of small aircraft, which is causing many people to sell or otherwise get rid of their aircraft, he again said that the user must pay. When air freights and fares were increased, it was again a matter of the user must pay. The same principle was applied when subsidies for inland air services were cancelled.

The Commonwealth Government needs all this extra money to implement its socialistic undertakings and therefore the user must pay. That is why we are in this situation today. In spite of this, through the Commonwealth Government's socialistic spending, it is in dire straits. That is why I have said again and again, that the only solution is to get rid of this Commonwealth Government.

ALLEGED OVER-CHARGING FOR SOUTHERN BEER DURING BREWERY STRIKE

Mr. JONES: In directing a question to the Minister for Justice, I refer to the recent brewery strike and the importation of southern beer which sold in certain places for a variety of prices ranging from 25 cents to 35 cents for a 7 oz. glass and 59 cents to 65 cents for a stubby. What steps does the Minister propose to take to ensure that the State Licensing Commission has the necessary emergency price-fixing powers to prevent obvious cases of over-charging in any similar situations that may arise? Is any action being contemplated against persons who engaged in blatant profiteering at the economic expense of the public during the recent dispute?

Mr. KNOX: The answer to the honourable member's question is, of course, that the commission has some powers already. If the

honourable member had a specific complaint that he wished to bring to the notice of the commission, I presume that he would have taken that action already. I understand that he has not, so——

Mr. Jones: How do you know?

Mr. KNOX: Have you?

Mr. Burns: How do you know?

Mr. KNOX: I asked him.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker won't let me answer you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I inform the honourable member for Cairns that when I am on my feet he will refrain from speaking. If he persists in repeated interjection, I shall have to deal with him. There will be no cross-firing in the Chamber whilst a Minister is on his feet. I ask all members for their co-operation.

Mr. KNOX: It is obvious that the honourable member for Cairns has not made any complaint to the Licensing Commission about this matter. If he does so, it will be attended to.

Mr. JONES: I rise to a point of order. I feel that the Minister is, without knowledge, making an assumption, and I also believe that I have the right to question him on the floor of the House. That is my right.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr. KNOX: If indeed there has been gross over-charging and profiteering as alleged by the honourable member for Cairns, he would have used his services much better by trying to resolve the dispute that led to the people of Queensland being deprived of their beer.

PROCESSING OF OBJECTIONS TO REVALUATION OF LAND

Mr. KAUS: I ask the Minister for Survey, Valuation, Urban and Regional Development: When will he be processing objections to the recent revaluations of land and, for the information of my constituents, what will be the machinery of this process?

Mr. LICKISS: When a revaluation notice is issued there are two important dates on it. One is the date of valuation, which is the date to which all values are related, and the other is the date of issue of the valuation. The Valuation of Land Act provides that within 60 days from the date of issue of the valuation a person may object on the prescribed form. When filling in the form an objector may request a conference, and the Valuer-General or his delegate will then arrange for that person to be interviewed on his or her own property to discuss on a without-prejudice basis the objection to that valuation.

To answer the honourable member more precisely—the Valuer-General will move to hear objections as soon as 60 days have elapsed from the date of issue of the valuation, and it is his intention to deal with these objections as soon as possible.

The Valuer-General or his delegate can, on objection, alter the valuation. If the objector is then still not satisfied with the valuation of his property he can proceed on appeal, in a prescribed form, to the Land Court and subsequently to the Land Appeal Court, if he so desires. There is a further right of appeal to the Full Court of the Supreme Court on a question of law, so there are ample rights of appeal to ensure that the valuation made is a correct one.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT

UNEMPLOYMENT ARISING FROM ELECTRICITY RATIONING

Mr. SPEAKER: I inform the House that I have received the following letter from the honourable member for Fassifern:—

"Parliament House,
"Brisbane, August 15, 1975.

"The Honourable J. E. Houghton, M.L.A.,
"Speaker,
"Parliament House,
"Brisbane.

"Dear Mr. Speaker,

"I wish to inform you that on Tuesday next, August 19, in accordance with Standing Order No. 137, I intend to move—'That the House do now adjourn.'."

"This motion is proposed to enable the House to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the concern for the public interest, arising from the possibility of large-scale unemployment if severe electricity rationing, affecting industry and commerce, has to be reimposed to preserve adequate stockpiles of coal at South-East Queensland power stations for emergency purposes.

"Yours faithfully,
"S. J. MULLER,
"Member for Fassifern."

Not fewer than five members having risen in their places in support of the motion—

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (12.6 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

I have moved this form of motion because Standing Orders do not contain any other provision enabling a debate to take place on a matter arousing great public interest.

During recent weeks, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Burns), together with the Lord Mayor of Brisbane (Alderman Walsh), has appeared on numerous occasions on television and made a blatant attempt to confuse the public on the issues involved

relative to the rationing of electricity. Assertions have been made that the present Government, the Southern Electric Authority of Queensland and the State Electricity Commission have failed to make provision for the ever-increasing consumption of power. These are not true, and the persons making such allegations know them to be untrue.

The rationing of electricity has been necessary not because the Government has failed in its obligation to provide mechanical devices to generate power but solely because of a shortage of fuel, which in this instance is coal. If at present the Southern Electric Authority of Queensland had another six powerhouses, the situation would not be different.

Mr. Burns interjected.

Mr. MULLER: We will hear from the Leader of the Opposition later.

Every responsible citizen in South-east Queensland must have been alarmed by the events of recent weeks. Industrial action by one militant trade union has interrupted and restricted coal supplies, thereby threatening essential services throughout this part of Queensland. The consequent electricity rationing, which could not be avoided under these circumstances, brought about a complete stoppage of some less essential sections of industry and commerce between 31 July and 5 August.

Mr. Marginson: How was it avoided in New South Wales?

Mr. MULLER: The honourable member will have an opportunity to give his views.

All consumers of electricity have been subject to rationing since 22 July, firstly, on a voluntary basis and, since midnight on 25 July, on a compulsory basis. This has interfered with the normal life of the community and has brought about large-scale unemployment, and it is a matter of great public concern. The coal shortage has caused heavy cost to the public generally, including those thrown out of work as a result of it.

Last week the Coal Industry Tribunal hearing was boycotted by the unions. From the bench Mr. Duncan described the situation in these terms—

> "The positive refusal to take the dispute to arbitration maintained in the face of total failure of serious and meaningful efforts to reach agreement is harmful to the interests of the industry, the men themselves and the nation. Already South East Queensland has been gravely inconvenienced by a situation to which this dispute has been a principal contributor."

Mr. Duncan then went on to say that 13 days of strikes had cost the country 3,000,000 tonnes of coal, and mine workers $11,000,000 in wages. On top of that is the effect of the ban on overtime, which was excluded from those figures. Probably one-third or more of that loss has occurred in Queensland. There is still no guarantee when coal supplies will be brought back to normal and stockpiles will return to a safe level.

Mr. Houston: What is a safe level? How many tonnes?

Mr. MULLER: 380,000 tonnes is a safe level.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask honourable members on my left to refrain from persistent interjections.

Government Members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! That applies also to honourable members on my right. While I am on my feet all honourable members will refrain from interjecting. If honourable members do not heed my warnings, I will deal with them under Standing Order 123A.

Mr. MULLER: The present deficiencies in coal on the stockpile match almost exactly the amount of coal withheld by the miners by strikes and overtime bans since this present industrial strife began. For that reason it is important that this House be fully informed of the facts about the coal shortage, which has forced the rationing of electricity in South East Queensland, and that this House register its concern at the damage the whole community is suffering because of one small industrial group.

By now most honourable members are well aware of the need for adequate stockpiles at the main power stations. We have seen ample and tragic evidence of this need in recent years, with the Box Flat disaster in 1972 and the Australia Day floods last year. The stockpiles of coal represent security for essential services in the event of interruptions in the delivery of coal, whatever the cause.

It is unfortunate that in past years coal stockpiles were also seen by coal miners as a serious threat to their employment and working conditions. Some of that out-of-date thinking still carries over to the present day even though coal miners, in many respects, enjoy better pay and conditions than workers in other callings. A survey last January showed that the average earnings of coal miners in Queensland were $244 a week.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask honourable members on my left to refrain from persistent interjections. They will have an opportunity to speak in the debate. I ask all honourable members to heed that warning.

Mr. MARGINSON: I rise to a point of order. He is telling a lie.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! That term is a reflection on the honourable member for Fassifern, and also on me. I have not heard any lies. The honourable member for

Wolston has accused the honourable member for Fassifern of telling a lie. I ask him to withdraw that statement.

Mr. MARGINSON: I will withdraw the word "lie".

Mr. MULLER: The media were informed by some persons—and I would not know their authority for saying this—that in many instances miners had a take-home pay of only a little over $90 a week. That statement is proved to be incorrect by the earlier figure I gave.

Careful and expert judgment has to be exercised in determining what represents the minimum irreducible quantity of coal needed on a power station stockpile at a given time to guarantee the supply of electricity for essential services such as hospitals, water and sewerage facilities, and food supplies.

At midnight on Sunday, 20 July, the Southern Electric Authority had an effective stockpile of coal at its main power station, Swanbank, but this was equal to only 15 days' normal consumption. This was considered to be an alarming situation. The level was lower than at the same time last year, and charts published in the Press of coal stockpile levels show quite clearly that the stockpiles have fallen sharply and continually since May. This is the result of systematic industrial action by the coal-mining unions.

In addition to the miners' action in restricting deliveries of coal, the leader of the Transport Workers Union, Mr. Arch Bevis, was quoted in "The Courier-Mail" of 19 July as saying that, unless contractors supplying coal to the Swanbank Power Station agreed to talks aimed at achieving a 35-hour week for truck-drivers carting coal from West Moreton, no coal would be carried to Swanbank.

The coal miners' industrial action was taken mainly in support of a log of claims that had been served on coal-mine owners throughout Australia and, quite rightly, that was a matter for negotiation and arbitration. That log of claims has not received the publicity that should be given to it in the present crisis. It was intended as a first step towards the destruction of wage indexation and the creation in the coal-mines of an elitist work-force whose members would enjoy wage rates and conditions far in excess of those that can be afforded by the nation for the balance of the working community.

That log of claims was before the Coal Industry Tribunal in Sydney last Thursday, when the President of the Miners Federation, Mr. Evan Phillips, read to the tribunal a long statement indicating his federation's intention to withdraw and to take no further part in the proceedings. While that type of attitude is adopted, there remains the threat of the reimposition in Queensland of severe electricity rationing with resultant hardship and high unemployment.

Published figures show how hard it has been, even with rationing, to maintain essential stockpiles in the face of restricted supplies. The most severe rationing that was introduced achieved only a 43 per cent reduction in the use of electricity. This shows how dependent the community is on the use of coal; it also shows the havoc that will be created in industry and commerce if power stations do not receive adequate coal supplies. And, of course, it shows the extent to which the coal-mining unions are holding this State to ransom.

Let me remind honourable members what severe electricity rationing means for Queenslanders. Domestic consumers will have limited lighting and cooking facilities and will be without hot water and space heating. Commercial consumers will be allowed one 40-watt fluorescent light per 40 square metres. No electricity will be available for entertainment or for sport; nor will there be any for air-conditioning. Only basic power will be supplied for lifts, cooking and other uses. Further, industrial consumers will not be allowed any electricity unless they are engaged in essential services. This is an alarming state of affairs.

The effects and cost of lost factory production and unemployment are staggering. The Director of the Metal Trades Industry Association, Mr. D. J. Buckland, estimated that 35,000 metalworkers under Federal awards were stood down with a loss of wages of $500,000 a day and a daily production loss of at least $2,000,000. The jobs of 500,000 workers were placed in jeopardy.

Both the Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Manufactures have warned that businesses already hard hit could go to the wall. In addition, the electric authorities are losing money, and loss of revenue is bound to force prices up again. All this is occurring because a small group of miners are demanding special privileges at any cost to the public.

If it becomes necessary to reimpose severe rationing, I understand that the State Electricity Commission has estimated that, in order to achieve the necessary cut-back in coal usage, the rationing order will have to be even more stringent that the one that operated from 31 July to 4 August. I also understand that there is very little scope for further reductions in usage without either load-shedding or cutting into services which, to date, have been treated as essential, such as educational institutions and the media.

To date, the Government has very sensibly avoided full-scale black-outs. It is apparent that every effort had been made by the State Electricity Commission and the Government to avoid extreme personal hardship or long-term damage, but this could not be guaranteed if coal supplies dry up completely. The public have obviously recognised this and, on the whole, have so far supported rationing.

The prospect of further and more severe rationing, with consequent unemployment on a large scale, is very real. Last Thursday the Miners' Federation refused to appear before the Coal Industry Tribunal in Sydney to allow arbitration on its claims to proceed. Stop-work meetings have been organised in New South Wales for tomorrow, 20 August, and in Queensland for 27 August, when the miners have returned from their August holidays. It can be expected that these stop-work meetings, which will cause a loss of coal production, will be followed by more stoppages.

The coal-miners' total disregard of the public is evidenced by the fact that in the 35 working days leading up to 4 August, when severe electricity rationing was lifted in South-east Queensland, 11 days were taken up in strikes. Those strikes and overtime bans cost electricity consumers the equivalent of four weeks' coal supplies.

(Time expired).

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (12.23 p.m.): This debate is a clear example of how this Parliament is becoming a waste of time in that the Government has brought the House together after months of recess and it has no business or legislation to bring before us. A back-bencher has been placed in the position of having to move an adjournment motion to create an artificial debate to take up some of the time of the House which should be used to debate matters that call for urgent legislative action.

If this matter were so important we would have expected the Minister for Mines and Energy, who is sitting in the House, to move the motion himself—we would not expect the House to have to depend on a National Party private member from a rural electorate to move such a motion on behalf of the Government—but the Government has no legislation available and doubtless in this way it hopes to while away some time while legislation is prepared.

The first mistake the honourable member for Fassifern made was when he said we had electricity rationing because there is a shortage of coal in Queensland. A shortage of coal!

Mr. Muller interjected.

Mr. BURNS: That is what he said. He may want to change his speech later on, but he said that there was a shortage of coal. Here we are in Queensland with millions of tonnes of coal stockpiled, with the Minister for Mines and Energy spending most of his time——

Mr. MULLER: I rise to a point of order. I did not make the statement alleged by the Leader of the Opposition. I said that there is a shortage of coal at the power-house.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I hope that the Leader of the Opposition will accept the statement made by the honourable member for Fassifern.

Mr. BURNS: I find it very difficult to accept it because I was listening and wrote down what he said at the time. It comes to this: if the honourable member denies what he said and I have to accept it, that changes the whole import of what he said in the House. I do not like to dispute your ruling, Mr. Speaker, and I withdraw my statement, but I am sure that Opposition members and other honourable members will agree with me that he said "shortage of coal". He might have meant something else but he most certainly did not say it.

Mr. Moore: Have a look at "Hansard" tomorrow.

Mr. BURNS: "Hansard" might even indicate that the honourable member for Windsor has been here all day, and we all know that will not be true, either.

The situation we are faced with is that a member of Parliament has adopted a union-bashing technique to blame the unions and the workers for a Government-created crisis. He launched a very vicious attack on the miners in the area. I will be interested to see whether the honourable members for Ipswich West and Ipswich join their colleague from Wolston in supporting and defending their constituents—the miners who have been attacked under parliamentary privilege.

However, let us examine the supply of coal sixteen months ago. On 13 February 1974 the Minister for Mines and Main Roads (Mr. Camm) and the Minister for Local Government and Electricity (Mr. H. A. McKechnie) conferred on means of overcoming the coal shortage at the Swanbank Power Station. The Queensland Coal Owners Association Secretary (Mr. Lawrie) said that West Moreton mines wanted to supply Swanbank's total coal requirements but accepted that Central Queensland would have to give the West Moreton mines breathing space by carrying them over for a short period. He said that the reserves were available at West Moreton but that they could not be produced overnight and that the coal-owners looked to the Government to allow them to develop West Moreton mines to provide adequate supplies.

Seven days later, on 20 February 1974, the Premier announced that a Millmerran mine would be opened to supply coal to Swanbank. That was long before July 1975, when people were shivering without radiators and hot water. At that time the Millmerran mine was to be opened to supply coal to Swanbank, where there was a shortage.

It is nonsense for the Government to say that it did not know anything about the shortage. Press statements announced a shortage of coal supplies. One Minister was negotiating with the other about it.

On 19 March 1974 the Treasurer said, "I will resign if we have power rationing." At that time the Government threatened the Commissioner for Electricity Supply, and the Minister then responsible for electricity was instructed to pull the commissioner into line for his statement that there would be power rationing owing to a shortage of coal supplies at Swanbank. The true position was known at that time, so it is no use the Government saying that this is something that crept up on it. Over 12 months ago we knew there were shortages, and those shortages have threatened since then. The miners' strike did not result from some new overnight action. Their log of claims was made at the beginning of January 1975. In 1974, when we did not have any problems finding sufficient coal to continue to supply Swanbank, there were strikes. The newspaper reports I have read also indicate that there were strikes in N.S.W. but no power crisis!

Obviously the Government has decided to engage in a little union-bashing, to squeeze the ordinary people in South-east Queensland and blame the unions for it, to put the pressure on and then allege that the strikes and the unions are responsible for the crisis and hardship.

If the Government wishes to raise those matters, I would like some questions answered. How did the Government, through inadequate planning, allow coal supplies to reach the level where electricity supply was in peril?

Mr. Hartwig interjected.

Mr. **BURNS:** I am talking about coal supplies. Government members should be very clear on what I am saying. Twelve months ago it was known——

Mr. Hartwig: There's no coal at Hay Point.

Mr. BURNS: It is nonsense for the Government to suggest that they could not possibly have ordered thousands of tonnes of coal to be railed to Swanbank from mines throughout the State. When they could have been doing that, they were converting coal wagons into wheat wagons at Toowoomba.

Mr. Hartwig interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Callide will refrain from persistent interjections.

Mr. BURNS: The Opposition wants to know what tonnage of Central Queensland coal is available on present production levels to complement West Moreton supplies to Swanbank after export commitments have been met. What rail transport capacity is available to carry Central Queensland coal to Swanbank? What provisions exist for the diversion of wagons and other essential railway items to get it there? What delays exist in the first stage of the Gladstone Power House? When does Cabinet intend to make a decision on a new powerhouse, which the Government has been told should have been made some time ago? Why has the Queensland Government deliberately delayed a decision on the new South-east Queensland powerhouse? Why were South-east Queenslanders inflicted with power rationing without more warning? These are all questions that ought to be answered by the Government. Twelve months ago the Premier said that he wanted to protect the ordinary worker. He said, "We do not want the worker inconvenienced or left without electricity. We do not want him to lose his job." The Premier at that time was also saying, "We don't want cost increases." But right in the middle of the power crisis electricity tariffs were increased and his own Minister put workers out of their jobs and out of electricity unnecessarily. But as I said at the outset the Government should not use—or misuse—this House for union-bashing exercises merely because the Government has no legislation ready to introduce. If the Government had been prepared, we would now be debating legislation. The motion is a weak political stunt to cover up the inefficiency of Government members as legislators and also to hide the Government's failure in the provision of power. No motion is needed to provide adequate electricity; all that is needed is Government planning and action.

The Government knew that there was a shortage of coal at the powerhouse; but as a result of its inaction people in Japan were working and using our coal whilst our own people in South-east Queensland were out of work and without lights. The Opposition wants to know what sort of agreements are being made to ensure that in future the ordinary working man in Queensland will not be disadvantaged while the Government's Japanese friends are using our coal and power. What sort of agreements is the Government writing with Utah and Thiess-Peabody-Mitsui to ensure that coal supplies will be available for the benefit of the people of South-east Queensland before coal is sent to Japan?

The Minister for Mines and Energy has said that even if the miners go back to work, there could still be rationing of electricity until Christmas. How can the honourable member for Fassifern blame the miners when the Minister stated quite clearly in the Press that there will be rationing until Christmas even if the miners return to work?

Mr. Camm: No, I did not.

Mr. BURNS: What did you say?

Mr. CAMM: I rise to a point of order. Why cannot the Leader of the Opposition tell the truth for once? What he is saying is a lot of lies and tripe. I never at any time said that there would be rationing until Christmas. What I said was that if the

delivery rate of 63,000 tonnes a week was not maintained, there could be extensive rationing.

Mr. BURNS: The Minister never said that at all. That is a deliberate lie and he's calling me a liar!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will have to accept the Minister's denial.

Mr. BURNS: I will withdraw it, Mr. Speaker, and take a point of order. The Minister called me a liar. He said that I was telling lies, and I ask for a withdrawal.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Minister to withdraw that statement.

Mr. Camm: He might not have been telling lies, but he did not have any information.

Mr. BURNS: The information I have I read from the Press. The Minister for Mines and Energy said in the newspaper that even if the miners went back to work, there could be rationing until Christmas. That is in the newspapers, and the Minister did not deny it. Why did he not deny it if it was untrue?

Mr. Camm: Why hasn't the Federal Government denied that half of its members are Comms?

(Time expired.)

Mr. PORTER (Toowong) (12.33 p.m.): Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who foams and froths in this place like a sink full of dirty washing-up water, the honourable member for Fassifern, the mover of this motion, is always quiet, restrained and factual. Everybody knows that he perfers to deal in low-key terms; he always understresses rather than overstresses. When he proposes this motion without any exaggeration, hyperbole or purple prose, we know that what he says needs the careful attention of the House. Because we know that he is a modest person who does his homework carefully, everything that he says has added weight. Because he traversed the details of this sordid, sorry and sinister affair so well, I do not intend to go over it in quite the same detail.

What I do want to put to the House is the larger scope that the motion encompasses. What we in this place must simply do is recognise what in fact this debate is all about. Ostensibly, it is about the community distress that follows the impact of power cuts, but in real fact—and everybody in this Chamber knows it—it is about confontation between unelected union power and the elected power of this responsible Government. This debate reflects one of the great issues of our times, and one of the parliamentary tragedies of this State surely is the spectacle of the Leader of the Labor Opposition, cut down to a veritable rump at the election last year, saying that this matter is unimportant, and that we are wasting time discussing it.

This is the issue that is the greatest tragedy for the economy of the country, for our community and for our prospects both here and abroad. This is the very situation which has reduced the United Kingdom to about a tenth-rate power in a matter of a very few years, yet the Leader of the Opposition has the gall—I might say the absolute stupidity—to suggest that the matter is of no moment, that we should not bother about it and should not waste time talking about it.

Step by step the honourable member for Fassifern revealed the cold-blooded, union planning which has resulted in this situation, planning to hold the community to ransom; and for what ends has it been done? Are the ends the industrial betterment of the union members? An independent authority says the union members are averaging about $250 a week so I would suggest that this move is not designed to improve matters for the union members. Of course it is not. The end in view is power.

Last year I chaired a committee of Government members which dealt with industrial matters and this committee produced a number of proposals regarding union ballots and other related matters. The proposals were all very sensible and were designed to ensure that there was greater rank-and-file participation in union decisions and that Communist-inspired leadership could not exploit the unions and thereby exploit the community.

These proposals were designed to prevent the development of the very situation that exists at the present time where the union has acted like some sort of hostile invading force laying waste to the countryside as it drives on towards its objective. This coal shortage, with the power cuts that flow from it is, unhappily, typical of this very situation. It was planned like a piece of battle strategy for an army going to war. War against whom? It is always the general public which gets caught in the cross-fire.

It would be wonderful if members of the Opposition, who always try to plead the cause of the working man, would try to persuade unions that they are indeed members of the community, that they are part of the corporate body of consumers, that they are not something separate and that every act a union takes against the body politic it takes against each of its members individually.

What we have to remember here—and I hope it will be remembered in coming legislation—is that people in the community overwhelmingly want trade unions to be run in the interests of their members and the community in general and not in the interests of the people who manipulate the trade unions from the top. Public-opinion polls have shown this down through the years. The latest Morgan Gallup Poll I

have in relation to this matter is dated October 1974 and shows that between 70 to 75 per cent of people in Australia want secret ballots for trade union elections, and this figure includes well over 60 per cent of trade union members.

It might be interesting for honourable gentlemen opposite to learn that the results of a poll published in September last year showed that what worried people most in Australia was not big business, not the multinational corporations, not the media, not the Government but the fear of big unions. In fact, 66 per cent of people nominated big unions as their greatest area of apprehension.

One must sometimes wonder just who some union officials think they are. In this mornings "Courier-Mail" we see that the Queensland Trade Union Congress is to be asked to ban the mining, processing and export of uranium. Who in God's name do the unions think they are? What right have they to usurp the role of elected Government? What right have these unelected people to propose that we should have the rule of the gutter, the rule of the Trades Hall, over the rule of elected Governments which can be tossed out at elections if the people do not like what they do. This is the most monstrous proposition, this steady and insidious growth in the power of some militant unions, that the nation faces. Their actions are aided and abetted by the party which honourable members opposite represent. Because of what they stand for, they have very properly been reduced in numbers, and this process has certainly been speeded by their fellows in the Federal sphere.

All of us, of course, accept that there is a right to strike; but no right in our community can escape being matched by a corresponding responsibility. There should no more be an inalienable right to strike than there should be abolition of a right to work. In our type of society, no group of persons, merely because it suits their own particular personal, industrial or political ends, can arrogate to themselves the right to determine that some people shall not receive their incomes, that some people shall go without and that some people shall be forced to suffer.

I believe we are moving towards that stage, and I am quite sure that I represent the overwhelming body of opinion on this side of the House when I say that the time has come for us as a Government to accept the obligations in that sphere that people want us to accept. I hope that when the legislation comes into this Chamber during the present session, it will reflect what the overwhelming majority of members on this side of the House and what, clearly, three-quarters of the people in this country want. I say that most people believe that if some unions want to act like bullies, then the bullies themselves must expect to be bullied by the one power that people have to enforce this situation—the power of an elected Government.

We have never had a situation in this country as fearful as the present situation. We had more strikes in 1974 than we have had since 1913, when statistics relating to industrial disputes were first kept, and that reflects the encouragement that is being given to union people by honourable members opposite.

This man-made coal shortage, this union-engineered coal shortage, which has led to crippling and painful power cuts, is typical of the problems that responsible Governments must resolve, and it will only worsen if we do not face up to it. We will quickly become like the United Kingdom, where responsible Government is now a sorry joke because there is literally no decision that the United Kingdom Government can take without first getting the consent of the unions to it. Heaven forbid that we get to that stage!

(Time expired.)

Mr. HANSON (Port Curtis) (12.43 p.m.): In the first place, I am somewhat surprised that, in view of the line taken by the Leader of the Opposition in this debate, the Minister for Mines and Energy did not himself initiate this very important motion. However, it has been left to the honourable member for Fassifern, a National Party colleague of the Minister, to bring the matter before the House.

The Standing Rules and Orders of this Assembly demand that the mover of an adjournment motion shall have the support of at least five members standing. What did we see when the matter was raised this morning? The honourable member for Ithaca and the honourable member for Toowong were the only members to rise to their feet, and there was a considerable delay before other honourable members opposite came out of their funk-holes and rose to support the Government on the introduction of the motion. Many of them who have a vital and direct interest in the matter are hiding behind colleagues and are very embarrassed by the motion that has been put forward.

The Government has put the motion forward not only because it has no legislation ready to proceed with but also because it is desirous of inflaming the present situation and creating discord throughout the State. The national log of claims put forward by the mining unions is now about nine months old and there have been protracted negotiations on it. Negotiations proceeding at present will, it is hoped, at least reach some form of finality and so bring about industrial peace. But what do we find? We find the Government, on the opening day of this session of Parliament, putting up a back-bench member to move this motion and, in the very delicate industrial situation that

exists in this State, trying to create discord and cause considerable inconvenience to the people of Queensland. Certainly it is not a very popular course for any Government to pursue. I understand that the National Party dinner tonight will be a big show. No doubt some of the large coal-mine owners will be dipping their hands into their pockets to swell the funds of the National Party.

The Premier and the Minister for Mines and Energy travel throughout the State vomiting their hate upon the mining unions and unions generally and, at the same time, creating a certain amount of inconvenience to the people. The Government is nothing if not Fascist. It should hang its head in shame because of its sad and sorry history in the supply of the State's power requirements.

The present Government came to office in 1957. In 1960 I and several other local authority officials were interviewed by the Merz McLellan people, whom the Government engaged to report on the State's power requirements for many years ahead. Although a very voluminous report was presented to the Government, it was scrapped in the early 1960's. To study history in its proper perspective—that is one of the reasons for the present power shortage in Queensland. It was not brought about by the miners in the last couple of months when they decided to fight for their rights. After all, what Government member would get down into those stinking holes with outmoded equipment? Admittedly, with modern technology, equipment has improved in recent years. Would any Government member go down the pits and work the shifts that have to be worked by the underground miners at Ipswich and other areas in this State? I would love to see the honourable member for Toowong coming up out of the pits with his hard-hitter and miner's lamp. Imagine him arriving home in the ultra-conservative suburb of Toowong and washing his grimy hands and the coal from his tits! It would be champers and chicken at the barbecue behind his home.

The sorry story of the inadequacies of the Government in supplying power to the State does not end there. One has only to go back to 1967 and 1968 and take note of the warnings that were given by the then chairman of the Southern Electric Authority, Mr. Anthony. He spoke about the need for a new powerhouse complex. Note should be taken of the remarks of the honourable member for Port Curtis. On his entry into Parliament in 1963 he drew attention to the inadequacies of the Government and demanded that it shape up to its responsibilities and provide more power for the people of the State. Incidentally, he was supported by numerous men who were very competent in the field of power supply. We know what happened in 1968 and 1969 when the Liberal-Country Party coalition was in office in Canberra. Long negotiations took place between the Bjelke-Petersen/Chalk Government and the Gorton Government over loan moneys to get the new powerhouse launched at Gladstone. Of course, Canberra's answer was that the State had not supplied details and that the Commonwealth Government knew very little about Queensland's case, hence the delay. Those are not my words or the words of any other Labor Party spokesman but the words of the Liberal colleagues of honourable members opposite in Canberra. They are the words of Gorton, Fairbairn and many others who occupied ministerial office in the Gorton administration.

Honourable members opposite should hang their heads in shame because of their Government's history of inadequacies in providing power for the people of the State. Because miners desire to press for a log of claims, because they decide to take strike action—the only action they can take to bring to the attention of the authorities their just demands—Government members scream. They are responsible for the power shortage, and this allegation can be proved by tracing the history of this matter from 15 February last year, when a major row erupted within the State Government. No doubt the honourable member for Toowong and his group, by devious means, exerted a tremendous influence on the decisions that were arrived at then. We know, of course, that they are often in the background when Government decisions are made.

The Liberal Party members were reported to have been fuming at the decision to bring Blackwater coal to Ipswich because they claimed it would lead to increases of as much as 10 per cent in electricity charges. Naturally the Liberal Party called the tune, much to the embarrassment of the National Party Ministers.

But the history of this matter goes back much further than that. Many Liberal Party members would agree with me that this Government, controlled by "Dads and Daves", has shown that it is not equal to the task of catering for the future requirements of the State. In 1969 a power station for Gladstone was on the drawing board for completion in 1974. It is not yet completed, and there are grave doubts that it will be completed even next year.

The Government told us that flood-prone Queensland would welcome the new power station at Gladstone. It was held out as a hope for Queenslanders to avoid a situation of the type that arose when three or four coal mines in Ipswich were flooded and thrown out of production. The Gladstone Power Station should have been on stream long ago, but the Cabinet Ministers, showing a complete lack of aggression, failed to take action to safeguard the future interests of Queenslanders.

I forecast that if the Government continues along its present course of taking it easy while enjoying the fruits and emoluments of office, without paying any regard

whatever to the public safety and public good, in five years' time an even more disastrous situation will arise.

(Time expired.)

Mr. HARTWIG (Callide) (12.53 p.m.): It was very interesting to hear the honourable member for Port Curtis accuse the Queensland Government of inadequacies. Fancy him, a person who has on his doorstep a $200,000,000 enterprise provided by this Government, having the audacity to charge it with incompetence! Under this Government vast quantities of coal are being produced. In contrast, when Labor was in office there was not even one large-scale coal-mine in operation and there was virtually no coal industry. Apparently Opposition members have short memories. If it had not been for the policies of this coalition Government, there would be no coal mining at Moranbah, Saraji, Blackwater and Moura—and there certainly would not be a new power station nearing completion at Gladstone.

Not one ounce of credit is given this Government by the member for Port Curtis, who has condoned the actions taken by the Communist-dominated unions in the recent power crisis. The fault lies not with the union members but with their Communist-dominated leaders, and they are the persons whose actions he condones.

Mr. N. T. E. Hewitt: Under Labor we had people living in tin shanties.

Mr. HARTWIG: Most of the people did not even have homes to live in.

As a former chairman of the Capricornia Regional Electricity Board I can speak with some authority on this issue. Electricity generation is a tremendous business, supplying a product that is necessary for the welfare of our community and essential for the production of 90 per cent of our industrial output.

The Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues were very quiet during the time that power restrictions were imposed upon consumers in South-east Queensland. Electricity consumers depend upon power stations at places like Collinsville, Callide and Swanbank. Apart from a few gas turbines and the hydro-electric scheme on the Barron River, the sought-after fuel for electricity generation is high-quality steaming coal, which, I am convinced, should be mined as economically as possible, preferably by the open-cut method.

Over the period of electricity restrictions, the Minister for Mines and Energy worked his insides out. I pay tribute to him. I dare say that over those three days and nights he did not once go to bed. He worked unceasingly to bring common sense into the coal situation. Before that we made a tour of the northern coal-fields. The manager of Saraji mine told us on 9 July that Utah, in mining Queensland coal, had lost 29 working days this financial year. That is equal to almost six weeks' work, and at that time, early in July, a strike was on. That was long before there was any power rationing. The mates of members of the Opposition control the Communist-dominated union in New South Wales. The Minister went into the mess at Peak Downs and Saraji, and we drank with coal miners who had no hesitation in saying that it was the Whitlam Government and the Communist-dominated unions who were bringing this on. Key people in those areas are dwindling in number. They are moving away from the coal mines and getting other jobs. They are fed up to the teeth with this Communist-controlled business that is ruining the economy of this State and nation.

About 35 years ago I used to stay with friends in Brisbane when I visited the city. On one occasion a chap who was boarding there was going out to a meeting every second or third night. When I asked him, "What's the strength of your going out?" he said, "We have a vacancy on the executive of our union and we're going to vote our Communist friend onto the executive." Over the years Communist-inspired people have taken over the control of unions. Today we are paying the penalty for the take-over by this party.

Coal is the chief fuel used in Queensland to generate electricity. The West Moreton field is charging about $25 a tonne to mine the coal at West Moreton. That is what it is costing us. The Government has tried to keep the West Moreton field going.

Mr. Marginson: How much did you say?

Mr. HARTWIG: Approximately $24 a tonne.

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

Mr. HARTWIG: I should like to correct a mistake I made shortly before the luncheon recess. I said that West Moreton coal cost $24 a tonne whereas I should have said $14 a tonne.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Minister for Mines and Energy, the Premier, the Queensland Cabinet and the Government have done everything in their power to avert the very undesirable situation brought about by the shortage of power.

I am afraid that until we have secret, controlled strike ballots, this country is destined to have more industrial unrest than in the past year. And, under the Whitlam Government, last year saw a record in industrial action—contrary to the remarks of the honourable member for Port Curtis about industrial peace.

The loss of production due to strikes and overtime bans this year at Swanbank represents a loss in production of 265,000 tonnes. If that tonnage had been mined, it would have been more than adequate and there would have been no need for any restriction in the use of electricity in this State. Swanbank Power Station requires 64,000 tonnes of coal a week from now until Christmas

and to see us over the holiday period. That production would give us a surplus of 14,000 tonnes a week and would carry us over the Christmas holiday period. If less than 64,000 tonnes of coal is mined each week, we will be in a desperate situation over the Christmas holiday period.

The ball is now in the miners' court and, once again, I should like to highlight the lack of support that the A.L.P. gave the Government in the recent industrial strife that was caused by the unions. The A.L.P., as usual, condoned the actions of the Communist-dominated unions and their activities. The Queensland Government handled the situation in the best possible way.

(Time expired.)

Mr. MARGINSON (Wolston) (2.18 p.m.): This question of coal production and the shortage of coal at Swanbank did not arise last month; nor did it arise last year. It arose in 1972. Cabinet was even then discussing the shortage of coal at Swanbank.

Mr. Campbell interjected.

Mr. MARGINSON: The Minister should not talk. He went to Ipswich and said that a power station would be erected there and that the matter was on the drawing board. It was in the Press and the Minister did not deny it. He should be the last one to come in.

In 1972, we had the Box Flat disaster. Box Flat was a greater producer of coal for Swanbank Power Station than any other mine in the area. In January 1974 we had the floods. Being completely aware of the consequences of those two disasters, the West Moreton miners tried particularly hard. The output of the remaining mines increased. The miners worked overtime for many years to produce coal for Swanbank.

We in Ipswich did not want coal brought to Ipswich. It is quite farcical to transport coal to our coal-mining town. But we had to put up with this Government's neglect and incapability to carry out some work for the West Moreton coal miners. The Government was not prepared to allow more mines to be opened. It was not prepared to give the mines a guaranteed tonnage.

Mr. Camm interjected.

Mr. MARGINSON: The Minister did not. He said, "All the coal you can produce we will have."

What businessman would spend millions of dollars on development for the production of a commodity without a guarantee that he would have a definite demand for a considerable number of years? No businessman would, and the mine owners were not prepared to do it. The Government was not prepared to help until recently when an announcement was made in the Press that the mines could have a production of 1,600,000 tonnes per annum. The West Moreton coal-field now is providing over 2,000,000 tonnes per annum. What a great achievement it was for the Government to guarantee 1,600,000 tonnes when production is now over 2,000,000 tonnes!

The electricity restrictions are the result of nothing but the neglect of the Government. No attempt, or at best only a very small attempt, has been made over the last three years to bring coal from Central Queensland to augment coal supplies at Swanbank. At the time of the imposition of restrictions, the Minister for Mines and Energy said on a television programme that not more than three trains could be run on the main northern line a week, as any more would affect the supply of commodities to North Queensland. What a change came over the scene! The number of trains now being run on the line is more like three a day rather than three a week. Why was this not done months ago?

Mr. Camm: Because the unions wouldn't allow it, and you know it.

Mr. MARGINSON: The unions gave permission for it. The Minister said that three trains a week were all that could be put on the line. Just after the flood the unions gave permission for 100,000 tonnes to be brought down over a period of 10 weeks and that, too, was never done. The figure of 100,000 tonnes was not reached. At that time the unions gave permission for 10,000 tonnes a week, and since then the figure has been increased to 20,000 tonnes. And that, too, was not brought to Ipswich during that period.

Let us look at what has been happening more recently. The honourable member for Fassifern, together with all his stooges and Ministers, says that the restrictions were caused by the stoppages of West Moreton miners. The West Moreton miners did have stoppages. Their first stoppage in connection with their log of claims occurred on 22 May last. That was the first occasion on which they had a stoppage in support of their log of claims. Over the period till the introduction of restrictions, they had five stoppages.

Mr. Camm: Thirteen days.

Mr. MARGINSON: They had five days after that—as a result, I presume, of the attitude of the Minister in his antagonism to the coal miners at Ipswich.

Then the Minister for Industrial Development, Labour Relations and Consumer Affairs came into it. What a knowledgeable fellow he is! Whilst the Minister for Mines and Energy was saying, "This is not a matter for a Cabinet Minister. This log of claims is a matter for the Industrial Commission," the Minister for Industrial Development, Labour Relations and Consumer Affairs was saying on the same day, "I have sent a telegram to Senator McClelland in Canberra, because he is the Minister for Labour, asking him to step in." On the one hand, a

Minister says that it is not a matter for a Minister; on the other hand, another Minister, for propaganda purposes, says, "Senator McClelland, come to the rescue."

The miners imposed their overtime ban as late as 15 June last, and not before then. But the coal stocks at Swanbank were decreasing and decreasing long before 15 June. The imposition of restrictions was a move by the Government for political blackmail—it was nothing more nor less than that—in the hope of setting those unionists who were affected by the restrictions against the coal miners on the West Moreton field. That was the aim of the Government.

We should look at how the powerhouses were operating when these restrictions were applied. There is an oil-burning powerhouse at Middle Ridge, but it was not working at full capacity. From memory it is a 60 megawatt station, but it was producing only 10 megawatts. Swanbank C, which also is an oil-fuel station, was not even operating during the restrictions. Tennyson Power House was working only partially, yet—and I could be corrected on this—I am told on very good authority that there was five weeks' supply at Tennyson.

An Honourable Member: What of?

Mr. MARGINSON: Of coal. By the way, there were no restrictions at Howard. I do not know whether it also supplies electricity to Kingaroy but it could. The Howard Power House was not working at full capacity.

Mr. Elliott: They are only toys.

Mr. MARGINSON: I do not care whether they are toys or not; the fact is that those stations were not working at full capacity. This was the state of affairs while the restrictions were in effect. Today, of course, the Government, not having legislation to bring before this House (and Government members having red faces with respect to the attitude it has adopted in regard to electricity rationing) and being desirous of getting the people to believe that the coal miners of west Moreton were responsible for these restrictions, not the Government, it has had the honourable member for Fassifern move a motion of this nature in the hope that it will be able to whitewash the whole episode.

I again charge that the Government alone must be held responsible. It knew that the stockpile at Swanbank was declining and had known for the previous three years.

An Honourable Member: Why has it not been stockpiled?

Mr. MARGINSON: Exactly. Why has it not been stockpiled? The Government has not even brought down to Ipswich the amount of coal the unions said they would allow to be brought down. The excuse was that only three trains a week could be operated on the North Coast line. What complete rot! During the past four weeks a large number of these trains have been running.

In view of the condemnation by the honourable member for Fassifern and other honourable members of the coal-mining industry in West Moreton and the miners in particular, I would remind honourable members that the miners promised the Minister the week before they went on holidays that they would produce 35,000 tonnes of coal in Ipswich. They produced 40,000 tonnes, not 35,000. I want the Government to acknowledge the good faith of these people.

(Time expired.)

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.28 p.m.): I have listened now to three speakers from the Opposition side of the Chamber and only one, the last speaker, has spoken to the motion before the House. Only one speaker has attempted to justify the shortage of coal in the power stations of South-east Queensland.

The honourable member for Port Curtis, the man who has grown fat on the work and sweat of the miners of Central Queensland, could only rise and castigate this Government for what he said it had not done, but if one looks at his own electorate and reads "Hansard" one finds that when he entered this House he pleaded with the Government to do something for the meatworkers in his area when the meatworks were closed down. One realises that this Government was responsible for a large alumina plant and also an electricity power station in his area. The Government encouraged the export of coal from Gladstone. Then the honourable member has the audacity to rise in this House and criticise this Government. But what appals me is that on the other side of this House we have men who are ostensibly spokesmen for the Labor movement in this State but not one of them has expressed any concern at the unemployment that could prevail if the miners go on strike after their holidays, which Phillips in Sydney said they will do. Honourable members know quite well who Phillips is. This situation represents a fight between the Left and Right wings of the coal-mining unions. Every time a settlement of this dispute seemed likely, Phillips and Smale arrived from Sydney and the whole situation was thrown into discord once again. On one occasion these was a five-day strike, on another, overtime bans.

These are the Communist bosses whose actions honourable members opposite are condoning. An article by Denis Warner in "The Courier-Mail" said that half the Federal Cabinet of Australia are members of the Peace Movement, which is a Communist front. I wonder how many members on the opposite side of this Chamber are members of that Communist movement, in view of their reluctance today to say

anything in sympathy with the workers who will be thrown out of employment if the miners carry out their threat of a strike after the holidays.

I want to have recorded in "Hansard" the history of this shortage of coal. The honourable member for Wolston spoke about its having gone on for years. Does he not realise that last Christmas almost 400,000 tonnes of coal was in stockpile at West Moreton power stations. The situation degenerated to such an extent that by July and August it became necessary to impose rationing.

There is no shortage of generating capacity in Queensland. The power stations are not working at full capacity even when they are supplying all the electricity needs of this State. The rationing has been caused by the shortage of coal at the power stations in the south-east part of Queensland—not in Central Queensland, not at Collinsville, and not at the Howard Power Station, but in the West Moreton area.

It is true that the problem arose first after the Box Flat disaster in August 1972. Several discussions were held with the Southern Electric Authority and the Coal Board at that time, and it was agreed that, to augment the supply, it would be necessary to import some coal from Central Queensland. Following the Australia Day floods of 1974, the coal miners' union readily agreed to allow the Government to import the coal needed, and I think that anyone who has followed my statements during the last three months will know that on many occasions I have referred to the coal suppliers to the West Moreton field and have not singled out the coal mining unions in particular.

The Government did import that coking coal from Central Queensland last year, and it continued to import coking coal from Central Queensland until it had a stockpile of about 400,000 tonnes last Christmas. There was no shortage of electricity; there was no hint of any rationing. However, it must be remembered that coking coal was costing electricity users about $26 a tonne, and that stockpile was worth over $7,000,000—paid for by the electricity consumers in this part of Queensland.

After a plea by the miner's union and the coal producers in the West Moreton area, the Government discontinued bringing coking coal into South-east Queensland. At that time there was an 8.8 weeks' supply of coal in that stockpile and I think that the only criticism which can be levelled at the Government, or at me as Minister in particular, is that we had a misplaced faith in the word of the miners' union that it would see that the supply of coal was kept up to the power stations—a supply at least sufficient to meet the demands.

It was proved on several occasions that the miners' union and the mine owners were quite capable of delivering up to 50,000 tonnes a week. But the situation continued to deteriorate, and the stockpile of 400,000 tonnes in the West Moreton area was being eaten into to such an extent that, after a meeting between the coal owners, the unions, the Southern Electric Authority and the Coal Board, it was agreed that the Government would be allowed to bring down 10,000 tonnes of steaming coal a week from Central Queensland. This is the coal which, under the agreement with the Utah company, is made available for the generation of electricity virtually at cost price.

The State Electricity Commission has already spent considerable sums on wagons and locomotives to transport this coal to the Gladstone Power Station. Crushing and loading facilities have been installed at Blackwater, and they came into commission in April. In May, as permission had been given by the unions to transport 10,000 tonnes of coal a week to the West Moreton area, shipments were commenced. I am not blaming the unions for the problems that arose in the use of the loading equipment, because naturally in a project such as this there would be teething problems. As well, there were problems associated with the re-routing of trains between Brisbane and Rockhampton. The result was that we never did achieve the level of 10,000 tonnes a week.

The situation deteriorated even further, and we asked the unions if they would allow us to transport 20,000 tonnes of coal a week. This was agreed to by the unions, but they then imposed an overtime ban in all coal-mines throughout the State. At no time did we expect the miners to work overtime underground, nor did we want any coal mined during overtime. All we wanted was permission to carry out some maintenance work and repairs on the machinery that is used in the mining of coal.

Contrary to the claim made by the honourable member for Wolston, and in an endeavour to obtain the coal supplies that were required, we allowed some open-cut mines on the West Moreton field to be opened, and we wanted the operators to be allowed to work overtime to remove the overburden so that the miners could mine the coal in a 35-hour week, but even this request was refused. We also sought permission for three men to pull levers on the loading plant at Blackwater so that trains could be loaded on the seven days of the week, but this, too, was refused. Consequently the tonnages that we expected to be transported from Central Queensland simply did not eventuate. We diverted 24 locomotives and approximately 360 wagons, including some from the State Electricity Commission and the export trade, to the transport of coal from Central Queensland to Swanbank. This was done in an endeavour to attain the figure of 20,000 tonnes a week. In fact, in one week we did have 23,000 tonnes of coal transported, but during the overtime ban there were stoppages of at first

one or two days a week, later three days a week, and finally a five-day stoppage. Stoppages accounted for 13 days in all, which meant that the power stations were deprived of in excess of 100,000 tonnes of coal.

I say this to advise honourable members of the situation that confronted us when the Commissioner for Electricity Supply came to me and said that he and his engineers considered that the coal stockpiles had been reduced to the minimum level necessitating the introduction of rationing. It was then that rationing was commenced.

Honourable members will recall that at a meeting in the Blackwater area the coal miners said they would load 28,000 tonnes of coal. On TV I challenged the president of the miners' union to state whether or not he would allow 40,000 tonnes of coal a week to be transported from the Blackwater area, but he stated that he would not recommend that to his union, nor would he allow us to bring 40,000 tonnes of coal each week from the Blackwater area to the West Moreton field. If he had given permission, we would have been able to augment our stockpiles and lift the rationing orders.

Next we had the spectacle of the miners in the Blackwater area refusing to load coal for the West Moreton field while at the same time they were loading coal for export to Japan. The Government has been criticised by Opposition members for allegedly fostering the export trade at the expense of the supply of coal to the Gladstone Power Station. Yet here is the union in Blackwater, following a visit from Sydney by Mr. Phillips, the Communist boss of the coalminers' union, agreeing to continue loading coal for Japan while it imposes a black ban on the loading of coal for the West Moreton field.

Throughout the dispute I remained in contact with the president of the Trades and Labor Council, Mr. Jack Egerton, and on this occasion I rang him and told him the situation was becoming ridiculous in that someone from Sydney was coming to Queensland and telling the workers what they would do. Jack Egerton agreed to go to Blackwater to see what he could do. Fortunately he was able to have the miners' decision reversed and to give an assurance that 28,000 tonnes per week would be coming down to the power stations in South-east Queensland. So now we have 28,000 tonnes of coal coming down each week, except that very little is coming in at present as it is a holiday period. We do not ask the miners on the West Moreton field to work during their holidays.

We are now faced with the prospect—we were advised of this by the miners' union—that they will not go back to work after their holidays if the mine owners have not acceded to all their demands. They have had 13 discussions with the mine owners since last January, every one of which has been abortive. I sent the Chairman of the Queensland Coal Board to Sydney to apprise the Coal Industry Tribunal of the seriousness of the situation, but I was taken to task by the honourable member for Wolston on the basis that I did not interfere in an industrial dispute. I have been associated with the labor movement and with government for quite some time. We have appointed experts in the field of industrial relations—magistrates and men well versed in industrial affairs—to adjudicate between the unions and the employers, whoever they may be. I said that I did not think it was my function to adjudicate between coal owners and the miners' union. They met in Sydney with the Coal Industry Tribunal. This meeting also proved unsatisfactory because the miners' union would not agree with the mine owners. The Coal Industry Tribunal said, "I will call a compulsory conference; we will argue this out by arbitration and I will then make a decision." The president of the Combined Miners' Union attended, read a long screed and indicated that he would be walking out of the conference. He would not take part in it and therefore arbitration was impossible because only one party to the dispute was present. Mr. Phillips said that if the men do not get their demands agreed to before the end of the miners' holidays he will call a national strike.

It is time for Opposition members, who ostensibly represent the workers of this State, to show where they stand. I do not think they have any interest at all in how they are employed, because not one of them has expressed any concern about what is going to happen. If there is a miners strike at the end of this week, the electricity generating industry will have no alternative to imposing the most stringent rationing on this part of Queensland. That rationing could extend up to Rockhampton. Because the miners refused to load coal during the holiday period, there is not a big coal supply at Callide Power Station. The stockpile there was brought down to the same level as in this part of Queensland. We were bringing some electricity down on the transmission line from Calcap, but we are now deprived of that.

(Time expired.)

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (2.43 p.m.): I have been in the Queensland Parliament for quite some time but I must say that the circumstances surrounding this debate are more remarkable than those of any other I have ever listened to. I have here a copy of the letter which you received, Mr. Speaker, from the honourable member for Fassifern. Let me read it, show what we are debating and then relate it to all the nonsense coming from the Government side. We are not debating what happened in the past, but all we heard from the Minister was a threat of drastic rationing next week plus an attempt to rehash all the things that had been said before and

to find excuses for himself and the Government for their lack of positive thinking and action. I did not write this letter. It was written by a Government member, no doubt with the approval of Cabinet. It reads—

> "I wish to inform you that on Tuesday next, 19th August, in accordance with Standing Order No. 137, I intend to move—'That the House do now adjourn'."

How do Government members intend to vote? When the motion is put, do they intend to vote that we adjourn? If they do, that will be the end of business for the day. Perhaps the real reason behind it is that the Government has no legislation to put before us. This morning notice was given of only one Bill, which is not to be presented until either later this week or next week. If the motion for the adjournment is carried, what will we do then? Will we all pack up and go home, or will we debate ways and means of keeping men in work? The motion before us is, "That the House do now adjourn". No Government member, including the Minister, had anything at all to say on the motion.

The letter continues—

> "This motion is proposed to enable the House to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the concern for the public interest, arising from the possibility of large-scale unemployment if severe electricity rationing, affecting industry and commerce, has to be reimposed to preserve adequate stockpiles of coal at South-east Queensland power stations for emergency purposes."

The motion refers to the future and mentions nothing about the past. The motion says nothing at all on what brought about the strike or the power rationing. That is not what we are supposed to be debating, but that is all that Government members and the Minister spoke about.

Mr. Hartwig interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: The honourable member has spoken in the debate. He had seen the letter and knew all about it. Anybody wishing to speak to the motion should deal with what will be done in the future to stop further rationing.

As this matter is so important to Cabinet and Government members, the first thing that the Premier should have done when the House met this morning was to get up and tell the House and the people of Queensland what action the Government intends to take if the powerhouses are not given maximum coal. After all, it has been elected as the Government of this State. I know that it was elected on false promises and rigged boundaries; but the point is that the Government has the numbers and it is its responsibility to govern. It is not our responsibility to tell the Government how to govern. We know how badly it is governing and how it has run away from almost every issue.

This is the one issue that has arisen in recent times for which this Government cannot blame the Federal Government. It is the one issue that it has had to tackle on its own, and it has failed miserably. It has thrown thousands of human beings out of work. Because of its inability to govern and to carry out its responsibilities, it has created hardship for many people. The Government's responsibility was to provide adequate power for this State. One of the reasons for its not being able to do so at a time of crisis is that it has not planned electrical development correctly.

Mr. Camm: I have already told you that there is no shortage of generating capacity in Queensland.

Mr. HOUSTON: There is a shortage of generating capacity in Queensland at the present time. The Government is unable to meet the demand. It cannot bring power from Callide to Brisbane.

Mr. Camm: Of course we can.

Mr. HOUSTON: Then why wasn't it brought down? I wanted that statement from the Minister. He could have brought power down from any powerhouse if he wanted to, but he did not want to. He wanted to create hardship for the people of Brisbane.

The usual line adopted by this Government is to blame the workers and the trade unions. Seeing it was faced with the police problems in Southport and other parts of the State and knowing that in the public eyes it was failing to discharge its responsibilities, the Government decided to try to get the public on side against the trade union movement and the Australian Labor Party. The Government is prepared to go to any lengths to do that.

The Government knew that if it could create hardship among the people they might react against the unions. When rationing was put into effect, public opinion was against the Government. That is why it called off the restriction when it did. Public opinion was running high against the Government. It showed it was not interested in the workers or the miners. How many meetings did the Minister or the Premier convene with representatives of the mine workers, the mine owners and the electricity supply authority? Not one!

Mr. Camm: Thirteen.

Mr. HOUSTON: They did not have them all there at the one time around the table.

Mr. Camm: I did.

Mr. HOUSTON: The Minister did not.

The decisions were made by the miners on the job. Recently meetings were held at West Moreton and further north. The miners on the job—not the leaders—made the decisions. It was the miners on the job at Ipswich who said they would not allow the other coal to come in. Of course, they

changed their attitude at a later stage. But the first decision made at Ipswich recently was that they would not accept exemption from the proposed national strike. That was the decision of the miners on the job.

One of the most significant things about this debate is that not one of the three members representing Ipswich electorates has spoken today. The Minister for Health is an Ipswich representative, yet he has said nothing at all. The honourable member for Fassifern would not even know what a shaft was. He would not know anything about the coal-mining industry.

Mr. BYRNE: I rise to a point of order. I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to Standing Order 137 which provides—

> ". . . every Member debating such Motion shall confine himself to the single matter in respect of which the Motion is made."

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! There is no valid point of order.

Mr. HOUSTON: What the honourable member says is quite correct, and I am speaking on the matter before the House. What we are considering is what is to be done in the future. I say that the first thing that the Government has to do is make up its mind where the new powerhouse is to be built. Imagine the situation today if the railway electrification programme had been carried out correctly! If it had followed the Wilbur Smith report, there would now have been a completely electrified system.

Mr. CAMM: I rise to a point of order. Here is a man who has been in Parliament for years and yet he talks about a Wilbur Smith report on power generation in Queensland. What a ridiculous statement!

Mr. HOUSTON: That is typical of our farmer friend; he does not know that an electrified railway system is run on electricity.

Honourable Members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will address the Chair and carry on with his speech.

Mr. HOUSTON: How could anyone imagine that electric trains could operate in Brisbane without the use of power from Swanbank, Gladstone or some other power station! The point that I make is that if the electrification of Brisbane's railway system had been made on time——

Mr. BYRNE: I rise to a point of order. The motion refers to the possibility of large-scale unemployment if there is severe electricity rationing. That appears to be the subject of the motion before the House, and the member who is speaking would seem therefore to be out of order.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! There is no valid point of order.

Mr. HOUSTON: I suggest to the honourable member for Belmont that he learn a little about parliamentary procedure and not try to tell Mr. Speaker how to conduct the House. After all, Mr. Speaker is in charge of the House, and I think he is performing his duties very well.

Mr. Moore: He has given you a ton of latitude.

Mr. HOUSTON: There has been no latitude at all.

(Time expired.)

Hon. N. T. E. HEWITT (Auburn—Minister for Water Resources) (2.53 p.m.): I am somewhat amazed to hear the former Leader of the Opposition speaking in his present vein, because he knows as well as I do the failure of the Labor Party over many years in the development of coal mines throughout the State. All I can say is that Labor members ought to be ashamed of themselves. Developments that have taken place under this Government point up that Labor members were a complete failure.

When I entered Parliament in 1956, what was the state of the coal-mining industry in Queensland? There were a couple of State-owned coal mines, at Ogmore and Collinsville, with people living there in tin humpies under dreadful conditions. Labor members have no thought for people, and that is why Nev Hewitt won every time at Blackwater. That is also why he won on the last occasion by approximately 300 votes at Moura. He has some interest in the miners, and if the miners were allowed to have secret ballots, there would be no doubt where they stand in the present strike. The unions are completely Communist dominated and, what is more, they are bringing hardship to the people of Queensland. I recall that at Bluff I had to go down on my bended knees and beg the then Minister for Mines and Main Roads, Mr. Ernie Evans, to keep the miners in work by building a bitumen road from Bluff to Blackwater. That is a job that they had to do. Blair Athol was history. We had to beg orders from the powerhouse in Rockhampton and the Railway Department——

Mr. Marginson: What has this got to do with electricity?

Mr. N. T. E. HEWITT: The honourable member for Port Curtis said that nothing has happened in development in the Central Queensland area.

Mr. Houston: I think you will agree that after you gave away the Collinsville coal mine you decided to build a powerhouse there so that the new owners could make a fortune.

Mr. N. T. E. HEWITT: Well, that is a ridiculous statement; but let me say again that the people today are living under much better conditions. Honourable members opposite did not care whether the miners lived in tin humpies or tents. The previous Labor Government adopted the same attitude to all

walks of life. All I can say is that this Government has brought in conditions previously unknown to people in that area. It has built schools and other amenities which are vital to people in the area.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much noise in the Chamber. I refer particularly to honourable members on my left.

Mr. N. T. E. HEWITT: It is very easy for so-called Labor members to sit over there and smile and carry on. Of course, they tolerated these things and they hate to see a place like Blackwater today with a first-class primary school, a high school, a hospital and everything else. What a difference to the position in 1962! A mere 12 children attended school at Blackwater. When I visited the school with the then Director-General of Education there were nine kiddies present. Today over 1,000 are enrolled. People are now living in decent conditions, and, what is more, the company is subsidising housing. If my memory serves me correctly—I do not represent the area any more—the miners are so subsidised that they pay $5 a week rent. That is something not many people in this State know. It should be made known to the public of Queensland that the mining companies have given these improved conditions to the people. Honourable members opposite do not agree. They claim to be the friends of the workers but they are not. Honourable members opposite are the same as when they were complaining with tongue in cheek about the conditions of Aborigines. When the job got too hot where did they go? They ducked for cover, and that is the truth of the story.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much audible conversation and too many interjections in the House. I will not tolerate this. I will deal under Standing Order No. 123A with the next person who interjects.

Mr. N. T. E. HEWITT: It is time some sanity was brought back into this business among the unions. They should be made to realise that they have a job to do. They are not doing it at present. At one time the unions in this State played a vital role and I think the old Labor Party was a party you and I might have gone along with. But what a difference today! Many of these unions are completely Communist dominated and, unless we get some sanity back into the situation, all I can say is that this country is heading for disaster.

What is more, if we cannot get some sanity to prevail in the Federal Government, exactly the same thing will happen there. At the present time the Federal Minister for Minerals and Energy, Mr. Connor, is denying this State many projects that would employ at least 2,000 men. Honourable members opposite should have some backbone and get up and support the Government in an endeavour to get some of these projects going. I warn honourable members opposite that the Federal Government is ruining the Labour Party and the Queensland branch will be history in this State.

An Honourable Member interjected.

Mr. N. T. E. HEWITT: The honourable member for Bulimba is history now. He has had one try at re-election and we saw what happened to him. He is now trying to make a comeback. I suppose with only 11 members he will always have a chance because he does not need much support to get the numbers. I might have thought he was not a bad bloke but apparently other honourable members opposite did not think that way. Perhaps if he kept to the attitude he displayed previously he would be doing more for this State than trying to get onto the band-wagon and possibly become Leader of the Opposition again, even though the Opposition has only enough numbers to make up a cricket team.

All I can say to honourable members opposite is that we on this side of the House have nothing to be afraid of in our record in this State. I can truthfully say that for many years I have represented the two largest open-cut mines in Queensland. In 1972 the town of Blackwater was included in the electorate of Belyando, but for many years I had the opportunity of representing the people of Blackwater and Moura. What is more, I never lost in the town of Blackwater or in the district of Moura. With approximately a thousand miners there, surely that must mean that they have some faith in me as a member and think that I am giving them a fair deal. I assure the House that I will continue to do that.

I say to honourable members opposite, "Try to get some sanity back into the unions and you will get somewhere." At present, all that honourable members opposite are doing is bringing discredit to their party and bringing the people of Queensland to a plight which they should not have to suffer.

Mr. Marginson: Do you agree with what they are doing now?

Mr. N. T. E. HEWITT: Being on strike?

Mr. Marginson: Yes.

Mr. N. T. E. HEWITT: I certainly do not; I make no bones about that. The matter should go to arbitration. I think that the honourable member, as a true Labor man, should be supporting that course, because he knows as well as I do that honourable members opposite have their tongues in their cheeks when they do not come out into the open and admit that things are not completely right. As I have said so often before about Aborigines, we should be sensible and try to do something constructive instead of trying to highlight matters just for the sake of getting our names in the Press.

Hon. F. A. CAMPBELL (Aspley—Minister for Industrial Development, Labour Relations and Consumer Affairs) (3.2 p.m.): The honourable member for Wolston appears to think that there is some impropriety in my communicating with my Federal counterpart in the crisis that has confronted Queensland in the last month. Because of that, and in supporting the motion, I think it is essential that honourable members know, and that "Hansard" record, the attempts that have been made by the Government during the coal industry dispute to save the jobs of Queenslanders by urging strong and immediate intervention by the Commonwealth, this industry being under the jurisdiction of the Coal Industry Tribunal, a Federal body.

I regret to have to report a total lack of success and a shocking inertia on the part of a Federal Government in one of the most potentially disastrous threats to the well-being of our people and the economy of the State. It will become obvious to honourable members as I recite the sequence of non-events that there is neither care nor compassion in the hearts of the socialists for what is going on in the, to them, foreign State of Queensland.

Since 30 June I have sent two telegrams to the Minister for Labour (Senator McClelland)——

Mr. Houston: Did he answer?

Mr. CAMPBELL: Yes. I also sent one to the Consumer Affairs Minister (Mr. Cameron) on behalf of families who would be most seriously affected by severe power restrictions. In addition, on 31 July the Premier urged the Prime Minister to take immediate action.

Senator McClelland's reply to my first telegram was predictable—

> "As the dispute is before the tribunal I cannot comment."

Mr. Cameron's reply was ambiguous, to say the least. His comment was, "I am sure the Senator will find a way of quickly stalling the dispute." I have seen no evidence of Senator McClelland's stalling the dispute. Perhaps he personally is just stalling. Who knows what the demoted and embittered Mr. Cameron meant?

However, in answer to my second telegram, Senator McClelland was kind enough to say that he shared my concern about the impact of the strike in Queensland. Then, having gone through the niceties, he went further —and this is the important part—and he undertook that if meetings on 28 July did not result in a return to normal production or if early resolution of the dispute was not apparent in proceedings before the Coal Industry Tribunal, he intended to communicate with the employee organisations to express his concern and to suggest that industrial action cease to allow the tribunal the opportunity of resolving the dispute by appropriate processes.

Senator McClelland also stated that if it were decided to continue industrial action, he would indicate that consideration should be given—this is Senator McClelland, the Minister for Labour in Canberra—to exempting essential services such as power supplies. This was, as honourable members would appreciate, a most significant and praiseworthy commitment. The pity is that the promise lacks the performance. I have no knowledge whether the senator has backed his fine words with action or, if he has done so, what the results are.

In a telegram to the Prime Minister the Premier repeated Senator McClelland's undertakings and added—

> "You will be aware that some of your predecessors in office moved speedily and successfully to resolve crises of this nature. My Government and I are convinced that immediate action on your part is both warranted and necessary."

The Prime Minister's reply, while being factual, was useless. He said—

> "I am informed that on 1 August a meeting of West Moreton coal miners resolved to allow the shipping to Swanbank from other coal-fields of approximately 28,000 tonnes of coal following resumption of normal production. I am further advised your Government has begun the progressive lifting of power restrictions. As a consequence I anticipate that the requirement will no longer exist for implementation of the stand-down order handed down on 1 August by the Full Bench of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Commission of Queensland. I also understand that the Coal Industry Tribunal has listed the dispute for further hearing on 7 August."

Honourable members will note that the Prime Minister appeared to be more concerned with the lifting of the stand-down order than with the need to interest himself personally in a strike that was nationally inspired by a Communist-led union.

That telegram was received on 7 August. It is now 19 August, and the Blackwater miners have voted to hold South-east Queensland to ransom. The miners' August holiday is drawing to a close, and the dispute has not been resolved. Now the railway unions are threatening to take their turn in the strike queue.

In addition, the miners' federal president, Communist E. Phillips, made a fool of the Queensland Trades and Labor Council by coming to Queensland and organising the Blackwater vote under the Trades and Labor Council's nose. No matter how much some people might profess that they are concerned for the general welfare and employment of workers, and that this is their sole reason for intervention, we have the situation that the Trades and Labor Council has been soundly rebuffed, spurned and humiliated. I wonder what Opposition members think of the shocking treatment meted out to the

president of the Trades and Labor Council and of the Labor Party in Queensland. Jack Egerton was given shocking treatment by the coal miners in Blackwater, spurred on, no doubt, by this Communist named Phillips.

Federally, I have not received any indication of intervention or intercession in any form by the Federal Government. The time has long passed for recitals of fact and pious promise. Arbitration, a council of trade unions, and the Federal Government itself have been challenged, and Queenslanders could well be the pawns in a three-way struggle. The refusal of the Commonwealth to take up the gauntlet cast by the Communist-led miners' union is apparent, and tragic.

The attitude adopted by members of the Opposition and the tactics followed by the Communist-led unions have clearly shown the need for strong industrial legislation. If ever there was a need for secret ballots there is such a need now. Those miners who, in the presence of the leaders of the Communist-dominated miners' union, voted by a show of hands against the resolution must have been extremely brave men. I sincerely hope that, in the light of the experience we have had over the past few weeks, any efforts by this Government to introduce legislation providing for some type of secret ballots in the determination of industrial disputes will have the support of the House. The events of the past few weeks have shown that never before has there been greater need for this type of legislation.

I conclude by repeating the comment of the Minister for Mines and Energy that there is no shortage of generating capacity in Queensland and by reminding the House that the Queensland Government had the foresight to provide for the establishment of an 1,100 megawatt station at Gladstone which almost doubles the existing capacity, with an interconnection between Gladstone and Brisbane. In its planning for electricity generation, the Government has kept faith with Queensland.

Mr. Marginson interjected.

Mr. CAMPBELL: The honourable member is quite obviously unaware of that.

Thanks to the Government's sound planning the people of Queensland may be assured that the generating capacity will be there to provide for the needs of Queenslanders. What we need, of course, is an assurance that coal supplies will be maintained in future. It seems to me that the only reason we are not getting coal supplies is that Queensland is being used as a tool by the Communist-led miners' union, which, for its own particular ends, seems to me to be deliberately keeping this State on short commons in the matter of fuel for power stations.

I make an earnest appeal to the coal miners, those who produce the coal, to have regard for the problems of their fellow workers, who are fellow trade unionists. These other trade unionists must feel at times that they are being let down by the miners.

Honourable members opposite have very little concern for the great majority of Queensland trade unionists. They seem to be apologising for the actions of Communist leaders.

(Time expired.)

Mr. MILLER (Ithaca) (3.12 p.m.): I should have thought that the motion moved by the honourable member for Fassifern this morning would have been welcomed by every honourable member in the House.

Mr. Marginson: What is the motion?

Mr. MILLER: If the honourable member does not know it, I suggest that he go outside and read it. It enables the House to reflect on what has happened in the past few weeks and also to look at what action should be taken in future to see that this type of thing does not occur again. It also enables Opposition members to put forward a case in support of the Lord Mayor of Brisbane when he calls for an inquiry into this catastrophe. Yet today what have we seen? We have not even seen members of the Opposition wishing to speak to it. I should have thought that they would have stood up to support the Lord Mayor in his demand for an inquiry, but all that happened was that the Leader of the Opposition accused the Government of wasting the time of the House. Surely the future of 500,000 workers is of concern to this House. It is certainly my concern. If it is not the concern of the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues, it is certainly the concern of Government members. We do not want 500,000 people out of work. We believe that the people of Queensland should be told the reasons.

After listening to the Minister for Mines and Energy and the Minister for Industrial Development, Labour Relations and Consumer Affairs, I can well imagine why Opposition members did not really want to hear what they had to say. They made very clear the reasons behind the situation that developed some few weeks ago. I say to the Leader of the Opposition, who interjected when the honourable member for Fassifern was speaking about the fact that there was no shortage of coal, that I believe the coal might just as well be in China as in the ground without miners willing to mine it.

I give credit to the honourable member for Bulimba who, of all Opposition members chose to look at what was to happen, although he did not say anything about what should happen in future. At least he brought to our attention that we should be looking at what should be taking place to ensure that this does not happen again in the future.

The Minister for Industrial Development, Labour Relations and Consumer Affairs made one of the most telling points, that is, that there must be secret ballots involving all unionists before strike action can be implemented. This is certainly one way to overcome the present situation.

There are many reasons for the present crisis. We have been accused of union-bashing. I think it must be said that the unions have created the problems now facing Queensland. The stand taken by Jack Egerton, in his support of the Minister for Mines and Energy and in his statement that the Queensland Government would have no alternative to closing down industry should this strike continue, is rather amazing. What prompts a man like Mr. Jack Egerton, who is opposed to this Government politically, to come out in support of the Minister for Mines and Energy?

Mr. Jensen: He is a fair man.

Mr. MILLER: Of course he is a fair man! I accept that. Why did he do it? I believe he did it for one reason. He is supporting the Prime Minister in his cause for wage indexation. This is one of the most serious problems facing the Queensland Government and every other State Government at present. We all know that the Prime Minister wishes to introduce wage indexation. We know that for some time the miners' union has been endeavouring to obtain an increase in salary and an improvement in working conditions.

Somebody along the line has to miss out. The miners do not want to miss out. So a conflict is developing in Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia between the Communist-dominated trade-union movement (and the miners' union is one of them) and the Federal Government—and, in particular the Prime Minister. I am sure that they are trying to undermine what the Prime Minister is trying to achieve. He is hoping against hope that he can contain prices. He knows that the only possible way to do so at this late stage is to have some sort of control over wages. So he is trying to introduce wage indexation.

Mr. Jensen: That's sound.

Mr. MILLER: Whether it is sound or not makes no difference. We must look at the claims made by the miners' union and those being put forward would not be accepted by either the Prime Minister or the Federal Government. And they could not be accepted, because the wage demands, if granted, would make the cost of electricity an absolutely impossible burden for the average person in the community. Setting aside industry and the fact it has to compete with overseas producers, everyone realises that these wage claims, if granted, must be passed on to the consumer.

Quite recently the Lord Mayor was reported in the Press as saying that there was no need for an increase in the price of electricity. If these wage claims are granted, the people will not be able to afford the charges that the Brisbane City Council will be compelled to introduce.

So we see this fight going on between the Federal Government and the miners' union. What is it that the miners' union wants? It is asking for—and it demanded this last January—an average annual increase in earnings of $10,000 for each employee. That would almost double the existing average earnings. The employers' offer is expected to boost the average earnings by $3,200 a year, including an effective average of $1,200 a year increase resulting from a 5 per cent lift in base rates. This was not accepted by the union. So this confrontation is taking place between the Federal Government and the miners' union. And who is the meat in the sandwich? It is the people of Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia. There are no power restrictions in New South Wales.

Mr. Moore: Not yet.

Mr. MILLER: That is quite correct—not yet.

It all comes back to what was said in a leader in "The Sydney Morning Herald" of 6 August 1974, and I do not think that truer words have ever been written in any editorial. I wish to quote two passages from it. It reads—

> "The quality of life—that sonorous phrase mouthed so often by politicians like Mr. Whitlam and Mr. Uren—is rapidly becoming a bad joke in Australia. What quality? It is deteriorating day by day. But then, it is beginning not to matter very much what Mr. Whitlam, Mr. Crean, Mr. Uren and their ministerial colleagues say or do. At least as important, sometimes more so, is what the trade-unions decide to do. The Government embarks on a programme to reduce the rate of inflation, and within weeks our real rulers, the trade-unions, make nonsense of it by multiplying and accelerating their wage claims."

(Time expired.)

Mr. DOUMANY (Kurilpa) (3.22 p.m.): We are dealing in this adjournment motion today with a matter that is basic in all western industrial economies, and that is the deliberate tampering with, and destruction of, energy and power resources. There are three areas that Communist insurgents in the trade-union movement can attack. They are communications, transport and power supply, and Queensland's turn for power disruption came this year.

I am fed up with hearing from honourable members of the Opposition right through this debate that there is nothing happening in New South Wales, or that Queensland is the only place in which this is happening. From late 1973 until 1975, well into this

year, New South Wales was afflicted—a better term would be "plagued"—by not just restrictions or rationing but blackouts of three, four or six hours, often without warning. They crippled some major industries and caused a great deal of unemployment, hardship and cost to the economy of that State. That is what this motion is all about. We do not want that to happen here.

I must say that the management of this whole affair over the last few months, particularly the last few weeks, by the Minister for Mines and Energy and the Cabinet of this State has saved Queensland from the complete disruption with which New South Wales has had to contend. It is true that the reasons have been somewhat different, but the same people have been stirring the pot, and with the same motives. I have here a whole file of clippings dealing with the New South Wales position if Opposition members wish to follow the matter up in the library. In New South Wales, it was a matter of powerhouse employees taking the industrial action that was necessary to disrupt the energy supplies of that State. Headline after headline dealt with the situation. One reading "Power cuts hit New South Wales jobs and industry" appeared in "The Courier-Mail" of 20 January of this year.

One cutting in this folder goes back to 13 October 1973. It is from "The Australian" and it reads, "New South Wales Government may get power on a zone system." At that time the threat was already in existence and the zoning of power so that some sort of rationalisation could continue was being contemplated by the New South Wales Government.

In South Australia the blessed Mr. Dunstan operates, the Labour brother of honourable members opposite. I have here a copy of the "Advertiser" of 25 July 1975. When we were suffering from power restrictions and the Lord Mayor of Brisbane and the Leader of the Opposition were telling the people of South-east Queensland, and Brisbane in particular, how awful and how inept our Government was to let all this happen, their colleague in South Australia, Mr. Dunstan, closed the powerhouse. He just imposed blackouts. He did not bother even to keep the wheels of industry running or to keep power flowing into the homes in his State. He did not care because when it comes to concern for the welfare of the individual in the long term, to keeping the nation together and to keeping the economy intact and productive, the Labor Party has an abysmal record over the past few years. In contrast in a previous era some members of the Labor Party showed great foresight in these matters. It was in fact the late Mr. Ben Chifley who had much to do with the initiation of the Snowy River scheme. One finds this hard to reconcile with the rumblings and mutterings from Opposition members today. They show little concern about the use of electricity.

Electricity keeps the wheels of industry running. The only way to keep men employed, to keep their families fed and clothed and to keep their children in schools is to keep the wheels of industry turning. We can only tide unemployed people over their difficulties if the rest of the work-force is productive and can pay its taxes, yet we have some of the most irresponsible people ever to afflict the nation telling us what to do. I would like to have said this in the presence of the honourable member for Wolston, who said that the unions gave permission for coal to be transhipped. Who controls this coal? Are we to permit individual interest groups to run this State? I have every respect for the trade-union movement because it has done a great deal for Australia. I have every respect for the trade-union movement in its right place and in its right role—but it is a sorry day when responsible elected representatives of the people are prepared to think of trade unions as masters of our destiny and not as individual tools within the complex of the nation and when they say that the trade union will tell us what we can do with our basic resources. Let me read a statement attributed to Mr. Egerton on the 6th of this month. This statement was made after the Blackwater people reneged——

Mr. Moore: Barramundi Jack.

Mr. DOUMANY: Barramundi Jack as he is commonly known but we will give him his proper title—Mr. Jack Egerton. He said—

> "It appears that the miners in Central Queensland have deliberately set out to wage war on the people of south-east Queensland. And it's a pretty ill day for the trade union movement."

Mr. Egerton is a responsible trade union leader and it is a great pity we do not have more Jack Egertons in the Australian Metal Workers' Union and the Australian Miners' Federation running those unions—people who have some feeling and rapport with the community, people who know what will happen if the present disruption continues without any thought as to its repercussions. Look at the cost to industry and the impact on employment if we do have to shut down our powerhouses. Look at the repercussions! We have the loss of income by thousands of individuals and their families. If that is not enough, we have the imposition of costs on businesses that are affected. They have to carry all the other fixed charges and have to spread them over future production. Then costs increase and they go to the Prices Justification Tribunal and get increased prices there.

There are other repercussions, too, such as lost orders. For example, if a clothing manufacturer at South Brisbane has an order for 2,000 pairs of trousers and he cannot make them by a certain date, that order goes to Melbourne or to Sydney. In this era of the Labor Government in Canberra, perhaps it

will go to Hong Kong or Korea. Orders will be lost and a lot of little businesses, having lost their orders, will go to the wall, and the jobs that these little businesses represent will go to the wall with them.

That is the sort of issue the House is dealing with today. Instead of the witch-hunting and frivolity that we have seen on the Opposition benches today, let us see some responsible effort. Let us see honourable members opposite support the Government on this occasion and put their shoulders to the wheel and keep Queensland in a viable position instead of following the destructive course that New South Wales has had to follow.

(Time expired.)

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (3.32 p.m.), in reply: I am sure all honourable members agree on one point, that is, that the debate today has proved three things: firstly, the complete and utter inadequacy of the Opposition; secondly, that there is no shortage of generating capacity in Queensland; and thirdly, that there is a shortage of coal at the powerhouses. If we examine the situation, Mr. Speaker, I think we might agree that many deficiencies exist within the work-force, which is in fact motivated by the industrial unions.

In replying to my initial comments, the Leader of the Opposition challenged my right to make the submission and have the motion debated in the House. If there its anything wrong with making a submission along these lines when so many people stand to lose their employment and when, as a result of that, there is tremendous hardship on people who are in no way responsible for what has happened, then, of course, I stand condemned. But I think that the Leader of the Opposition is completely off the ball and has not made a practical submission. He has not attempted to answer any of my initial charges.

The honourable gentleman was followed by the honourable member for Port Curtis, for whose judgment I usually have a great deal of respect. He rather disappointed me today. After the motion was submitted, it became perfectly obvious that there is a coal shortage at powerhouses. The honourable member for Port Curtis suggested immediately that this could be overcome if the building of another powerhouse at Gladstone was commissioned. How foolish can he be! There is not sufficient fuel in the form of coal to meet the requirements of the present powerhouses. How in the name of heaven does he expect to solve the problem by providing another powerhouse without supplying it with fuel? I leave it at that.

Later honourable members heard a great oration from the honourable member for Wolston. He said that there is an oil-burning unit at Middle Ridge. That, of course, is true. But the fact is that there is an oil-fuel crisis, too, and it is tremendously expensive to operate a plant of that type. As I understand it—and this information flowed to me as recently as yesterday—that unit burns approximately 30,000 gallons of high-octane aircraft distillate each day, and this has to be transported from Brisbane to Toowoomba, which no doubt makes such an operation very expensive and uneconomical. As we know, Swanbank supplies 95 per cent of South-east Queensland's power requirement, and Swanbank is without doubt our most efficient generating plant.

Certain people have suggested that more power should be generated at Tennyson and that the New Farm Power House should be brought back into operation. Obviously neither suggestion is practicable, because there would be a fuel shortage at both those power stations. If the suggestions put forward by some members of the Opposition were adopted and if these inefficient powerhouses were brought back into operation, the results would be obvious.

The former Leader of the Opposition claimed that as I was not a coal miner I had no right to comment on this matter. His attitude concerns me greatly. I am sure all other honourable members would agree with me that in a matter of such grave importance as this I have every right to comment. The honourable member, who rarely travels outside his electorate, may be interested to know that Swanbank Power Station, the most important powerhouse in South-east Queensland, is within the perimeters of the Fassifern electorate.

I feel that very little could be accomplished by pursuing this debate further. As I said before, I believe we are agreed on the three main issues. The major problem confronting us is, of course, the fuel shortage at our powerhouses.

In the light of the comments that have been made and the evidence submitted, I feel that this matter has been adequately debated, and I ask leave of the House to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

COLLECTIONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION

Hon. W. E. KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Justice), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider introducing a Bill to amend the Collections Act 1966–1973 in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. W. E. KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Justice) (3.38 p.m.): I move—

"That a Bill be introduced to amend the Collections Act 1966–1973 in certain particulars."

From time to time various disaster relief appeals have been sanctioned throughout the State when the need arose under the Collections Act. Quite often after moneys have been distributed from these various funds some moneys remain in and in some cases continue to come into the fund even after the appeal is closed and in some instances long after the appeal is closed.

To enable these moneys to be applied in the best possible way, this Bill proposes to provide for the establishing of a Disaster Appeals Trust Fund and Committee. It is proposed that the fund be administered by five responsible persons, one of whom is to be the Public Curator. As the Public Curator is proposed to be one of the members of the Disaster Appeals Trust Fund Committee, the fund will be established in the accounts of the Public Curator. Provision is made in the Bill for the appointment of the committee and the conduct of its business.

It is proposed that where the Governor in Council is satisfied there are any moneys in a disaster relief fund that have remained unexpended for a period of two years or more and these moneys do not appear likely to be applied for the benefit or relief of any of the persons for whose benefit or relief the fund was established, he may by Order in Council vest those moneys in the Public Curator, who will be required to pay it into the Disaster Appeals Trust Fund.

Consideration has been given to whether the Bill should be confined to those funds raised for the relief of natural disasters only. There could be many circumstances where appeals are made to raise funds for disasters that do not arise from natural causes such as a rail disaster similar to those which occurred recently in London and in Germany.

Disaster relief fund will therefore be defined as meaning any fund raised by or resulting from any appeal for support for the purpose of assisting persons suffering distress, whether physical, mental, or financial, as a result of any catastrophe or disaster arising from natural causes, inevitable accident, wilful act or negligence.

It is proposed that any moneys standing to the credit of the Disaster Appeals Trust Fund may be invested in any authorised trustee investment nominated by the Disaster Appeals Trust Fund Committee.

The moneys standing to the credit of the Disaster Appeals Trust Fund will be applied to or for the use or benefit of other disaster relief funds as they arise in the future.

The proposals contained in this Bill should ensure that unexpended moneys in disaster relief funds will be put to good use as further disasters arise.

I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (3.41 p.m.): The Opposition supports the idea of a disaster trust fund. Since the Darwin appeal and the Brisbane flood appeal, there has been considerable public concern over the fact that moneys are not always used as well as they could be. It has also been pointed out that in former years moneys have been raised and simply left idle in bank accounts throughout the State. Some months ago I read an article which stated that money raised for some shipwrecks 100 years ago was still lying idle in bank accounts.

It is fairly important, I think all honourable members will agree, to remember that it is ridiculous to have this money sitting there when it could be used, co-ordinated, or put into a pool. The Opposition supports the intention of this legislation, but there are some other aspects that we should consider.

The original legislation, that is, the Collections Act, which repealed or replaced the Charitable Collections Act of 1952, was supposed to contain this provision. I note in the Record of the Legislative Acts for 1966-67, on page 64, that the following appears—

> "Quite often when an organisation set up to make a public charitable appeal ceases to operate, it leaves money in a bank. A provision of the Act allows such money to be allocated to a similar charity in the locality concerned."

I have gone through the Act and it seems that this comes under section 35, where the vesting of property in the Public Curator is allowed. I wonder why this is necessary. The Minister should also explain why the Collections Act of 1966 has not been operative, and why we now need this.

While we are setting up the Disaster Appeals Trust Fund we might look at setting up a disaster fund in toto. Instead of having a Brisbane appeal or some other appeal applying throughout the State, we should have an on-going fund, with all moneys going into the disaster fund and being dispersed from that fund. I say that because some concern has been expressed that money raised has not been used for the designated purpose. With the Brisbane and Darwin appeals, mayors, shire chairmen and various service clubs throughout the State raised money. While appeals have to be sanctioned and regulated, to my mind it is very difficult to ensure that all the money is used. This problem arose with the Darwin appeal and certain media appeals which raised thousands of dollars publicly.

It seems that there is a major machinery problem in collecting this money and, moreover, in passing it on to the appropriate authorities. I recently read that one of the local media groups in Brisbane was appealing for people to come forward with the money that was promised. This problem arises at different times. It has been said

that thousands of dollars have been promised but there has been no actual receipt of the money by the authority or group raising it. It seems to me that we need to go further than the present proposal. I should like to hear the Minister's views on this idea of a special fund.

In an article on 27 March 1974 Sir Thomas Hiley spoke about the need for a State disaster fund. He said that such a fund should be set up immediately because it would, firstly, clean out idle money from the previous funds. I do not intend to read the article at any length, but I think honourable members who read it would agree that one fund would allow for better operating techniques. My suggestion is that the legislation should go further than the outline given by the Minister. It is agreed on all sides that the residual amounts should not be left to sit idly in accounts. We should attempt to co-ordinate community efforts to ensure that in times of distress money will be lodged in one fund.

There are other advantages in this, of course. For instance, immediately people were found to be in trouble, money would be available for them. The situation now is that they have to wait until money is lodged. As I pointed out before, although people might offer money publicly, very often it is not in fact given. Therefore, I suggest that the Minister consider establishing a disaster fund for the State to be operated through the Public Curator's Office and administered by people selected from the community. I cannot see any need for accounts to be in Townsville, Brisbane or other parts of the State when the money is for the one purpose. Let us ensure that it is raised locally, because I think that is an incentive; but I believe there is need for co-ordination.

When the Bill is printed, the Opposition will consider it closely, although it is not our present intention to oppose it. However, I make one other point, which I realise does not arise from the intention of the Bill as made known to us by the Minister. It seems to me that when legislation is amended the Government has a responsibility to peruse the existing Act to see whether further amendments are needed.

One thing that concerns me personally—and I am sure other honourable members have had this concern expressed to them personally—is that too often community groups use the name of a charitable institution for the purpose of raising money. I know it has happened in Rockhampton, Brisbane and some of the provincial cities in between. People use the name of some well-known charity when collecting rags or paper. The amount of money that goes to the charitable institution is difficult to ascertain. I know that a fellow in Rockhampton used young lads. One lad attended the school for subnormal children and was virtually paid with a handful of cents. We approached the trade unions about it and took the fellow on.

It is fairly obvious, though, that anybody can raise money in the name of a charity if the charitable organisation is prepared to sanction it. It is my belief that the Act should go further and cover that situation. That is one comment I make and I would like to hear the Minister's views on it. We know that he does not tend to listen to speeches of honourable members, but I suppose that is his prerogative. However, I suggest that when legislation is being amended his obligation as a Minister is to go through it in more detail, and I would ask him for his comments on that aspect.

Mr. GYGAR (Stafford) (3.48 p.m.): It is an unfortunate fact, as the Minister has recognised, that in many appeal fund accounts opened in our State money contributed by Queenslanders lies idle. Either the purpose for which the money has been contributed no longer exists or the people who were to benefit from the fund can no longer be identified.

Most of us have heard of the shipwreck case of over 100 years ago, which was mentioned by the honourable member for Rockhampton. Money from the fund, which was supposed to be used for the benefit of the victims of the wreck or their children still lies idle in bank accounts. That is not desirable.

When amending the legislation to bring some rationality into the matter, we must consider the reason why money has been contributed in the first place. The people who gave to disaster appeals were motivated by a desire to reduce human suffering. That the money was given to a particular disaster fund is not, in retrospect, of great importance. The money was given for the relief of human suffering in the hope that it would be best directed to the victims of a disaster. If under the circumstances there is no need to devote it to that particular cause, then surely the contributors would want the money to be used for the relief of human suffering in similar circumstances and to be given to victims of acts of God or major accidents. This legislation will enable that to be done. It will take money that would otherwise lie idle and put it under the control of a responsible body of five people to be held in case of future disasters of a similar type.

Apart from the obvious advantages stated by the Minister and the previous speaker, it must be recognised that the Bill will provide for very great flexibility in the event of future disasters. If something does go wrong and people need assistance, no longer will there be the need for the preliminary action of someone going round deciding that something needs to be done before getting a group of interested citizens together and launching an appeal. There will be already established in the State a group of five responsible people who know

that on their shoulders will fall the task of providing immediate relief. They will be able to go into action immediately to ascertain who needs relief, and they will have funds to be made available. We all know, as the fable says, that a stitch in time saves nine. Now a dollar in time will perhaps save greater expenditure a matter of days or weeks later, and it will most certainly reduce the sum total of human suffering and deprivation that will follow any future disasters in Queensland.

I am sure that I speak for all members in the Chamber when I commend the Minister on the introduction of this legislation.

Mr. MELLOY (Nudgee) (3.52 p.m.): The Opposition supports the stand taken by the honourable member for Rockhampton. The Act certainly needs considerable cleaning up, and there are certain aspects of it that need close attention, not only as they relate to disaster funds but also to collections of all kinds.

During house-to-house collections, children of tender years have come to my home collecting funds in the hours of semi-darkness. I do not doubt the integrity of the children, but I am concerned for their safety when they have collected money perhaps all afternoon and are still doing so in the hours of semi-darkness. People know that these collections are taking place on certain days, and there are some in the community who may feel disposed to take advantage of children when they are carrying what is perhaps not a very large sum of money but a considerable amount nevertheless. These children are open to the risk of assault by such people. I think that this is one matter that has to be given attention. Perhaps the first consideration should be the age of collectors for the various funds, and the second should be the hours in which collections can be made. I think that these are matters for the Minister's consideration—if, as the honourable member for Rockhampton mentioned, he ever listens to Opposition contributions. He should give consideration to the age of collectors and the hours in which collections can be made.

There is one other matter that I wish to raise. I think that the administration of collections, for disaster funds in particular, needs strengthening. I propose to relate one instance that I think is very serious. I have knowledge of an organisation that donated $50 to the Lord Mayor's disaster fund and $50 to the Premier's fund. A receipt was received for the donation to the Lord Mayor's fund, but there was no acknowledgement of the $50 donated to the Premier's fund. Despite inquiries that I made in the Premier's Department, it could not be traced. This is a serious matter. The money was paid at one of the suburban branches of the Commonwealth Bank. The donation reached the Lord Mayor's fund, but no trace could be found of the donation to the Premier's fund. I think we have to ensure that when people contribute to a fund their money in fact reaches it.

Mr. Moore: Use the microphone. I cannot hear you.

Mr. MELLOY: I knew you wanted to hear me.

Mr. Moore: I did, yes. We are interested, so speak up.

Mr. MELLOY: I will go over it for the honourable member's benefit.

The CHAIRMAN: I am sorry, but you will not go over it.

Mr. MELLOY: Well, I will not go over it, Mr. Hewitt, but I will emphasise the need for closer supervision over the funds that are collected in view of the fact that certain moneys contributed by an association went astray. I am aware that $50 which was contributed to one of the Premier's disaster funds went astray. It was paid into a branch of the Commonwealth Bank and there is no record of it. I think that this is one of the points that have to be looked into. We cannot have people contributing money and that money going astray. The Opposition welcomes any amendment to the Collections Act which will protect the interests of the public. We hope the Minister will give further consideration to the other provisions of the Act.

Mr. GREENWOOD (Ashgrove) (3.56 p.m.): In dealing with trust moneys it is, of course, necessary to be very careful about legislative intervention by a Government. When a man gives money to a particular public charitable appeal he is entitled to act on the assumption that the money which he gives will be used by the trustee for that purpose and for that purpose alone. Somebody giving money to the Darwin Relief Fund might not necessarily be prepared to give money for the relief of North Vietnamese or for the relief of the guerrillas operating against what they regard as white despotism in South and East Africa. This is a fundamental fact which trustees have to bear in mind and which this Committee, of course, must bear in mind in the debate today.

That brings me to one of the points that were made by the honourable member for Rockhampton, when he suggested that we set up an on-going fund, a fund which aggregates all these different purposes into one, a fund which is there at all times ready to be used. I think this is an ideal which all of us would like to see achieved and I think that the Bill which the Minister is now bringing down will achieve that very result but in a different way. The Minister is achieving it without obliterating the very necessary differences that exist between these charitable purposes. It would have been easy for him to bring in a Bill such as that suggested by the honourable member

opposite—a Bill which provided for just the one fund—but consider the difficulties in its operation. If, for example, we had a Brisbane flood disaster and a disaster in Townsville within a few months of each other, who would decide how much should go to each? Ideally the people who give the money should decide. The people who give money for Townsville would not necessarily want it spent in Brisbane. The solution which the Minister is adopting preserves the integrity of individual funds where it is desirable that their individuality should be preserved. It is only after the lapse of two years, with the additional safeguard of the satisfaction of the Governor in Council that it is unlikely that there will be a need for these funds to be applied for their original purpose, that the residue is then placed in this common fund. That, I think, is an important point of difference between the Bill that is proposed to the Assembly and the interesting suggestion made by the honourable member opposite.

I would pause at this stage in fact to point out that what is being created is an on-going fund—a residue of moneys that can be used for disasters of this type at any time immediately the need arises—and the type of disaster, as the Minister has already mentioned in his introductory speech, is a disaster that is very widely defined.

Mr. Moore: There really should not be any funds, because the money should be used for the purpose for which it was given in the first place.

Mr. GREENWOOD: As the honourable member for Windsor points out, it is, of course, desirable that these funds be used up promptly, but that is another matter.

The honourable member for Rockhampton referred to section 35 of the Collections Act of 1966. Section 35 of that Act is limited to the various situations that are set out in section 35 (1) (a) to (g), and for the most part they do not concern funds raised by the State or by public authorities for the sort of natural disasters that are mentioned in this Bill. For the most part, section 35 concerns funds that are private funds and in which for one reason or another—in most cases it relates to the inability of the particular fund to have a valid collection under the Act—it becomes necessary for the Governor in Council to consider changing the trustees from the private trustees who are there at present to the Public Curator and then, perhaps, changing the trustees back again to private trustees and at the same time changing the terms of the trust. This provision is one which, as I said, is intended to operate in a somewhat different set of circumstances. The Bill that the Minister is now bringing before the Committee closes a gap and provides something that does not seem to be adequately provided for in the law as it presently stands.

Before leaving that question—the question of the Government or a court deciding that the particular objects of a trust can no longer effectively be carried out and so changing those objects in some way—I must again refer to the difficulties involved in this process.

When people give their money to a particular trust, they do so on the basis of a promise by the trustee that it will be used for that purpose, and courts are very loth to devise a cy-pres scheme—a scheme for a similar but not identical purpose—and it has to be shown that it is a virtual impossibility, in practical terms at least, to carry out the trust before a court is prepared to devise a scheme cy-pres.

The thing about a natural disaster is that there really is nothing that is similar to that particular natural disaster—there really is nothing that is similar to the Darwin disaster or to the Brisbane floods—so to use the traditional method of adopting a scheme cy-pres would not work because there is no such thing as a scheme cy-pres for that form of natural disaster.

Mr. Wright: The distress is similar.

Mr. GREENWOOD: Yes, the distress is similar. That is why the Government has taken the view that in that form of natural disaster when, after two years, it becomes abundantly clear that the moneys can no longer be spent for that particular purpose, it is permissible, and the donors will no longer regard it as a breach of faith, for the Government to pay this money into one of these aggregate funds so that it can be paid out from them for similar forms of distress. That is the Bill which is being presented and I support it.

Hon. W. E. KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Justice) (4.5 p.m.), in reply: I appreciate the comments made by honourable members, all of whom have had some experience with public collections. I think I should make it clear that there already exist numerous orders and regulations covering collection of money for these purposes.

The honourable member for Nudgee referred to the collection of money by children and the hours when they may do so. I refer him to regulation 20, subsections (d) and (e). Provision is made that children collecting money shall not be under the age of 15 years unless written consent has been given. A child must be accompanied by an adult if it is under 15 years of age, and consent must have been given.

Mr. Melloy: That provision is not carried out.

Mr. KNOX: How far do we have to go? Many enthusiastic people are involved. It is not that people have any intention of misappropriating the funds. They take part with a great deal of enthusiasm, but they may not be familiar with the rules, even though they should be. If necessary they

should make inquiries. We have had very few complaints of misappropriation under these circumstances. When complaints have been made the police have taken action and prosecutions have been launched. Indeed, they have been successful prosecutions. The hours are limited to from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

We should appreciate that in the enthusiasm of the moment, and the euphoria that seems to gather around particular disasters, many well-intentioned and well-meaning people get involved—and do a very good job—but unfortunately, unless there is some machinery to tidy everything up at the end, there can be a lot of untidiness in the accounting arrangements. This is not because anybody is dishonest but simply because people do not realise what does happen in these appeals.

The Townsville disaster and the Darwin disaster were mentioned. Happily people pay to appeals large sums of money either in cash or by cheque. At the same time various people go about collecting in their localities and groups. That sort of thing went on and gathered momentum as the days and weeks went past. We are talking here more about the distribution of funds than the setting up of a foundation or anything of that sort. Some weeks after the whole of the operation is concluded, and the funds have been distributed, a substantial donation may come out of the blue. Substantial donations of that type are a matter of some embarrassment. They are submitted for the purpose of distribution, or are collected in good faith, but determination of what to do with the funds under those circumstances is embarrassing. Distribution of the amount evenly amongst the people entitled to receive it would mean that they would get less than the cost of the work done to ensure that each received his just entitlement. This has often occurred and it has been a worry to the trustees of funds.

The reference by the honourable member for Rockhampton to Sir Thomas Hiley's comments is apposite to this problem. By way of donation to that flood fund amounts were received from overseas quite some time after the event and, indeed, after the last planned distribution of money had been made. This again highlights the fact that something has to be done with these outstanding amounts. I believe that certain funds that have been closed for some time are still receiving donations from people who were moved by some event to make a donation to them. Perhaps someone who has received a donation from a fund has had good fortune and now wishes to make a donation back to the fund.

This sort of thing can happen and, of course, should not be discouraged. But we as the Parliament must ensure that people who accept the responsibility of administering these funds are not embarrassed or placed in a difficult position when they want to wind up the funds. We must also ensure that the public are assured that when they contribute money to a particular fund, even though it may take a long time for their donations to get to the people for whose benefit it was donated, there is machinery for looking after it and that the whole matter is not left in limbo. This is a move in the right direction.

As the honourable member for Ashgrove has pointed out, we are not setting up a permanent fund as such for all purposes. This is quite a different concept. The whole idea here is to ensure that the winding up of funds can be carried out without embarrassment and that in the event of a disaster, whether natural or man made, there are funds that can be made available from this source. Whilst it is not the specific purpose for which the money was raised originally, at least it can be made available immediately for a similar type of disaster.

Mr. Wright: In the same locality?

Mr. KNOX: Not necessarily. I cite as an example the Townsville cyclone, after which many funds were created. I suspect that in certain funds throughout the State there is money that people would like to do something with but are not sure what to do with it. This fund will help them out of their predicament. I suspect that there are quite a number of funds that are still open and contain money that has not been used. For example, I think 58 or 59 different funds were established throughout the State after the floods of 1974. Whilst some of them, such as the one established by the Townsville City Council, are continuing trusts, quite a number are conducted by people who would like to be able to wind up their affairs.

That is the type of difficulty confronting community leaders and well-wishers who open funds of this type. It is very easy for them in the early stages because the enthusiasm and the euphoria of the occasion carry the administrators of the funds through. However, someone must accept responsibility for the accounting and the distribution of money, and ultimately this can become a heavy burden on those who are left to carry that responsibility. I believe this Bill is a progressive step in the right direction.

I stress once again that it is not our intention that this will become a substitute fund for any worth-while cause for which public-spirited citizens wish to establish funds and appeals. It will not in any way cut across the raising of funds to help people in distress. For example, if there were a disaster in Rockhampton tomorrow the Rockhampton City Council would have no difficulty at all in creating a fund. That can be done without any problem at all. On the other hand, if a fund such as this is established and if there is a disaster of such magnitude as to warrant attention from the State, there will be some way in which a contribution can be made from this fund, so that in the long term the money will be used for the relief of personal distress.

In relation to those other funds or areas that have been spoken about, such as support for a war or guerilla action in Africa or elsewhere, I again stress that we are dealing only with disasters that occur within our State. In this respect I should mention the Darwin situation. This fund will not be established for the purpose of looking after funds raised for disasters outside the State.

Mr. Wright: Don't you think this could be a good administrative point for such funds? You would have people putting the money through such a trust group and it could then be passed to the groups outside.

Mr. KNOX: In theory it sounds very nice, but having served on a number of committees that have raised funds I find that a disaster might occur one morning and that somebody starts a fund the same afternoon. We should not clutter up the system with a lot of unnecessary controls. There is already provision for giving sanctions to people to raise money. If a disaster of some magnitude occurs in any part of the State this morning, by this afternoon a fund could be operating. It is at that time that people are prepared to make substantial donations—on the spot, shortly after it happens. There is need for speed. When councillors and leading citizens are prepared to take the responsibility for collecting donations, this can be done by telephone, and there is no problem. It is desirable that it be done by the leaders of the particular community. This is the best way to handle it.

What should we do when there is a flood throughout the State and funds are established in various parts of the State almost simultaneously? It would be unwise to stipulate only the one fund. That would merely mean multiplying the problem. Like other people, I have given this matter a great deal of thought. There would tend to be a mass of administrative machinery and, with the fund being administered in Brisbane, as it would inevitably be, this could lead to a lack of local interest. It could reduce the feeling of intimacy and to some extent prevent rapport on the problems involved. I think that would inhibit people in making donations and so on.

There is no way in the world that we will ever stop people from wanting to raise money for relief of distress when a disaster occurs, and there is no way that we will stop people from making donations for that purpose. Our duty is to ensure, firstly, that the people who accept the responsibility of administering the funds, and those who make the donations have confidence and faith in the system and, secondly, that the donations will go to the cause for which they were intended, as nearly as possible, and that those who accept the responsibility do not have to carry a burden for the rest of their lives. I think this is the way out of that situation.

Motion (Mr. Knox) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

VALUATION OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION

Hon. W. D. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Survey, Valuation, Urban and Regional Affairs) (4.20 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider introducing a Bill to amend the Valuation of Land Act 1944–1974 in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. W. D. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Survey, Valuation, Urban and Regional Affairs) (4.21 p.m.): I move—

"That a Bill be introduced to amend the Valuation of Land Act 1944–1974 in certain particulars."

The Bill amends the provisions of the Valuation of Land Act 1944–1974 which, as honourable members are well aware, is the statute under which valuations of all land in the State are made for the purpose of levying local authority rates and land tax. The provisions of this Act have been fairly exhaustively debated over recent years, particularly when amendments to the Act were introduced in 1971 and 1974, and I will not weary honourable members by again covering this ground.

I am particularly pleased that my ministerial portfolio includes valuation, as that has long been one of my major interests. As a Fellow of the Commonwealth Institute of Valuers and a past president of the Queensland division of that institute, I have been closely associated with valuation matters generally for many years. The role of the professional valuer has long been a most important one to the community at large and the importance of this role is increasing. Recognising this, in 1965 this Government introduced the Valuers Registration Act to afford a measure of protection to the public by the regulation and control of valuers in this State.

It is, I think, fair to say that most valuers agree that the assessment of unimproved value for rating and taxing purposes is one of the most difficult and important tasks undertaken by a valuer. The difficulty arises from the fact that in most cases unimproved value is a fiction created by statute. Section 12 of the Valuation of Land Act provides that the unimproved value of unimproved land is the market value of that land. That is simple enough, but it goes on to provide

that the unimproved value of improved land is the market value of such land assuming that the improvements did not exist. Unfortunately for the valuer, there is not a great deal of truly unimproved land in the State, and so, when assessing the unimproved value of the majority of the land, he has to work on the assumption that the improvements on or appertaining to that land did not exist.

Although the Act and the established principles of valuation give him guide-lines when assessing the unimproved value of improved land, the valuer still faces a task of some magnitude. He must find sales of comparable land, ensure that these are in conformity with the tests of a reliable basis of valuation, deduct his assessment of the added value of the improvements on each sale from the overall sale price to arrive at the unimproved value for the basic sale land, and then apply that basic figure to the subject land making the necessary and appropriate adjustments for differences between sale land and subject land. The Valuer-General's valuer has another responsibility. He must ensure that each piece of land within a local authority area is valued in relationship or relativity with every other piece of land in that area. This is most important if the rating burden is to be spread equitably throughout the local authority.

From this brief summary of the process of arriving at unimproved value it can be seen that each step can be subjected to an attack, and it is from this that the Valuer-General's valuations are sometimes contentious. Valuation is not a precise science and there is often room for argument. Facilities for such argument are freely given by the Valuation of Land Act to an owner who feels aggrieved at the valuation of his land by the Valuer-General.

First, the owner can object to the valuation, and will be given the opportunity for a conference with the Valuer-General's representatives, at which he may enlarge on the reasons for his objection and receive an explanation as to why the valuation was placed on his land. At the discretion of the Minister, such conferences may be held under an independent chairman whose duty it is to ensure a full, free and frank exchange of opinion between an owner and the Valuer-General, including full disclosure of information relevant to the matter.

After giving consideration to each objection, including matters discussed at an objection conference, the Valuer-General sends to the owner a notice of decision on the objection. The owner then has the right to appeal against that decision to the Land Court. If aggrieved at the decision of the Land Court, the owner may appeal to the Land Appeal Court. That is where purely valuation matters stop. However, on matters of law or jurisdiction, the owner may appeal from the decision of the Land Appeal Court to the Full Court of the Supreme Court. The majority of matters, however, are successfully resolved at the objection stage, and of those that go to the Land Court, very few proceed further.

To perform the duties required by the Valuation of Land Act, the Valuer-General has a field staff of qualified and registered valuers, backed up by trainee valuers and an administrative staff. Over the years, it has been difficult to recruit and train sufficient valuers to keep pace with resignations and retirements. As I said before, the job is a difficult one, and it is constantly in the mind of every departmental valuer that each valuation he performs is a potential court case. I acknowledge the efforts of the staff of the Valuer-General's Department in meeting their statutory commitments.

The Valuation of Land Act was subject to a number of far-reaching amendments in 1971, and some functional machinery amendments in 1974. I am able to report that on the whole these amendments appear to be working reasonably well. However, where it appears that there is room for improvement, it is the duty of the Government as a whole, and my duty as Minister, to recommend amendments. I believe that it is the responsibility of government to constantly review legislation to ensure that such legislation is adequate to cater for the optimum needs of our contemporary society. This will be my aim in relation to legislation coming within my ministerial responsibility.

The present Bill remedies some deficiencies which have arisen in the implementation of the amended Valuation of Land Act. It deals mainly with procedural steps which must be taken under the Act and ensures a more efficient functioning of the legislation.

The present Act provides that the Valuer-General is required to fix a date as at which all lands within a local authority area are to be valued. This date of valuation effectively establishes the level of unimproved values which will apply to that area valuation, as the market value of all lands in the area is determined from an investigation and analysis of sales of land at approximately that date. Although the Valuer-General is empowered to alter this date of valuation, the Act states that it must be a date prior to the date of the first proclamation by the Governor in Council fixing a date upon which that area valuation shall have force and effect for rating and taxing purposes. The Act further provides that this proclamation must be published in the Gazette at least 12 months prior to the actual date of effect. This means that once the first proclamation is gazetted the Valuer-General is powerless to alter the date of valuation.

By an amendment in the 1971 amending Act the date of effect, however, may be postponed if the Governor in Council is satisfied that there are special circumstances warranting such postponement, and this sometimes results in the valuation of an area coming into force and effect several years later

than the initial date specified in the first proclamation. The result is that the valuation takes effect at a time which is quite unrelated to the date of valuation, and, as real estate market trends may have altered significantly within that time, the level of values in the area valuation may be quite different from those prevailing at the time they are first used for rating and taxing purposes.

In a period of rising land prices, the level of values is lower than the market level prevailing at the date of effect. However, it is in a period of falling land prices that the anomaly of the situation is most clearly demonstrated, as landowners in the area will be rated and taxed on values at a higher level than the prevailing market level.

The Bill makes provision to rectify this situation by removing the necessity for the Valuer-General to fix a date of valuation, and hence level of values, prior to the date of the original proclamation, provided that he fixes it at a date prior to his issuing the notices of valuation for the area. This will enable the Valuer-General, in the event of the date of effect of an area valuation being postponed, to investigate the trend of the real estate market, and, prior to issuing the valuation notices, fix a date of valuation and level of values more in conformity with changes in the market.

There are a number of local authority area valuations already affected by postponements of their respective dates of effect under the existing legislation. An instance may be cited of a predominantly cattle grazing shire where the date of valuation, and hence level of values, was fixed at a time of prosperity in the cattle industry. The date of effect of this shire valuation has been postponed several years but the Valuer-General is unable to adjust the level of values of this shire in conformity with the disastrous fall in cattle prices. The absurdity of this situation is that landowners in this shire could be rated and taxed on valuations fixed during the period of prosperity.

To remedy the situation in respect of these local authority area valuations, this amendment is to apply to all those area valuations where proclamations have already been gazetted but notices of valuation have not yet issued, as well as to area valuations not yet proclaimed.

The Valuation of Land Act provides that the valuation of all lands in a local authority area shall remain in force for a period of not less than five years nor more than eight years. Prior to 1971 there was no provision enabling an extension or reduction of the period which an area valuation was to remain in force. The 1971 amending Act, however, made provision for the extension of the maximum period beyond eight years in certain circumstances. This 1971 Act also provided that if the Governor in Council is satisfied that there are special circumstances warranting such action, upon the request of a local authority and on the recommendation of the Minister, the Governor in Council may by proclamation determine that an area valuation shall be in force for a specified period of less than five years. The sole prerogative of making such a request rests with the local authority.

The Bill makes provision for the Valuer-General as well as a local authority to make a request that an area valuation remain in force for a specified period of less than five years. At times, the Valuer-General could be aware of circumstances which indicate that a revaluation of an area should be carried out as soon as possible, but under the existing provisions he has no authority even to make a request that such a revaluation be made, and unless the local authority concerned makes such a request, no action can be taken until the five-year minimum period has elapsed. As with a request made by a local authority, the final decision remains with the Governor in Council upon the recommendation of the Minister. Even if such an early revaluation is carried out, its date of effect could, of course, be postponed if the provisions of either paragraphs (iv) or (v) of section 11 (2) were applicable.

I turn now to the provision in the Bill dealing with the proposed amendment of section 21, the section dealing with appeals to the Land Court.

Honourable members are no doubt all aware of the procedure to be adopted by a landowner who is dissatisfied with the valuation which the Valuer-General has placed on his land. Such a dissatisfied landowner has 60 days from the date of issue of the notice of valuation in which to lodge an objection in writing with the Valuer-General. The Valuer-General must then consider the objection, usually after a conference with the owner if mutually agreeable, and give the objector written notice of his decision upon the objection. If the owner is dissatisfied with the decision of the Valuer-General he may appeal to the Land Court.

I think it is fair to say that the Land Court has long been known as a court in which each landowner has felt entitled, or indeed encouraged, to appear on his own behalf without the need for legal representation. Of course, he is entitled to have such representation, but the minimum of legal technicality involved in the Land Court has encouraged many appellants to handle their own cases. A certain amount of technicality is involved, as it is in any tribunal that seeks to hear and determine issues between parties; but anyone who has had the opportunity of comparing a Land Court hearing with that of other jurisdictions will readily appreciate the difference.

In keeping with the spirit of the Land Court hearing, it has been considered that the formalities involved in instituting a valid appeal are too rigid. Provisions in this Bill go a long way towards alleviating the harshness of strict compliance by a landowner

with the existing provisions of section 21 when he wishes to appeal to the Land Court against a valuation by the Valuer-General.

The existing legislation provides 60 days for the institution of an appeal after the date of issue to the owner by the Valuer-General of a notice of his decision on the owner's objection. An appeal is instituted by filing a notice of appeal in the Land Court Registry. The 60-day period is strictly enforced by the court as it has no discretion to take account of disruption of mail services by floods, postal strikes, and so on.

The notice of appeal is required to state the grounds of appeal and the appellant's opinion of the valuation of the subject land. The appeal shall be limited to the grounds so stated and the burden of proving them is upon the appellant. After instituting an appeal the appellant is required forthwith to serve a copy of the notice of appeal on the Valuer-General. These provisions have been held by the courts to be mandatory and if not complied with in full by an appellant will render the appeal invalid. Neither the Land Court nor the Valuer-General has the power to waive strict compliance by an appellant.

It has been the cause of bewildered anger to an appellant, and of acute embarrassment to the Valuer-General and, I have reason to believe, to the Land Court, to have an appeal ruled invalid because of a failure to comply with the abovementioned mandatory requirements of the Act. However, the strict legal interpretation of these provisions gives the court no discretion, so an invalid appeal deprives the court of jurisdiction to hear and determine the matter. It is towards reducing the number of appeals ruled invalid because of failure to comply with a technicality by an appellant, and to prevent the necessity of his having to seek legal advice to ensure compliance, that the provisions of this Bill are aimed.

The Bill provides for a period of seven days between the filing of a notice of appeal in the Land Court Registry and the serving on the Valuer-General of a copy thereof. This does away with the service "forthwith" requirement. It also allows for an extension of the 60-day period for the instituting of an appeal if the owner proves to the satisfaction of the court that failure to institute the appeal within that time was caused by undue delay in the transmission of mail in the ordinary course of post. When a notice of appeal is filed in the registry later than the prescribed 60 days, the registrar shall notify the owner that the appeal does not lie unless he notifies the registrar within 21 days of his intention to endeavour to satisfy the court, and actually proves to the satisfaction of the court that the failure to institute the appeal within the time prescribed, was caused by undue delay in the transmission of mail in the ordinary course of post.

The Bill further provides that if a notice of appeal which does not comply with the mandatory requirements or which is otherwise defective is filed in the Land Court Registry, the registrar shall issue a requisition to the appellant requiring him to comply in all respects or to remedy the defect within 21 days. If the appellant does not satisfactorily comply with the requirements of the requisition within that time, the Land Court shall not hear and determine the appeal. The registrar shall also furnish a copy of such a requisition and of any answer thereto to the Valuer-General.

This new provision will prevent the situation which arises all too frequently under the existing legislation where an appellant is told at the court hearing that because his notice of appeal does not strictly comply with the requirements of the section the court has no jurisdiction to hear and determine the appeal. He will now have his attention drawn to any defects in his notice of appeal and have time to remedy them.

The Bill further provides that in the event of failure by the registrar to issue a requisition where he should have done so, or where a requisition issued by the registrar was incorrect or incomplete, the Land Court shall require the appellant to furnish it within seven days with the necessary particulars. If the appellant fails to satisfy the requirements of the court within that time the court shall strike out the appeal. This ensures that the rights of an appellant are not prejudiced by the registrar failing to issue a requisition in an appropriate case, or issuing an incorrect or incomplete requisition.

The Bill makes it quite clear that failure by the appellant to serve a copy of the notice of appeal on the Valuer-General will cause the Land Court to strike out the appeal. However, as previously mentioned, the appellant will have seven days in which to do this after filing the notice of appeal in the Registry of the Land Court.

Where the Valuer-General is served with a defective copy of a notice of appeal, the Bill provides that the Land Court may proceed to hear and determine the appeal if it is satisfied that the Valuer-General is not disadvantaged by the defective nature of the copy served on him, and the court may order such adjournment as it thinks fit to ensure that the Valuer-General is not so disadvantaged. This will ensure that the serving of a defective copy of the notice of appeal on the Valuer-General does not render the appeal invalid. At worst, it could cause a delay in the hearing if the court thinks the defect is such that the Valuer-General is disadvantaged to the extent that it warrants an adjournment.

The Bill gives the Land Court a discretion to order costs in favour of the Valuer-General in respect of any adjournment

occasioned by the appellant filing a non-complying or defective notice of appeal or by serving the Valuer-General with a defective copy of such a notice.

Over all the position of the appellant is vastly improved by these amendments as he can now regularise a notice which was originally invalid and so continue his appeal subject only to the discretionary power of the court to award the Valuer-General costs in respect of any necessary adjournment of the hearing of the appeal.

I have previously mentioned that if an appellant is aggrieved at a decision of the Land Court he may appeal to the Land Appeal Court and appeal further to the Full Court on matters of law or jurisdiction. The Bill brings the provision in the Valuation of Land Act relating to appeals from decisions of the Land Appeal Court into line with the provisions of the Land Act dealing with the same matter. It also updates references to the Land Act to the current citation. This means, in effect, that if Land Court and Land Appeal Court procedures are altered by an amendment of the Land Act it will not be necessary to amend the Valuation of Land Act in this regard.

Finally, the Bill contains a provision that the date shown in a notice of valuation or notice of decision on objection as the date of issue of such notice shall be prima facie evidence that such notice was issued by the Valuer-General on the date shown, until the contrary is proved. The dates mentioned are those from which time runs against an owner in relation to the lodging of an objection or the instituting of an appeal, and disputes may arise as to the actual date of issue of such notices. It is, however, the Valuer-General's practice to ensure that these notices issue on the date shown in each notice.

I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. MELLOY (Nudgee) (4.44 p.m.): It is quite clear from the Minister's speech that the proposed amendments to the Act will require the strictest examination by those members of the Opposition who are familiar with valuation procedures and have some expertise in these matters.

The Minister covered a wide range of proposed amendments affecting appellants who object to valuations. It appears to me that the onus is placed entirely on the appellant to justify his appeal. There appears to be no onus on the Valuer-General to justify his valuation. The whole thing is thrown right back onto the appellant. He is hemmed in by regulations and restrictions governing the extent, nature and timing of his appeal.

I do not think any feature of community life causes more discomfort and heartburn than the revaluation of land. In most instances this results from the apparent viciousness of the increases in valuation, which the average landholder does not seem to be able to understand. In many cases he is not able to see any justification whatever for the high increase in the valuation of his property.

Appeals are restricted, of course, by the financial capacity of the appellant. Although he may have his appeal heard in the Land Court or the Land Appeal Court, if he is then not satisfied with the result he is put to great expense to have his appeal heard by the Full Court of the Supreme Court. It costs him a lot of money to obtain satisfaction.

All this comes back to the very basis of valuation. There should be a better basis of valuation than comparable sales. Valuers should go further than that to reach a true valuation of land. Time and time again allotments in the same street have widely varying valuations placed on them. This occurs for no apparent reason at all.

As the Minister has said, it is very difficult to assess the unimproved value of improved land. I suppose it is like trying to judge the quality of a cake covered with icing. Just as we cannot see the cake because of the icing, we cannot fix the unimproved value of land because of the improvements. However, I think that in an area containing land of the same nature, such as in a street or even in a community, there should be some equitable basis of valuation.

The Valuer-General is known to have made some huge mistakes in the valuation of land. I have before me a notation concerning a block of land in the Albert Shire on which the valuer placed a value of $88,000. On appeal, the value was reduced by the Land Court to $20,000. That is remarkable. It was claimed that the land was thought to be suitable for subdivisional development. But surely valuations are not based on what the valuer thinks will be done; they must be based on the situation at the time the valuation is made. After all, the land may not be subdivided for another five or 10 years, and I do not think that the belief of a valuer that the land will be subdivided at some future date entitles him to assess the value of the land at that future time. In later years when the land has been subdivided and there is a subsequent revaluation perhaps its value can be assessed on its subdivisional qualities.

Many aspects enter into land valuation. I know of landowners who knew that possibly their land would be resumed at a future date by the Commonwealth Government and did not appeal against their valuations for the obvious reason that they wanted them to be as high as possible prior to resumption. Of course, they had in mind the compensation that they would receive at a later date. Those values, however, affect adjoining lands that are not subject to resumption. If the owners of land that is subject to resumption do not object to their valuations there is a false basis for the valuation of adjoining lands. What the Government will do in

that instance, I do not know, but it is something that valuers have to look at very closely.

The recent valuation of the metropolitan area increased land values by an average of 80 per cent. In the view of property owners that is a stiff increase. All of them do not realise that their rates are not assessed at the existing rate in the dollar on the increased value of the land. Unless this is explained to them fully we will always have excessive appeals against land values. Most people are concerned about variations in the valuations of blocks of land from street to street. I imagine that, in the country, people would be worried about differences in valuations between area and area without apparent reason.

Evidently it takes between two and 2½ years to carry out the valuation procedure. We must shorten this time. The value of land changes within a couple of years and in many instances valuations do not reflect the true value of properties. About 800,000 properties in the State have to be valued whenever a revaluation occurs. We should have a basis of group or area valuation which would cut down a lot of the time spent in valuing land.

The Minister gave us an outline of a fairly comprehensive amendment of the Act, and he covered a lot of ground, mainly in relation to appeal procedures. As a said, we do not oppose the introduction of the Bill but because it contains so many ramifications and implications we believe it should be closely looked at.

Mr. MILLER (Ithaca) (4.52 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister on introducing his first Bill to the Chamber. I believe that he will do an excellent job in his role as Minister for Survey, Valuation, Urban and Regional Affairs. I congratulate him also on issuing the land valuation pamphlet, which has been an asset to many Brisbane people in the past few weeks in the light of the recent revaluation. It spells out in detail why revaluations take place and how local government uses the new valuations to fix new rates.

Like the honourable member for Nudgee, I am concerned about how valuations are arrived at, and today I wish to cite an example which, I believe, is rather confusing for the people living in the area. I refer to land that was owned by 17 people in the vicinity of Kennedy Terrace and Rockbourne Terrace, Paddington. The blocks were, on the average, 24 perches in area. The valuer told the owners that the value of the land was $10 a perch. Some of the longer-serving members will recall that I raised this matter in the House because I was concerned about the low valuation placed by a valuer on this land.

For the discussion this afternoon I will use the valuation of $10 a perch placed by a valuer on this land, which is three miles from the G.P.O. I understand that the adjoining land is valued by the Valuer-General at approximately $5,000 a block of 24 perches. The Brisbane City Council agrees with me that, when the land is developed by the council it will bring at least $12,000 a block on average. The people who have been paid $240 for 24 perches will then be told by the Valuer-General that their remaining area is now valued at $12,000.

When an area of 24 perches is resumed by the Brisbane City Council, valued at $240 by a professional valuer and then brings $14,000 at auction, it is difficult to explain to people how the Valuer-General can then say to people that the remainder of their land is worth $12,000.

I cannot understand how valuers arrive at their figures. I agree with the previous speaker that a new method has to be found for the valuing of land. I am concerned that such a thing can happen. It certainly does not encourage people to have faith in the Valuation of Land Act.

The second case I cite relates to another resumption of land by the Brisbane City Council. A professional valuer told a woman living in Milton Road, Milton, that the land required by the Brisbane City Council for road-widening purposes and for the extension of an existing private road was valued at $2,000. Her property, I contend, is now valueless because the council has resumed so much land that she is left with 14.1 perches; yet the Valuer-General has now put on the residue a higher valuation than was on the land before the resumption. I fail to see how 14.1 perches of land has any value to a person at all. I submit to the Chamber that, if an application were made through the Metropolitan Permanent Building Society to buy that property, not one cent would be loaned. The Brisbane City Council says that less than 16 perches cannot be built on; so how can a professional valuer tell that woman that her valuation is now more than it was before the Brisbane City Council resumed part of her land? I personally believe that the land has no value and that the Brisbane City Council should resume all of it and pay her a just compensation.

However, that is not the discussion we are entering into today. We are discussing land valuation. I have cited those two cases because people in the area are concerned. Frankly, I cannot blame them. How do we expect people to have faith in the Valuation of Land Act when such things happen as have happened in my electorate? I suppose other members could list similar instances.

Mr. Murray: On top of all that you have the Whitlam dollar, which is almost valueless.

Mr. MILLER: That is a very big factor to be considered.

Another point on land valuation I wish to bring to the notice of the Committee relates to land usage. We speak in terms of the unimproved value of land. In my electorate

is an old part referred to as Auchenflower, where many of the old residents—both widows and widowers—have decided to convert their homes into maisonettes. Because of their high valuations and as they are only drawing a pension, they decide to let half the house as a flat or maisonette. That income enables them to offset the high rates to be paid to the Brisbane City Council.

Mr. Murray: They have to in order to survive.

Mr. MILLER: Of course they do, yet the Valuer-General tells those elderly people that the valuation has now doubled. Why has it doubled? Because they have altered their property from residential to a flat or a maisonette. These people are doing this only so that they can continue living in homes in which probably they have lived all their lives, or at least all their married lives. Why then do we say that in these cases they have to pay double rates?

I can understand the situation where a block of land is sold to a developer for the construction of a high-rise block of units. I agree that the area of land is then much more valuable and the person who sells it obtains considerably more for it because a high-rise building will be erected on it. But I am looking at the position of pensioners who, because they want to continue to live in a particular area, choose to turn their houses, in many cases at inconvenience to themselves, into flats or maisonettes. Why should we then force them to do exactly what they do not want to do, namely, leave the area? In many cases, people in this position have to leave their homes and the district in which they had lived all their lives and in which their friends reside and move to areas seven, eight and nine miles from the city.

I think that these are matters that we as legislators must consider. I know that the Minister has only recently taken over his portfolio, and I know that he is aware of many of the problems that I have raised today. Because we have a man of his calibre in this position, I hope that we will overcome the situations to which I have referred. We cannot allow this type of thing to continue. We want people to have faith in legislation that we introduce, and the only way they can have that faith is by feeling that justice will be done.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (5.2 p.m.): From listening to the honourable members for Nudgee and Ithaca, and also from taking notes of what the Minister said, I think there will be a certain amount of agreement on the measure. It is probably strange for Parliament to have a specialist in a portfolio, such as we have with the present Minister. While that is to his advantage, I suggest that it also places on him a very great responsibility because he has a unique ability to look into matters within his portfolio and see the problems that they present. He has outlined to the Committee today the real crux of the present issue, which is that there is a false system in operation. It is held up as the only way of obtaining land valuations, and thereby income for local authorities. I think the Minister, in explaining the situation as succinctly as he did, really threw down the gauntlet for himself. He has admitted to this Chamber, as other speakers have already said, that the system is false. It certainly lacks equality.

Under the present system, officers with certain expertise go out into the community and assess the unimproved value of land, which the Minister himself says is the value of the land without improvements. I have heard unimproved land described as land "as Captain Cook saw it." Probably that is a very simple layman's approach, but it is a simple way of describing it and a valid description of unimproved land. In looking at land "as Captain Cook saw it", there is no consideration of roads, guttering, or money that someone may have spent in building it up or making other improvements. Unimproved land is land in its natural state. But I suggest, as others have also done, that it is impossible to say exactly how a piece of land would have been "as Captain Cook saw it". I suggest that that is impossible, and we only pretend and fool ourselves if we adopt that view. So the gauntlet has been thrown down, and I think the Minister needs to come up with a different system.

I think there are different systems, and the honourable member for Ithaca was partly there when he started speaking about the various categories that there could be. I agree with him that it is rather ridiculous to force people to sell out (which is what is happening in many inner city areas) because of huge costs placed on them by way of rates. I know the argument, too, that it is necessary to maximise usage of land. It is argued that this is vital, and that the community does not want large tracts of land with only one person on each. That may be so; but I think the alternative could also be argued.

I believe that we should start looking at the usage of land. I think it is unfair to say simply that this piece of land is worth $2,655, while two blocks away another piece of land is worth $3,500. And why? Because three months ago another block of land in that vicinity sold for $3,500. We find valuers going into an area, having one sale to work on and with this assessing the value of a whole block of land This is what is happening. The valuers are making a group assessment yet I believe the people in that group do not have the right of a group objection. This is something the Minister should perhaps look at. Instead of having just individual objections we should have group objections. After all, if the assessment is to be made on a group basis,

why cannot the people in that suburb or in that distinct locality come back and fight as one. It seems to me there are valid grounds for this type of approach. I think it is wrong simply to base the valuation of land on the price one block in the vicinity brought. Obviously no cognizance is taken of the reason a person wanted that land. He could, for instance, have though it desirable to buy that land to build near a hospital or a school or for some other reason.

Mr. Melloy: To put up a service station.

Mr. WRIGHT: This could be. Again it is false to judge the value of land on previous sales. We have anomalies that arise such as that just outside Rockhampton where one part of a block came within the control of the City of Rockhampton and another part divided only by a fence came within the shire of Fitzroy. The value of one was something like six times higher than the other. Surely it has the same usage and yet we find, because one block is assessed as rural and one is assessed as having potential because it is within the boundaries of the city of Rockhampton and could be used for development as a residential site, the city block suddenly is given a very high value. These anomalies are creeping up all the time.

We have the one raised by the honourable member for Ithaca about aged folk. Does it really matter than an aged person owns a large block of land? Why should he be forced to sell out? Why should he have to pay rates beyond his means? I know it is difficult for the Minister to come back and say that we have a rating system based on ability to pay but there are still grounds for that. I think we need to look at the question of what the land is being used for at the time. A person may be 60 to 70 years of age and have no desire to sell up and make huge profits. When it is sold, then we can increase the value but while an aged person is living there I do not believe we should be increasing the value of that land, increasing the rates and thereby forcing an aged person to leave. The anomalies go on and on.

I am pleased that the Minister is taking steps to increase the flexibility and informality of the Land Court and the system of appeals. I agree with the honourable member for Nudgee that it is wrong to place the onus of proof on the objector, as is done in France. Surely this is not how the system should work. Surely if the Valuer-General has the expertise we are talking about, he is the one who should say why a block of land is so valuable and why in fact a certain assessment has been made.

I have spoken to several valuers and pointed out to them that in a certain area no land has been sold in the vicinity. One fellow said, "Yes, but a like piece of land sold in another suburb and that is what I worked it out on." He would certainly have to be a Solomon to make a judgment like that. I suggest that the whole question needs to be looked at very carefully.

I reiterate the point that I made earlier that the Minister is a specialist in this field, but that places on him the responsibility to find the answers to these problems and I think most honourable members will be very pleased if he can do just that.

Mr. LAMOND (Wynnum) (5.8 p.m.): May I commend the Minister firstly on the initiation of his first Bill and, secondly, for introducing such a Bill into this Chamber.

I think we must look first at why land is valued. Having been engaged in the art or profession of valuing for a very long time, I sometimes query the methods adopted by a particular valuer and wonder whether they are the best methods. The accepted method of valuation is not necessarily the best. I have been pleased to hear the intelligent comments made by honourable members on both sides, their support for this Bill and the queries they have raised about a Bill which concerns everyone in the community. Honourable members speak about many matters involving the quality of life but most people during their lifetime own a piece of land and they are entitled to the protection of that asset.

I am very pleased that the Minister has seen fit to ease the rules and make the Land Court more a layman's court. Too frequently in the past people wishing to object to a valuation have had to follow the usual procedures and appear in a court of law or something akin to it. The ordinary person finds that very disturbing, and all too frequently people fail to come forward and contest a valuation case for fear that they will be placed in a situation that is somewhat embarrassing to them in a court. I believe that the Minister's proposal is a forward move.

Consideration must also be given to the effects of increases in valuations. Too often one hears of instances in which a property is sold for a certain price and that price is different from the valuation fixed by the Valuer-General's Department, and confusion occurs. As all honourable members are aware, valuations are now used for land tax purposes, for probate and succession duty and also for rating. Probably the figure fixed by the Valuer-General is a false figure because for many years it has been below the true market value of the property. In using it, Mr. Hewitt, we are only kidding ourselves. Let us produce a figure that represents the true market value, and let us then change our rules relating to land tax and upgrade the figure on which land tax is charged. Let us increase the figure at which probate and succession duty becomes payable and let us also change the rating on properties. I suggest that we should get back to a true figure. One honourable member said that there should be a better method of valuation. I agree with

him, and I should like to know what it is. I am pleased that so many honourable members are viewing this question intelligently.

Where rezoning takes place in a specific area, the value of land on the fringes of that area is affected because, although it is not zoned for the same purpose, it will certainly become its best use in due course. That is something which must be considered when a property is rezoned by a local authority or when a property is affected greatly by a town plan introduced by a local authority. For example, honourable members are aware that the Brisbane Town Plan contains various requirements relating to road corridors, and these have a disastrous effect on valuation. How can any valuer assess accurately the value of a property on which a road corridor has been determined when he does not know whether or not it will be resumed by the relevant authority?

I have mentioned some of the thousands of problems that valuers face. I commend the Minister for introducing the Bill, and I hope that it will bring forward the intelligent thoughts of people and enable them to present their case in a type of layman's court without having to comply with the stringent requirements that now apply, under which a landowner is called upon to do certain things by a given time and which have more regard for rules than for the human aspects of a person's defence of what is probably his biggest asset.

There are many methods by which properties can be valued. Reference has been made to comparable values, summation and capitalisation—and I think the honourable member for Rockhampton commented on comparable values. This is a great problem. When a valuer can have reference to only one sale in a given suburb in a particular zone in about five years, how does he assess the value of a particular property?

Mr. Wright: The ratepayer's only defence is to find another property sold at a lower price.

Mr. LAMOND: That is correct. It is not good enough. Too frequently valuers are called on to produce figures of comparable sales somewhere out of the area. Frequently the question is asked: "What was the value of the property as Captain Cook saw it?" As we all know, Brisbane has changed considerably since Captain Cook first saw this part of the State. Prior to reclamation or development by the owner a particular piece of land might be a very undesirable block. Because the owner is prepared to spend money on filling and terracing, the land can be sold at a much higher price and in this way adjoining properties are affected. Such facts must all be taken into consideration when assessing the value of a particular piece of land in a particular street. Valuing is most certainly a very definitive and complex science or profession. People engaged in valuing must involve themselves to the nth degree by looking at all relevant aspects.

I should like to speak to the Bill at a later stage when I have had the opportunity to study it. At last I see an upward trend. We are taking an interest in something that affects everybody, rich or poor. The effect of valuation of land is of great importance to all people. I commend the Minister for his action in bringing the Bill down.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (5.18 p.m.): It is very important that a complete review be made of the whole system of local government financing, land taxing and, perhaps more importantly, the valuing of land. The time is past when we can say, "What was the land like in the days of Captain Cook? What was the land like when each of us bought a raw block of land with a dirt road running past it?" Today the entire concept is different. Companies buy large tracts of land—perhaps farm land, perhaps land that formed large estates. The companies develop the land. They provide the electricity, sewerage, water, roads, footpaths and street lighting. The land when sold on the public market is sold not as an undeveloped block but as a fully developed one.

I am sure that those who have seen land developed in this way would be amazed at the transformation of the area where they used to shoot or go lobbying. It is amazing what developers can do with modern machinery. How could anyone 10 years later say, "That land looked like so-and-so in its original state or in its unimproved condition."?

I am not in any way criticising what the Minister is attempting to do by this legislation. As we study it we will be able to pass judgment on it. However, at this stage I want to say that the Minister would be well advised to get his officers and other experts in this field to make a complete review of the principles on which land valuations are made. After all, the previous value of the land is not what really matters. The real value of the land is what people put on it today. Both the State Government and the local authority base their taxes and rates on land values. If all land is valued on an improved basis I cannot see that people would be worse off than under the present system. Improved value would be more modern, more realistic, more just and more honest than unimproved value, which is a supposed value.

In considering the improved value of land it is necessary to take into account the cost involved in maintaining improvements. For example, a block of land on the slope of a hill can be turned into a very fine allotment merely by, say, growing grass on it, but the cost of retaining that land in its improved state against the ravages of storms is very high. The owner is required constantly to outlay money for top dressing.

In contrast, a level block of land can be improved in value with very little maintenance. All these indeterminable factors make it virtually impossible for a valuer to arrive at a valuation that is absolutely just and fair.

My first suggestion is that the present system of unimproved value be scrapped and that in its place we institute a system of improved value. It could be argued, of course, that this will hit the person who puts improvements on his land; he will pay additional rates or taxes as a penalty, as it were, for having improved his land. I would suggest, however, that once a value is placed on a block of land it should remain constant except for increases that might be applied to all land to keep pace with inflation or money values. I do not think that a person who improves his land should be penalised by having to pay higher rates or taxes. However, it might be appropriate to revalue his land when there is a change of ownership or a change of use, and such a revaluation could take into account all the improvements that had been made to the land.

At the present time when a block of land is sold the improvements that have been carried out on it are, of course, reflected in its price and this, in turn, has a bearing on the values of adjacent or nearby blocks of land. To me this is totally unjust. If a person is happy to pay a high price for land, that price should be regarded as his value only and not as a basis for the valuation of land in the vicinity. It is not fair to transfer that purchaser's valuation to other landowners in the area. I believe it would be a fair exercise to go into the various methods of valuation and the adjustments that can be made. Certainly reassessments should be made more infrequently than they are at present.

This brings me to the vexed question raised by the honourable member for Rockhampton, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the two Government members who have spoken. I refer to the problem confronting those people who find themselves on a lower income than that which they were previously receiving. They find the payment of rates and taxes a very heavy burden. I know that some local authorities levy half rates or reduced rates on pensioners, but this means that if the local authorities are not reimbursed by either the State or the Commonwealth Government the rate burden is passed onto someone else. After all, local authorities base their rates on the income that they require and they spread their rates over the entire area accordingly.

When we examine the history of land valuation and local authority financing, we find that the latter was based mainly on land valuations in the days when landholders in England were considered to be the gentry or the wealthy who had a means of deriving an income from the land. In those days it was not normal for the average person to own his own land or his home. Perhaps the fair way then for local authorities to get finance was to levy those who could afford to pay. In these modern times it seems that land values alter, as people improve their allotments, or because of circumstances which have nothing to do with the landowner. In fact, as honourable members pointed out earlier, land values increase at times as a result of area improvements that a landholder does not want.

As Commonwealth and State taxation is based on ability to pay plus services rendered, why should not local authority fund-raising be placed on a similar footing? It is wrong that people should be expected to pay more to finance local authorities simply because they happen to live in an area that has been reclassified or revalued under circumstances in which they played no part at all. To my mind this is one of the things in our system which are unjust.

It has been the boast of Queensland and other Australian States that they encourage people to own their own land and homes. That is a wonderful principle but it breaks down when people become older. It is one of the great problems confronting us. It is not good enough for Governments to shoulder local authorities with the responsibility of reducing charges so that a person in a certain financial situation will not be affected.

The same principal applies to land tax. Over the years we have tried to overcome the land tax problem by increasing the limit of exemption. People in country areas may require large holdings to carry on their rural industry but they find themselves in trouble when others pay more for nearby land than it is really worth. A few years ago cattle land was selling at a premium while sheep land was being virtually given away, but a valuation had to be struck to cover the land. I know that valuers try to do the decent and honest thing but more is required in the way of legislative action.

Through the Minister, his officers, and others with expertise, let us look at these matters. We have only to establish the desire to have a new concept, and I support that in principle, as it relates to the basis of land valuation. Land valuation must be more realistic in the light of our time. Let us forget about the idea of land being in its natural state, because that is not a reality today. Let us make sure that those who want to pay heavily for land have that privilege and right, but do not let their decision have such an important effect on other people who happen to live in the same area, as it does at present.

Mr. M. D. HOOPER (Townsville West) (5.29 p.m.): In supporting the proposed amendments to the Valuation of Land Act 1944–1974, I firstly agree that the assessment of unimproved value of land for rating or taxing purposes is, in many cases a difficult and important task. The Minister pointed out that section 12 of the Valuation

of Land Act provides that the unimproved value of unimproved land is the market value of that land. In that respect I disagree with the remarks of the honourable member for Rockhampton who said that valuation was relatively easy; that all the valuations in a street were added together to ascertain an average value of any sites that had been sold in order to arrive at a fair value of the land in that street.

Mr. Wright: I said that that was wrong and unfair.

Mr. M. D. HOOPER: I thought that was the method of assessment outlined by the honourable member for Rockhampton. I do not think that is right. What the honourable member is virtually saying is that that is a "guesstimate" of the value of the land. A competent valuer must properly assess all the relevant factors in his valuation of land and compare like sales of unimproved land.

Direct comparisons are not always easily obtainable in the immediate vicinity. For argument's sake, the highest price paid for one block of land is not always the figure taken by the Valuer-General or any other authority as the basis in assessing an area's unimproved value. Sometimes a developer will pay a particularly high price because he has a special purpose for buying the land; but, rightly, the Valuer-General's Department, as well as private valuers who make assessments for appeal purposes, take into consideration the average prices paid in the immediate vicinity or even in other suburbs. Sometimes, when there is not a large turnover of real estate in the area being valued, prices of comparable land in other towns may be considered.

Another matter to be considered is reclamation. Some building sites are on land that was previously tidal. Where low-lying land is reclaimed, a developer has to meet the cost of retaining walls and the fill. Those costs must be deducted from the sale price to find the unimproved value of the site. Thus, a valuer cannot just choose a street and say that every block of land in it is worth the same amount.

Mr. Wright: The point is that they may get different values from houses next door.

Mr. M. D. HOOPER: I am talking about the unimproved value of land for rating purposes, not house valuations.

The Valuer-General is accountable for all his valuations. His determinations are subject to appeal. The Minister pointed out that valuation is not a precise science, which is why we have the avenues of appeal outlined in the Bill. The Minister said that if a person wishes to appeal against the Valuer-General's valuations he may either directly or through an agent or a solicitor lodge an appeal to the Valuer-General's Department. In the past I have had experience of those appeals being conducted in a very informal and friendly manner. We sat around a table and discussed with the Valuer-General's valuer the reasons why we thought his valuations were too high. Frankly, a lot of frivolous appeals are lodged by appellants who wish to keep their rates down, but in many cases the valuer readily concedes the validity of an argument for a lower valuation and an amended notice is issued, thus saving the appellant the cost of a protracted appeal as well as the time spent waiting for the appeal to be heard.

Unfortunately, the Valuer-General's Department is not the only Government authority in Queensland which makes valuations. The Lands Department is responsible for determining valuations under the Act that it administers. Those valuations are not available to the public. Recently the Townsville City Council resumed several thousand hectares of grazing land, which in the past was valued at a low figure. The land had been subject to terminating leases, which, as everybody knows, have a lower value than freehold land on sale or resumption. With the permission of the Government, the city council resumed lands in an adjacent shire as the dam watershed.

To assess the compensation to be paid for the resumptions, the council had valuations made by private valuers, as it was not able to obtain the services of the Valuer-General's Department. Valuations of the areas to be resumed were based on the value of grazing land in that area subject to terminating leases. To our surprise, using the method of valuation under the Land Act, the assessment was somewhat in excess of what we considered to be the freehold value of the land. The Lands Department told the Townsville City Council that it would have to pay compensation to the holders of the leasehold titles based on undisclosed sales evidence. We were not provided with copies of the valuations made by the Lands Department. When we appealed to the Lands Department, we were informed that the valuations were its property, that they had been assessed by competent officers and that therefore we had to accept the opinion of the Lands Department as to what was the correct value, and pay compensation accordingly.

Under the provisions of this Act, we would have the right of appeal to the Land Court. We could produce our evidence and say that the Townsville City Council considered the value of the parcel of land to be $X thousand, not $X+Y thousand which is the opinion of the Lands Department. I contend that in matters of valuation for any governmental purpose there should be only one valuing authority, and that should be the Valuer-General's Department. I do not think that the Lands Department, or any other department, should set itself up as a separate valuing authority, and then not disclose to appellants its method of valuation. That is a rather clandestine operation, and I hope the Minister for Lands brings down legislation similar to that now under discussion.

I mention these matters because as a valuer over many years I have seen from time to time a number of things that I considered required correction. The Minister has taken a fair step in the right direction by providing for the easier hearing of appeals, and I commend him on the action that he has taken. I think that in the future perhaps appeals could be made somewhat easier.

A Bill brought down in a recent sittings by the Minister for Local Government concerning standard building by-laws provided that anyone who wished to appeal against a local authority ruling could apply to a tribunal or committee to obtain a fair and quick hearing. In future years the Minister for Valuation could look at even simpler legislation to allow a similar committee or tribunal to hear appeals from the Valuer-General's valuations. Members of such a committee could be an officer of the department and a competent member of the A.C.I.V.

Mr. Wright: Isn't a decision given by that tribunal final?

Mr. M. D. HOOPER: No, there is a right of appeal from decisions of the other tribunal.

Mr. Wright: On what basis?

Mr. M. D. HOOPER: Don't you remember the Act?

Mr. Wright: I'm asking you.

Mr. M. D. HOOPER: There is right of appeal under the other Act, and there should be right of appeal under this one.

Mr. Wright: There is no appeal once you go to that tribunal.

Mr. M. D. HOOPER: You can go to the court. You can go to a higher authority.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Miller): Order! Will the honourable member please address the Chair.

Mr. M. D. HOOPER: I am sorry, Mr. Miller. I was trying to answer the questions of the honourable member for Rockhampton.

I commend the Minister on the proposed amendments. However, I think we could go a little further in the future and possibly simplify the method of appeal.

Hon. W. D. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Survey, Valuation, Urban and Regional Affairs) (5.38 p.m.), in reply: In the first place, I should like to thank all members for their contributions to the debate on this very important measure now before the Committee. I should also like to say that this is the first time since I became a member in this Chamber (which dates back to 1963) that so much constructive consideration has been given to a matter dealing with land valuation. Since I assumed my portfolio, which covers the Valuer-General's Department, it has become my intention to try to take the heat and mystery out of land valuation. In past years, particularly when valuations of Brisbane have been brought down, a great deal of political heat has been generated by the problems that people imagine they face arising from revaluations. I should like to see people correctly advised on the principles and practice of valuation as they relate to statutory valuations required of the Valuer-General under the Valuation of Land Act.

One thing that I should like to point out quite clearly is that valuers of the Valuer-General's Department are professional officers, and they merely carry out their responsibilities in valuing as are outlined by the statute. We in this place are responsible for the statute.

All too often there is condemnation of the Valuer-General and his department as a result of ignorance not only by the general public but quite often by members in this place. For argument's sake, if I could cite just one instance, it has been said today that the Valuer-General should defend his valuation, but the Valuer-General makes the valuation and people object to that valuation. He is bound by his oath of office, as are all valuers, to bring down a valuation in accordance with the Act.

Let me say at the outset, as one who has been fairly critical of the process of valuation and some of the existing provisions in this Act, that I hope later on to be able to bring before the Committee, after I have discussions with the Cabinet and with my colleagues, some suggestions which may improve the system of the valuation of land. Most honourable members today have highlighted the problem of unimproved capital value. One could look at the question of "site value", which is something that people understand. One looks at a block of land and says, "What is the site worth?"

When I refer to unimproved capital value, particularly in relation to urban land, which is rather fictional, we have peculiar difficulties in assessing that value of a parcel of land. It has been said here today that one is required to visualise the land in the same state as when Captain Cook was here. Theoretically in putting a value on a parcel of land, that is, a suburban block, one has to relate what is contained within the four pegs to what it was like when Captain Cook was here. That was how it was.

But this seems to cause confusion because one has to find out what in fact gives land value. The location of the land, the services that are provided for it and other factors all go to make up land value, but it is people who assess that value. If I buy a block of land I mentally make a note of all the things that are desirable about that block of land and I say, "It is worth so much." I go to the person who owns the land and say, "I will give you so much for the land." He says, "I will accept it." That establishes value and it is really the only way one can interpret value.

Mr. Wright: That is a personal value.

Mr. LICKISS: It is all very well to say that is a personal value; but what other methods are available to the valuer? As I say, the valuer is in a very difficult situation. But for all that, if he can in terms of this Act provide relative values so that the relationship of the value of one block of land to other blocks of land spread throughout a valuation area is consistent and the relativity is preserved, then he is achieving the purpose of his commission because under those circumstances the rate burden can be equally distributed and that is the whole purpose of his task.

If he wears another hat and he has to value for the State in terms of a resumption, he is also carrying out a statutory valuation but that is under the provisions of the Land Acquisition Act. That is laid down in Collins on "Valuation, Compensation and Land Tax". I am sure our legal fraternity, the honourable member for Ashgrove and the honourable member for Brisbane, will have perused this in great detail. The principles to be followed by a valuer are contained therein. But I come back to the point that the valuer is merely carrying out his duty under the statutes with which we provide him.

Mr. Casey: I think you are striking one point that does confuse most people. You can have three different Government departments, say Government instrumentalities, with different valuations. That does become confusing to a lot of people.

Mr. LICKISS: We do not have three different types of valuers. The statutes vary for different purposes. If I could give the honourable member an example—this comes back to a point raised by the honourable member for Bulimba that perhaps we ought to disregard the unimproved capital value and go to the improved value of land. This is the system used in New Zealand.

It is interesting to note that in New Zealand about 30 per cent of objections to valuations are based on the fact that the valuations are too low. Over there the Valuer-General's valuations are used for mortgage purposes, for the raising of finance and for any other normal transaction and the Valuer-General is valuing to the market all the time. If you adopt that system all it means is that when you assess value for rating and taxing purposes you effectively shift the burden from one section of a community to another. If you work on the assessed annual value, which is an amount related to the total valuation of a property, the result would in fact be dramatically different from the unimproved capital value. For example, there may be a skyscraper alongside a two-storey block of shops. One is going to be valued on the total value of the property plus the land in a market transaction, and the same thing will be done to the next. Obviously a person will be affected in terms of how much he contributes to the local authority, if that valuation is to be the basis for rating and taxing purposes, because of the amount of money he has spent on the development of the land. The question that one would ask oneself politically is: do I want to encourage development, or don't I? In effect, one would there be encouraging people who did not want to develop as against those who wanted to develop.

Mr. Houston: I don't think that is so. It would be easy to take out a factor that allowed for the physical development of a building on the land and still bring the land back to a comparable value.

Mr. LICKISS: That was not exactly how the honourable member explained it. If one did that, one would come back to the argument of site value, and I do not think anyone would disagree with that. Let us take two parcels of land. The valuer has to assess at the date of valuation the cost of the invisible improvements to that land. For instance the filling of a hole in the middle of the land, and that could have been effected 70 years ago. In determining the unimproved capital value, he virtually determines the site value as it is at the moment and deducts from that value as at the date of valuation the cost of effecting that improvement. That could have happened six or seven owners ago, but it is still carried forward and is an allowable deduction for an improvement under the Act. This is one of the problems we are faced with in this day and age, and we must come to grips with such problems.

The question was raised—I think by the honourable member for Ithaca—of old people altering a home by converting it into maisonettes or by attaching a small flat to it. That poses a problem relative to land usage.

When one looks at land usage—and this is now provided for under the town planning legislation—and looks at that particular issue, section 11 (1) (vii) of the Valuation of Land Act provides relief for people living in a single-unit residential home or where the purpose of the use of the land is primarily the business of primary production. When the land is upgraded to a higher use, they are given relief from the land having to be valued for that higher use. Let me explain it simply. A single-unit home is on land zoned residential A. The land is rezoned as residential B, which is a higher use. If that house exists and is a single-unit residence, it is valued as residential A, not residential B. But if the person concerned decides to put in a maisonette or a small flat, he should know that the land is then being used for the purpose for which it is zoned, that is, for more than a single unit.

How far does one go in working out the transition period? If some method can be evolved, fair enough; but relief is pro-

vided at the moment and, quite frankly, not only is that relief provided but in my humble opinion it is often abused. I do not say it is not done legally, but a subdivider could purchase broad acres of land, knowing full well that in the short term he will probably develop it. He might pay $10,000 an acre for it. However, provided he can establish that in his possession that land is being used for primary production, even though there could be a value on his own initiative of $10,000 an acre, under this section the Valuer-General has to value the land as though it were used for the purpose of primary production and no allowance is made for its higher potential for the provision of accommodation. Quite frankly, the valuations could be as low as something less than $1,000 an acre. I am merely plucking a figure out of the air. Where is the equity in that? Again it is a question of judgment.

These are all matters that need to be looked at in the rating and taxing of land. They are all matters that should exercise the mind of this Legislature. When we weigh the pros and cons of what we have at the moment, we could well conclude that it is the best system.

I believe that all legislation should be open to critical examination at all times. As I said before, if at any time I feel that legislation can be improved, I will certainly do what I can to improve it. I want to ensure that our legislation in this sphere leads the field in Australia.

A number of matters were raised by individual members. I will not unduly delay the Committee in replying to all of them at this stage. The honourable member for Nudgee said that a wide investigation would be made of the proposed legislation by members on his side. I would certainly welcome that. I have already said that I appreciate the constructive comments that have been made by all speakers, and I look forward to further comments at the second-reading stage. The honourable member said that we should go further. By that I dare say he means the use of a different system, and taking it from the unimproved value to site value or to assessed annual value or some other value which we may evolve. All that really means is changing the category of valuation.

The effect of the assessment of the valuation would change from one section of the community to the other. What we are looking for, of course, is equity. If there is a better system, by all means let us find it. Ever since the Premiers' Conference in 1916, efforts have been made to find a better system. At that stage it was felt that this was one of the most contentious issues facing government in Australia. A Premiers' Conference was convened to look at valuation and its effect on land, and that gave birth to the Valuer-General's Department in most States.

The making of a valuation is merely the assessment of the value that people put on the land in question. This has to be made at a given time for the whole of an area because there are a number of variables. One is the measurement of value itself, which is money. Of course, money itself is a variable yardstick, particularly in this day and age.

In dealing with various valuations that had been made, the honourable member for Ithaca referred to a number of matters. In particular he referred to the value placed on certain land that was being resumed. I think I know the land he had in mind. If it was the land in Milton Road, that would be a valuation made by the Brisbane City Council. The Brisbane City Council is a constructing authority under the Valuation of Land Act, and it would thus make its own valuation.

The honourable member for Rockhampton covered various other matters. "Usage" would probably answer his question as to why a block on one side of a local authority boundary differed in value from a block on the other side. "Usage" is a very important factor. When land can be put to its best use it is valued accordingly.

The honourable member for Wynnum is an experienced valuer. I thank him for his contribution. The honourable members for Wynnum and Ithaca both mentioned the pamphlet. That was the result of a very earnest desire on the part of the Valuer-General and me to do something to educate and inform the public. I think it would be agreed that it was done on a completely non-political basis. I hope this will help people to determine what valuation is all about.

I have covered some of the points raised by the honourable member for Bulimba. The honourable member for Townsville West is also a valuer. I should like to thank him for his contribution. What we are trying to do was outlined by him. We are trying to make appeals as non-technical as possible.

I assure honourable members that if I have not covered all of the important issues in this reply, I will certainly endeavour to repair any omission at the second-reading stage.

Motion (Mr. Lickiss) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

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

"That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 11 a.m. tomorrow."

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 5.57 p.m.