Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 26 AUGUST 1975

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

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Proclamation under the Water Act Amendment Act 1975.

Orders in Council under—

Irrigation Act 1922–1973.

Water Act 1926–1975.

River Improvement Trust Act 1940–1971.

City of Brisbane Act 1924–1974.

Regulations under—

The Nurses Act of 1964.

Local Government Act 1936–1975.

By-laws under the Water Act 1926–1975.

Ordinances under the City of Brisbane Act 1924–1974.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

PRESS STATEMENT ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT BY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Hon. K. W. HOOPER (Greenslopes—Minister for Transport) (11.3 a.m.): I wish to draw honourable members' attention to a story on page 3 of yesterday's "Courier-Mail" in which the honourable member for Lytton attempted another of his infamous "hoodwink" tricks. This time he pulled out public transport from his pack of "criticism" cards and tried to bluff his way through the hand; but the honourable member for Lytton didn't hold any aces—he used the same worn-out deck which has been in the A.L.P.'s custody for decades.

For the nth time he talks about electrification of the suburban rail system being started in 1950 by a Labor Government, but what the honourable member conveniently forgets to mention every time he flogs this yarn is that the National-Liberal Government of the day opted to dieselise all of Queensland's railway system before haphazardly electrifying the suburban network, which would have been the case if we had continued with Labor's rough and ready plan.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I seek the indulgence of all honourable members. When a Minister is on his feet, I ask them to refrain from persistent interjections.

Mr. K. W. HOOPER: The Honourable the Treasurer, who was Minister for Transport in the late fifties and early sixties, also reported following an intensive overseas investigation that electrification was not a viable proposition unless a population of 750,000-plus was to be served.

Must it be constantly stressed to the members of the Opposition that the Queensland Government Railways has become one of the busiest railway operators in the world and that the Government's decision then was in the interest of the State as a whole? The fact is that the entire State railway system has been modernised and upgraded to the extent that it is now an efficient transport medium operating over much of Queensland.

The honourable member for Lytton also referred to railway stations, saying that many were in the antique category. Surely, Mr. Speaker, the honourable member can appreciate that there are 110 stations in the suburban network and many thousands throughout the State. If he knows anything of simple economics he would be aware that we just cannot go out and build hundreds of new railway stations. Even blind Freddie could see that old stations on the suburban network are being rebuilt and updated when precious funds become available.

This Government has built new suburban stations at Brunswick Street, Bowen Hills, Northgate, Hendra, Eagle Junction, Woodridge, Sherwood, Graceville, Indooroopilly, Auchenflower, Chelmer, Milton and Toowong, and new stations are proposed at Sandgate, Ferny Grove and Whinstanes.

During the past 10 years, public usage of the suburban rail services has increased by more than 12,000,000 passenger journeys.

It is not all this overworked propaganda which concerns me, but the blatant attempt of the honourable member for Lytton to cover up for his blundering cronies in Canberra. Let me make it quite clear: Queensland appears to have been dumped by the Federal Labor Government; the timing and future of our whole urban public transport programme is in doubt; it is in jeopardy and in acute danger of grinding to a halt.

Last week I received a letter from the Federal Transport Minister, Mr. Jones, saying—

> "With regard to urban public transport improvement, the (Federal) Government has decided not to support commencement of any new projects in 1975-76".

In other words, Mr. Speaker, it is a clear-cut case of another Labor Government promise made and another Labor Government promise broken. As far back as the 1972 Federal election campaign, both the Liberal and Labor parties promised in their platform financial assistance to the States for urban public transport, yet Queensland and the other States had to wait until midway through last year before the States Grants (Urban Public Transport) Act 1974 became a reality.

This financial year, Queensland sought approval to spend a total of $26,101,000 on projects including electrification, additional trackage, the cross-river rail link, interchanges and new buses. According to Mr. Jones's letter, the Commonwealth's allocation to

Queensland will be only $10,600,000, and with the State's contribution the total will be about $16,000,000.

The following, Mr. Speaker, is another self-explanatory section of the letter—

> "The Government gave specific consideration to the electrification of the Brisbane suburban railway system. It decided, in the light of the present economic situation, that it should not give any commitment to funding of the program beyond those elements already approved in the context of the 1973-74 and 1974-75 assistance programs".

In light of this revelation, the honourable member for Lytton has the audacity to claim that the Federal Government is rescuing Brisbane's urban transport system. I am having this crisis situation closely examined by my senior transport advisers and officers, but I gravely fear that Queensland has been left dangling at the end of a rope as far as future public transport improvements are concerned beyond this financial year.

I must stress, Mr. Speaker, that it is impossible to plan such a massive public transport programme on a stop-go basis, as Canberra would like us to. We must plan several years in advance and it is essential that we have continuity of funding for our programme to become a reality and beneficial to the public.

The Federal Labor Government stands indicted by this letter. It is blatantly disregarding an Act of Federal Parliament—a five-year agreement signed by the Prime Minister and Premier guaranteeing financial assistance to the States for urban public transport projects. If there is any guilt to be levelled, Mr. Speaker, it should not be at the State Government as the honourable member suggests, but clearly at the inept bunglers in Canberra.

For the benefit of honourable members, and particularly the honourable member for Lytton, I table a photostat copy of Federal Transport Minister Jones's letter containing the facts as I have outlined them.

Whereupon the honourable gentleman laid the document on the table.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

1. UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF FUNDS

Mr. Burns, pursuant to notice, asked the Deputy Premier and Treasurer—

(1) What amounts of money have been spent from State Government funds for unemployment relief in the financial years 1972–73, 1973–74 and 1974–75?

(2) To what departments or local authorities were the funds disbursed?

(3) What funds were received by the State Government and local authorities from the Commonwealth Government for unemployment relief in the same financial years?

Answers:—

(1 and 2) Because the Commonwealth has the responsibility for economic management of the nation any unemployment created by its policies and consequently the provision of any special measures to alleviate unemployment are also the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. On the State's part, its policy is to allocate every dollar that is available to it to essential State services and particularly in times such as the present when unemployment is rife, to channel whatever funds it can into the type of services and works that have a high labour content. The disbursement of these funds benefits all people in the Government employ and employees of private enterprise with Government contracts. The substantially increasing subsides paid to local authorities enables them to undertake additional works thus providing employment to workers in their areas. I would not attempt to put a figure on the expenditure from State Government funds that has contributed to relief of unemployment. The State also offers assistance to the Commonwealth in administration and formulation of programmes and projects for any specific unemployment relief measures that the Commonwealth decides to implement.

(3) During the years mentioned, the amounts provided by the Commonwealth for unemployment relief in Queensland were—

1972–73	..	$16.4 million
1973–74	..	$2.3 million
1974–75	..	$5.6 million

of which $17.2 million was directed to local authorities and the balance to Government departments.

2. HOUSING COMMISSION ACTIVITIES, IPSWICH

Mr. Hales, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Works and Housing—

(1) How many houses and aged persons units were erected by the Housing Commission in the Ipswich City Council area during 1974–75 and how many does the commission expect to erect during this financial year following the lower amount allocated to the States from the Commonwealth Budget for welfare housing?

(2) How many applications are still outstanding?

(3) How many vacant allotments are owned by the commission in this area?

Answers:—

(1) Completions in 1974–75 were 462 houses. At 1 July 1975 there were 188 further houses in current building contracts and tenders have since been accepted for another 31 houses making a minimum of 219 for 1975–76. Tenders will be called for 22 pensioner units. The number of

further houses for which tenders may be accepted will depend on an over-all review following the Commonwealth Budget allocation.

(2) 210—being 87 with priority, 104 without priority and 19 for pensioner units.

(3) 84 available house-sites and a further 135 hectares requiring development.

3. POLICE FOOT PATROLS

Mr. Lindsay, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Police—

In view of his answer to my question without notice on 20 August that police foot-patrols would be reintroduced as soon as the force had sufficient men, in what ways can I and the "silent majority" of the Everton electorate show our support and appreciation to the vast majority of the Police Force for their past and continuing contribution to the happiness and security of citizens?

Answer:—

Crime is a social problem, not just a police problem that should be everyone's concern. Yet there is a tendency in Queensland to consider crime prevention as the responsibility of the police only. Increases in lawlessness, whether they take the form of violence against the person, or drink-driving, are seen as reflecting only a flaw in law enforcement. This is, of course, absolute rubbish. There are many factors which create an environment in which crime can flourish, factors over which police have no control. Too much is expected of police and until as much is expected of the courts, the schools, the home situation, and the prisons, as is now expected of the police, crime will probably continue to rise. It is therefore refreshing to have someone ask what he can do to help the police. It is doubly refreshing that the question was raised by a member of this House who is able to bring influence to bear on others. There are many answers to his question. It would be helpful, especially in the present climate, if those in public positions were to be objective in their comments upon police matters; if their criticism, when they feel obliged to criticise, were to be constructive, not merely destructive; if they were to judge the facts, not the rumours before bursting into print; and if they were to gain some appreciation of the problems facing police before they off-handedly condemn. It would also be helpful if there were more responsible people, such as the honourable member for Everton, prepared to seek ways and means of helping the police. It is true we do not have enough police; no force in Australia has enough. It would be helpful if there were fewer comments from those who ought to know better, which suggest that there is an easy overnight solution to the problem of police shortages which for perverse reasons of its own the police department deliberately ignores. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have launched recruitment campaigns; we have improved working conditions and pay; and we have introduced many new techniques and ideas. We have a Police Academy with more advanced training that any other State in Australia aimed at combating crime. Yet these efforts to some extent are thwarted by the refusal of some commentators to help produce the mental climate necessary to ensure that such techniques are critically examined, not just rejected out of hand. It would also be extremely helpful if parents, and to a lesser degree, teachers could instil into the children a healthier respect for law and order and for authority, and, as far as parents are concerned, be better informed of their offspring's movements, friends and habits. Juvenile crime is rising. The police cannot take it upon themselves to discipline others' children. Previously, where they have taken what seems to be a sensible course—that is, have a properly constituted court determine what discipline ought to be administered—they have been unjustly criticised. There have been allegations that they take children to court just to make their clear-up figures look good. The public must learn to face facts, however unpalatable. There are more juveniles coming before the courts nowadays, not because the department wants to make its statistics look good, but because more juveniles are committing more crimes. It is as simple as that. Members of this Assembly and leaders in our community can do more. Do not join the band of knockers of the police and law and order, where it appears so easy to gain publicity, with half truths, unchecked allegations and innuendoes. The place for knockers is outside the door. When you visit schools and other social gatherings you can suggest that these young people should take a very serious look at the excellent career opportunities available as police officers, with continuing opportunity for educational advancement to university level. Our way of life depends finally upon upholding of society's laws and rules of conduct by members of the Police Force, who are the thin blue line of troops engaged in a real and continuing battle on behalf of the society which they serve and of which they are an integral part.

4. EDENLEE PTY. LTD. LAND, HERVEY BAY

Mr. Bertoni, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General—

Did a company known as Edenlee Pty. Ltd. sell land in the Hervey Bay area to which it did not have title and, if so, what action can the purchasers take to obtain a title or receive a refund?

Answer:—

The records of the Titles Office show that Edenlee Pty. Limited is the registered proprietor of the following parcels of land

in the Hervey Bay area which are all adjacent to one another:—(a) Portions 33 and 34, County of March, Parish of Urangan, containing 181 acres being the whole of the land in Certificate of Title, Volume 3516, Folio 67. (b) Portion 34A, County of March, Parish of Urangan, containing 8 acres 2 roods 12 perches being the whole of the land in Certificate of Title, Volume 4433, Folio 206. (c) Portions 35 and 36, County of March, Parish of Urangan, containing 163 acres being the whole of the land in Certificate of Title, Volume 3574, Folio 235, and that there have been no transfers from Edenlee Pty. Limited lodged over these lands. Currently investigations are being made by the Office of the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs into the sale of land at Hervey Bay by Edenlee Pty. Limited through another real estate company. If the vendor company has not complied with all requirements of the Real Property Act, the purchaser would have until such time as a separate Certificate of Title is issued the option to void the Contract of Sale under Section 67 of the Auctioneers and Agents Act 1971–1974 and to obtain a refund of all moneys paid, all such moneys being recoverable by action as for a debt.

5. COMMONWEALTH BUDGET

Mr. Bertoni, pursuant to notice, asked the Premier—

Is the Commonwealth Budget unlikely to reduce inflation and will this lack of responsibility as shown by the Commonwealth Government cause permanent hardship and harm to the Queensland economy?

Answer:—

I do not expect that the Commonwealth Budget will reduce inflation. The level of Commonwealth Budget deficit-financing alone will require funding which on its own will lift inflation by something like 11 per cent and, on recent past experiences, this deficit and its effect on inflation will be even greater than the Budget indicates at this stage. Then, of course, inflation cannot be restricted to Government and as it flows through to the private sector it is clear that its growth in money aggregates will push the inflation rate up near last year's quite unacceptable level. The Commonwealth Budget has lifted taxes and charges on postage, petrol, and a whole list of items, as honourable members know, and has shortweighted the payments to the States, who will now be forced to put their charges up as well—all of which will add further to the inflation rate. On the other hand the Budget does nothing to restore the confidence of the private sector to invest and produce, which was the real economic requirement the Budget should have achieved. In fact there could be still further reductions in the level of corporate investments. That is quite clear. To answer the questions specifically—yes, the Commonwealth Budget is unlikely to reduce inflation and will probably increase it, and yes, if inflation rates continue at this level it will certainly cause permanent hardship and harm to the Queensland economy. In addition, out of this Commonwealth Budget Australia can expect that the present very high levels of unemployment will increase still further.

6. BRIDGE LINK WITH MORETON BAY ISLANDS

Mr. K. J. Hooper, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Local Government and Main Roads—

(1) Is he aware that southern land agents and real estate agents are promoting and selling land on the Moreton Bay islands on the basis that the Queensland Government is soon to start construction of a $30 million bridge linking the mainland and Stradbroke Island via Russell and other Moreton Bay islands?

(2) Does the Queensland Government propose to construct a bridge in the foreseeable future and, if not, will he issue a clear statement setting out the true position regarding the construction of a bridge so that unsuspecting people will not be robbed by these land sharks?

Answer:—

There is, of course, an old adage that says "Let the buyer beware", and that applies in this instance to people who are silly enough to buy land in Queensland on what they have seen in a glossy brochure. We have all had ample evidence of what happens under these circumstances, particularly on Russell Island in the Redland Shire, where hundreds of blocks sold were under tidal influence. The same is true of the honourable member's question. The proposal to build a bridge to Stradbroke Island has not really been considered seriously. If certain persons have actually said that it has, they have no right to, because no Government department—either the Main Roads Department or any other department—is seriously looking at a proposal to build a bridge to Strabroke Island. If anybody in the southern States is selling land and indicating that the Queensland Government has that intention, people want to have a really good look at it before investing in land in that area.

7. ABORIGINAL HOUSING NEEDS

Mr. K. J. Hooper, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Works and Housing—

(1) With co-operative building societies being formed and money being provided by the Commonwealth Government, has any concerted State Government attempt been made to meet the demand for building blocks which will be required to satisfy the Aboriginal housing need?

(2) Has the State Government already received, in addition to Thursday Island, requests from co-operative societies at Stradbroke Island, Cunnamulla, Charleville, Augathella and Mitchell?

Answers:—

(1) As the appropriate department which co-ordinates all the affairs and activities relative to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders is the ministerial responsibility of my colleague the Minister for Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement and Fisheries, I suggest that the honourable member direct his question to him.

(2) No housing societies specifically for Aborigines have been registered under the Co-operative Housing Societies Act 1958-1974, which is within my administration. I understand that a number of societies which are known to have as their objective the interests of Aborigines, including the field of housing, have been registered under the Co-operative and Other Societies Act 1967-1974, which is administered by my colleague the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General.

8. ELECTROCUTION OF FOOTBALLER, MAREEBA

Mr. K. J. Hooper, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Health—

With reference to his answer to my question on 15 April that the tragic death of a footballer at Davies Park, Mareeba, would be the subject of a coronial inquiry, has the inquiry been held and, if so, what was the result?

Answer:—

Details of coronial enquiries are not held by the Health Department.

9. NEW ZEALAND TANNED SHEEP SKINS

Mr. Turner, pursuant to notice, asked the Premier—

(1) Is he aware that, as a result of the recent New Zealand currency devaluation, New Zealand tannery operators are dumping tanned sheepskins on the Australian market?

(2) Will this action affect the jobs of workers in local tanneries?

(3) Can the State Government do anything to induce the Commonwealth Government to prevent New Zealand operators from having an advantage over local tanning industries?

(4) Is he aware that the continuance of this action will result in less employment in the tanning industries and lower returns to wool producers, who are already hard hit by Commonwealth Government anti-rural policies?

Answer:—

Tanned sheep skins are among the items granted free entry to this country under the New Zealand-Australian Free Trade Agreement. Since the recent devaluation of New Zealand's currency, it is true that such skins have become available at cheaper rates than the equivalent Australian skin. Obviously, this situation does not interest or worry the present Commonwealth Government, because it has shown, in so many directions, its complete lack of concern for the primary producer.

10. COST OF SCHOOLING AND STUDENT RAIL FARES

Mr. Turner, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Education and Cultural Activities—

(1) What is the cost to the State per annum of providing free schooling and amenities for (a) a city State high school student and (b) a city primary school student?

(2) Is a child from a remote area who attends grade 7 at a Brisbane boarding college forced to pay approximately six times the second-class railway fare payable by a student in grade 12 and, if so, will he request the Railway Department to make the same concessions available to all students irrespective of grades?

Answers:—

(1) An examination of the salary and contingency costs of a small sample of Brisbane schools for the 1974–75 financial year indicates that the approximate per-capita expenditure associated with city schools is $900 for a secondary student and $540 for a primary pupil. It should be realised that these costs would vary from school to school. Capital costs of providing the school facilities are not included in this estimate.

(2) At present, free second-class rail passes are issued to secondary school students who are living away from home and are in attendance at an approved secondary school to enable them to travel to their homes and return to school on the following occasions:—A. The three (3) vacations in each year. B. At weekends to students within week-end return travelling distance of the school, to enable them to visit their parents in their homes. Week-end passes are not issued if travelling interferes with school attendance. These passes are issued only for the distance between the station nearest to the student's home and the nearest school of the type attended. No similar arrangements exist at the moment for primary students attending boarding schools. I shall, however, have the matter examined.

11. EFFECT OF COMMONWEALTH BUDGET ON HOUSING FINANCE

Mr. Byrne, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Works and Housing—

In view of the increased demand for State housing and of the decreased allocation of finance to welfare housing announced in the recent Commonwealth Budget, what will be the short and long-term effects on (a) the State housing industry, (b) the construction of new Housing Commission rental houses, (c) the maintenance and improvement of conditions of existing commission rental houses and (d) the quality of life of young couples and others who find themselves seriously disadvantaged by the present economic chaos hindering their capacity to purchase a house through the private sector?

Answer:—

(a) The short term effect will be less work for the industry. In 1974–75 the Housing Commission endeavoured to assist its regular contractors to maintain their work-force in employment but the commission's capacity to continue to do this will be limited by the reduction in finance. There must be similar detrimental effects on the industries which service the building contractors, for example, timber, roof tiles and manufacturers of equipment such as stoves and hot water systems. The long-term effect on the industry can only be harmful. Once an industry has been wrecked, which is what the Federal A.L.P. Government has done to the home-building industry, it cannot be rejuvenated at short notice. Tradesmen who leave the industry and find a place elsewhere do not necessarily return, and there is less opportunity for training of apprentices in both the building trade itself and the associated industries. (b) The annual completion figures must fall. (c) Maintenance has to be financed independently of allocations received under the Housing Agreement. Expenditure of $4,205,651 in 1974–75 shows that the commission takes a very serious view of the need for maintenance. At this stage the commission is budgeting for an increased expenditure on maintenance in 1975–76. For improvements to existing houses, it has been necessary, at all times, by reason of the limited finance available to cope with long waiting lists for rental houses, to contain expenditure within those items which can be accorded a high priority. Examples of improvements are sewerage to non-sewered houses, hot water systems in lieu of bath heaters, additional power outlets and provision of ramps for households having a member confined to a wheel chair. Improvements of such or similar nature have been and will continue to be, regarded by the Housing Commission as essential works and it is not considered that expenditure thereon can be reduced. (d) High interest rates for private finance are obviously preventing many people, including young couples, from starting to acquire their own homes. The reduced Housing Agreement allocation will, in turn, proportionately reduce the volume of agreement money which the Housing Commission can distribute through terminating societies. This reduction must affect those who, if they are eligible under the means test, could have been assisted through those societies. The reduced allocation to the Housing Commission itself will not necessarily directly affect these people except such of them as may seek to overcome their difficulties by applying for a commission house. In doing this they would only be adding to the thousands already on the waiting list.

12. HOUSING COMMISSION EXPENDITURE

Mr. Byrne, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Works and Housing—

What finance was expended by the Housing Commission for each of the five years to 1975 on (a) construction, (b) maintenance and (c) improvement of Housing Commission rental houses?

Answer:—

——	(a) Construction	(b) Maintenance of State Rental Houses	(c) Improvements to State Rental Houses
	$	$	$
1970–71	12,904,335	1,188,575	included in (a)
1971–72	14,194,462	1,343,653	,,
1972–73	16,449,989	1,677,675	,,
1973–74	17,936,472	2,333,198	,,
1974–75	35,277,969	4,205,651	1,000,000 (approx.)

Prior to 1974–75 it was not the practice to make a statistical dissection of capital expenditure into items (a) and (c). At the time of construction, all houses cannot be classified as between rental and home-ownership. The figures in (a) relate to all categories.

13. AVAILABILITY OF CHILDREN FOR ADOPTION

Mr. Byrne, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Community and Welfare Services and Minister for Sport—

What is the present situation relating to the availability of children for adoption?

Answer:—

For some time now, particularly over the past 12 months, the number of children becoming available for adoption has progressively decreased, resulting in an extension of waiting times for placements with

approved applicants. This is illustrated by the fall in the numbers of babies under three months old adopted by non-relatives over the past five years, viz:—

1970–71	1,169
1971–72	1,118
1972–73	970
1973–74	956
1974–75	621

It can be appreciated that the area is one over which the Department of Children's Services has no control, making it impossible to predict with accuracy the future availability of infants for adoption. For this reason a quoted waiting period at any time is necessarily the estimated time only, assessed upon the specific requirements of each application and on the assumption that the number of babies offered for adoption will not decline further. Placements are effected with approved applicants in accordance with their position on the prescribed waiting list. The waiting time in June last year was estimated to be from 14 to 22 months, according to the sex and religion of the babies but this waiting time has now increased to at least 23 months for a boy and 30 months for a girl and this applies to both Protestant and Catholic children. With the reduced number of babies becoming available it can be reasonably expected that the waiting time for persons lodging applications now could be extended by anything up to six years if applications continue to be received at the present rate and under present arrangements. If the number of babies becoming available continues to fall, this waiting period must extend even further than six years. On 25 August there were 2,858 Queensland couples whose applications have been approved or are in the process of being assessed to have their names included in the prescribed waiting list. This shows an increase of 317 couples since 11 July 1975 when the position was last reviewed and when the total was 2,549. For the past six months an average of only 35 babies a month have been passed over to the Department of Children's Services for adoption. There appears to be no relief in the number of children becoming available for adoption in the foreseeable future. In fact, information concerning future bookings for confinement received by the Department of Children's Services from the major maternity hospitals throughout the State would indicate that the position could further deteriorate. This position, of course, is not confined to Queensland and no doubt honourable members would have observed a Press announcement earlier this month by my counterpart in New South Wales regarding measures taken in that State in the allocation of children for adoption. In his announcement, the Minister in New South Wales said a marked decline in the number of babies being surrendered for adoption had necessitated the changes. He also said that there was at present in New South Wales a waiting time of six years for adoptions and that the present number of applicants exceeded 6,000. The reduction in the number of babies being offered for adoption is a result of changed social patterns in recent years. These include the use of the oral contraceptive pill, abortions performed interstate to terminate pregnancies, and the revision of past attitudes which placed a social stigma on the unmarried mother, or her family, rearing an illegitimate child. However, one of the most significant causes of the shortage of babies for adoption is the special social security benefit paid by the Federal Government to unmarried mothers. This has enabled them to retain custody of their children rather than offer them for adoption. The allowance paid by the Federal Government to unmarried mothers is at present at the rate of $49 per week for a mother and one child, under the age of six. It is reduced by $2 when the child becomes six years of age. During the six months immediately following the birth of the child, this payment is made by the State Government which receives reimbursement from the Commonwealth for 50 per cent of expenditure in this regard. It certainly looks attractive on the surface to the young unmarried mother and it is economically advantageous to her to keep her baby. Obviously it is influencing many unmarried mothers to keep their children and, whilst my department does not wish to deny any mother the right to keep her baby, the facts now beginning to emerge show that many young unmarried mothers and their families are not in a position to keep the babies. It is known that some of them have even gone to charity organisations to obtain layettes to start them off. In addition, many of the unmarried mothers, particularly in the younger age group, are not emotionally prepared to care for a baby and when they come to the full realisation that care is required on a seven-day-a-week basis, they become severely disillusioned and then approach the department for help. As the Federal Government's policy also enables the mother to work and receive wages in addition to the allowance, it often encourages the neglect of children, and delinquency often flows from this. The allowance could possibly meet the mother's needs in the early period, but no thought is being given to the serious financial situation in which she could find herself in a few years as the demands of the child become greater as it gets older. Unfortunately, the woman by then has become emotionally involved with the child and, even in the realisation of her

financial plight, will not permit the child to be adopted. The result is that the child can spend many years in an institution or foster home, with the possibility of the natural mother, who has legal right to the child, removing it from a stable home environment at any time. To summarise the situation regarding the availability of children for adoption in Queensland, it can be said that if present trends continue, couples who lodge applications now could well find that it will be anything from six to ten years before they receive a child.

14. TEACHERS RECRUITED FROM OVERSEAS

Mr. Wright, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Education and Cultural Activities—

(1) How many teachers have been brought to Queensland from overseas countries during each of the last three years as part of his department's programme to overcome teacher shortage problems?

(2) How many of these teachers are still employed by the Education Department?

(3) In view of the number of secondary teachers graduating this year, will some of the overseas teachers be considered surplus to 1976 staff requirements and, if so, will he consider increasing the opportunity for Queensland-trained teachers to take part in in-service training courses while replacement staff is readily available?

Answers:—

(1) Total number of teachers from overseas (to 22 August 1975)

——	U.K.	Canada	U.S.A.	Total
1973..	11	7	0	18
1974..	336	321	301	958
1975..	153	112	271	536
Totals	500	440	572	1,512

(2) As at 22 August 1975, 1,265 were still employed by the Department of Education.

(3) It is quite feasible that some overseas teachers will be surplus to normal staffing requirements in 1976. However, any continuation or extension of long-term release of teachers for in-service education in 1976 will depend upon—(a) The number of resignations of overseas teachers before the commencement of the 1976 school year. A large number will have completed their contractual obligation to the Education Department by that time and at present there is no indication of the numbers who will continue to teach in Queensland after completion of contract. (b) Finance available for teacher development programmes. (c) The unemployment situation at the beginning of 1976. School enrolments in State secondary schools were boosted by numbers well in excess of 3,000 at the beginning of 1975, and a similar situation would cause at least a corresponding escalation in enrolment in 1976.

15. DRUG ADDICTION

Mr. Wright, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Health—

(1) What facilities are at present available throughout Queensland to (a) treat and (b) counsel persons who could be described as drug addicts?

(2) What State Government assistance is available to community, church or charitable organisations desirous of assisting persons with drug problems?

(3) How many drug addicts are at present undergoing treatment in State Government institutions?

(4) How many social workers or counsellors specially trained to handle drug problems are at present employed by the Government?

(5) How many convictions under the Health Act for (a) illegal drug use or possession and (b) drug pushing have been made in each of the last three years?

Answers:—

(1 and 2) Facilities available for the treatment of persons who can be described as drug addicts cannot be distinguished from centres where such persons can be counselled. Counselling is an integral part of treatment. Specific services available for the drug dependent person are provided at the Psychiatric Clinic, 30 Mary Street, the Royal Brisbane Hospital at Lowson House, Wolston Park Hospital, and the Townsville General Hospital. These institutions provide inpatient as well as outpatient care. Outpatient care is provided in the context of the mainstream of psychiatric care throughout the State and is available at all general hospitals with psychiatric services, namely, Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Maryborough, Ipswich, Toowoomba, as well as the metropolitan hospitals. Special clinics have been set up for the treatment of outpatients at 30 Mary Street and Lowson House. In addition to services provided direct by this State, the State Government has provided assistance to the Cairns Drug Centre, the Gold Coast Drug Council, the Salvation Army and Teen Challenge.

(3) It is not possible to state the number of drug dependent persons undergoing treatment in State Government institutions at the present time. One of the most important

aspects of this question to be thoroughly understood by honourable members is that many drug dependent persons present at various institutions and the possibility of being able to record the number of unduplicated admissions or treatments by any institution is remote, not only within the Queensland setting but as a general rule. During the financial year 1974–75, 51 persons were admitted to psychiatric hospitals with a primary diagnosis of drug dependence. I would point out in clarification of this answer that no separate figures are maintained in regard to narcotics but that the figure quoted is applicable to all types of drugs.

(4) The honourable member has asked how many social workers or counsellors specially trained to handle drug problems are presently employed. The more proper emphasis would be on the number of professional people employed as the services offered, particularly at 30 Mary Street, are under the direction of psychiatrists who have had special experience in drug problems. As the drug dependency problem is treated within the general context of psychiatry, no professional or paraprofessional person is employed solely because of special training in drug dependence.

(5) As prosecutions for offences against the Health Act are taken by officers of the Police Department, the information requested by the honourable member is not held by the Health Department.

16. RAILWAY REFUNDS TO GRAZIERS

Mr. Wright, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Transport—

(1) With regard to the redress available to graziers who for personal or economic reasons are forced to cancel arrangements to transport cattle through the Railway Department, are booking fees for K-wagons, etc., not automatically refunded under such circumstances and are graziers still required to meet these commitments?

(2) If so, will he investigate this matter with a view to revising the existing arrangements or rules in order to assist graziers facing economic difficulties?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) I should like the honourable member to know that the many Government members who have made strong representations in this matter include the Minister for Water Resources and the honourable members for Callide, Belyando and Flinders. Orders for livestock wagons are required to be accompanied by a deposit, and if the wagons are not loaded as ordered, the deposit is automatically forfeited. Applications for refund of deposit are treated on their merits. If the honourable member is aware of any particular instance of a deposit having been retained in circumstances in which it was considered a refund should have been allowed, he might care to submit details to me for examination.

17. MEDICAL BENEFIT FUNDS AND MEDIBANK

Mr. Kaus, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Health—

(1) What does he advise in regard to maintaining medical benefit contributions?

(2) What difference is there in the cost of hospital beds today?

Answers:—

(1) In respect to the honourable member's question regarding maintaining voluntary medical insurance, I must say that this decision should remain one for the individual person. I am informed that the various voluntary insurance organisations have submitted new rules to the Commonwealth Department of Social Security for approval and I can simply advise the honourable member that people wishing to continue their medical benefit contribution should carefully examine what each individual insurance organisation is offering to the public under the medical benefits tables.

(2) I presume the honourable member is referring to the charges made by a public hospital for intermediate and private ward accommodation. Until Queensland signs a Medibank Hospital Agreement, the charges made by hospitals boards for intermediate and private ward accommodation is currently $30 per day for an intermediate ward bed and $40 per day for a private ward bed. Should these charges be altered when Queensland enters the Medibank Scheme, the new charges will be notified to hospitals boards and the public at the earliest possible time. In these circumstances, persons who propose to enter an intermediate or private ward in our public hospitals would benefit by continuing to hold hospital insurance cover with one of the voluntary insurance organisations, to meet the cost of the hospital ward accommodation charges.

18. ABORIGINAL ADVANCEMENT

Mr. Deeral, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement and Fisheries—

As the Commonwealth Budget indicates that direct expenditure in 1975–76 on Aboriginal Advancement is estimated to be $192 million compared with $158 million in 1974–75, an increase of $34 million, what does this mean in relation to Queensland's Aborigines?

Answer:—

I have studied the Commonwealth Budget papers and regret to inform the honourable member that they mean absolutely no advantage whatsoever to Queensland Aborigines. During the last financial year the Budget provided an allocation of $13.552 million to Queensland yet we received only $10.362 million, a short payment of $3.19 million. Although the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs claimed in a Press statement that this $3.19 million was funded directly to Aboriginal Housing Organisations in Queensland, in fact it was reallocated in the 1974 States Grants (Aboriginal Assistance) Bill to other States as follows:—

New South Wales	$1.877 million
Victoria ..	$0.730 million
South Australia	$0.583 million
Total	$3.19 million

In papers supporting the current Budget it is revealed that New South Wales and South Australia underspent their allocations, thus moneys which should have come to Queensland were totally lost to Aboriginal welfare, whether in this or other States. The total amounts paid to my department, viz., $10.362 million, were fully expended. No substantial increase is provided in payments to the States for Aboriginal Advancement. The total provision last year to the States was $40.790 million. A similar provision is made this year, namely, $40.790 million. In last year's Budget, provision was made for grants direct to local governments in Queensland for Aboriginal Advancement of $2.296 million, while this year, the proposed amount is $1.853 million, being $443,000 less. Queensland has, on Commonwealth census figures (excluding the Northern Territory), 34.58 per cent of Australia's total Aboriginal population. We do not receive anywhere near this percentage of either total Commonwealth allocations or even an equivalent proportion of the total allocation to the States for Aboriginal Advancement. I am saddened to note that the $3.19 million loss last year is repeated in the inequitable distribution this year which, in fact, means a total loss to Aboriginal Advancement in Queensland in excess of $6 million, all of which had been programmed for re-housing of families. My department's housing programme using the special grant and other funds has provided some 1,400 houses for rehousing about 10,000 people at an average house cost of $20,000 per conventional 3-bedroom house. Contrast this with the programme set out in the Commonwealth Budget Paper No. 5—Department of Aboriginal Affairs "Erection of Four Staff Houses Thursday Island $310,000", an average cost of $77,500 per house.

Is it any wonder that funds to the States for the direct benefit of Aborigines and Islanders are being restricted? It is all the more disturbing to note from Budget Papers Nos. 2 and 3 that the allocation to the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs last year was underspent by more than $8 million and that this money has now lapsed and is lost for ever to the cause of Aboriginal Advancement—$8 million allocated but never used.

19. National Conference on Goals in Nursing Education

Mr. Houston, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Health—

Why were nurses employed within the State Public Service refused leave to attend the National Conference on Goals in Nursing Education which was held in Melbourne in July, as it was a most important gathering of Australian nurses?

Answer:—

The Royal Australian Nursing Federation held a national conference to study the implications of proposals put forward in the report of a working party on "goals in Nursing Education" in Melbourne on 14, 15 and 16 July 1975. I am informed that a nurse educator employed by the Department of Health applied for, and was granted, special leave with full pay to attend this conference, and assistance with travelling expenses was also approved. Another application from a trained nurse of this department seeking to attend the same conference, with special leave on full pay and expenses, was not approved. It is not possible to approve of every application received in this department from officers wishing to attend interstate conferences. It is expected, however, that an officer attending such a conference will prepare a report on return from the conference for promulgation to appropriate staff members.

20. State Government Insurance Offices

Mr. Houston, pursuant to notice, asked the Deputy Premier and Treasurer—

(1) With reference to an advertisement currently appearing in the Brisbane Press which states that the six existing State government insurance offices lost a massive $44·1 million for the year ended 30 June 1974, even after allowing for one office which made a profit of $0·7 million, is the Queensland State Government Insurance Office one of the five offices which contributed to the massive loss or is it the office which made the profit of $0·7 million?

(2) Does the advertisement reflect unfavourably in any way against the S.G.I.O.?

Answers:—

(1) I again refer the honourable member to the financial results of the State Government Insurance Office for 1973–74, which have been tabled in this House. In explanation, I would advise the honourable member that the finances of general insurance offices throughout Australia have been seriously affected by the unprecedented inflation rates current in the economy generally where claims for injuries or damages are settled at cost levels far above the levels current at the time premiums were set. There seem to be but two solutions: one is for the Commonwealth to take realistic action to control inflation rates; the alternative is for insurance companies to increase their premiums.

(2) No.

21. LOCAL AUTHORITY RATE ARREARS

Mr. Neal, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Lands, Forestry, National Parks and Wildlife Service—

(1) As local authorities in many rural areas face financial difficulties due to rate arrears, what procedures do landholders adopt to avail themselves of special loan money available under his administration to pay rate arrears?

(2) Is it intended that this scheme be extended for 1975–76?

Answers:—

(1) The Rural Reconstruction Board, which is administering this scheme, has written to local authorities in rural areas of Queensland requesting the submission of a list of defaulters claiming inability to pay rates accrued to 30 June 1975 owing to the collapse in the cattle market. The board will then invite applications in brief form from those listed who appear likely to be eligible for this assistance. To be eligible, a farmer must be dependent on beef production for at least 80 per cent of his income and unable to obtain finance for payment from his normal lender.

(2) No.

22. DISCRIMINATION BY PERMANENT BUILDING SOCIETIES AGAINST S.G.I.O.

Mr. Casey, pursuant to notice, asked the Deputy Premier and Treasurer—

(1) Is he aware of the practice of most permanent building societies in Queensland of acting as agents for particular insurance companies and by various practices insisting that prospective borrowers must insure through those companies?

(2) Is he aware that many of the borrowing clients of some permanent building societies have been informed that the State Government Insurance Office is not acceptable to them as an insurer?

(3) As borrowers find that they can get a better deal from the S.G.I.O. by way of lower premiums, thus helping them in the establishment of a home at a time of high interest rates and high repayments, will he take action through the Insurance Commissioner to ensure that the S.G.I.O. is not discriminated against in this way?

Answers:—

(1) I understand that the Metropolitan Permanent Building Society is acting as agent for various companies and is insisting that prospective borrowers and also existing borrowers insure with those companies.

(2) I know of one particular case where a building society has told a borrower that the S.G.I.O. is not acceptable to it as an insurer because no concessions agreement exists with the S.G.I.O. The S.G.I.O. is prepared to enter into concessions agreements with any reputable building society, but will only grant agencies and pay commission to those building societies which give the S.G.I.O. equal insurance opportunities as other companies for whom they are agents. The S.G.I.O. has refused an agency to the Metropolitan Permanent Building Society because it advised the Office that it gives preference to one insurance company and endeavours to have all its clients insure with that company.

(3) The practice of some societies in discriminating against the S.G.I.O. appears to be in contravention of the Commonwealth Trade Practices Act, 1974, and borrowers should report the matter to the Commonwealth authority.

23. PROMOTION OF MEAT SALES TO COMMON MARKET COUNTRIES

Mr. Casey, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Primary Industries—

As the Australian Meat Board (unlike the Premier, who blames Japanese trade) alleges that the serious financial situation of the Australian beef industry has mainly been caused by the stockpiling of beef in Common Market countries, what action is being taken through the Queensland Agent-General in London, a man admirably suited for the task, to promote Queensland meat sales to the Common Market countries?

Answer:—

I am not aware that the Australian Meat Board has stated that the E.E.C. beef stockpile is the main cause of the beef industry depression. It is only one of a number of world-wide factors which have contributed to the current market position. Considerable action has been taken in an attempt to reopen the European market. Numbers of meat industry, Australian Meat Board and Government

delegations have visted Europe and strong pressure has been brought to bear on European authorities. I have no doubt that the Queensland Agent-General in London is fully aware of the situation and is constantly doing all in his power to alleviate the problem.

24. MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATIONS

Mr. Powell, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Local Government and Main Roads—

(1) How many (a) private motor vehicles, (b) commercial motor vehicles and (c) motor-cycles are registered in Queensland?

(2) Are registration figures compiled for separate cities and, if so, what are the figures for the registration of vehicles in Bundaberg, Hervey Bay, Maryborough, Rockhampton, Gympie, Toowoomba, Mackay, Townsville, Cairns and Mount Isa?

Answers:—

(1) (a) Complete statistics are not available as to the numbers of registered cars and station wagons which are used for private and/or commercial purposes. The total number of cars including station wagons registered as at 30th June 1975 was 692,714. (b) Motor vehicles classified for statistical purposes as being used commercially (utilities, trucks, tractors, etc.) as at 30th June 1975 numbered 242,614. (c) Motor-cycles registered as at 30th June 1975 numbered 68,541.

(2) Totals of all types of vehicle registrations as at 30th June 1975 were:—

Bundaberg	25,402
Maryborough	13,676
Hervey Bay	Not available
Rockhampton	30,797
Gympie	8,875
Toowoomba	36,246
Mackay	18,748
Townsville	49,885
Cairns	20,693
Mt. Isa	16,374

25. STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Mr. Powell, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Education and Cultural Activities—

(1) What is the minimum standard acceptable to his department for library size in (a) primary schools—Class 6, Class 5, Class 4, Class 3, Class 2 and Class 1 and (b) secondary schools—Class 1 and Class 2?

(2) Are these standards the same as those recommended by the publications "Standards for Secondary School Libraries" published in 1971 and "Guidelines for Library Services in Primary Schools" published in May 1974?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) Primary Schools. In primary schools the accepted standard towards which we are working is as follows:

Anticipated Minimum Enrolment	Area	Outdoor Reading Court
	sq. ft.	
900+	2,220 (239m²)	2 x 600 (129·2m²)
600–899	2,220 (239m²)	1 x 600 (64·6m²)
300–599	1,320 (142·1m²)	1 x 600 (64·6m²)
150–299	600 (64·6m²)	
100–149	400 (43m²)	
30– 99	250 (26·9m²)	
– 29	180 (19·4m²)	

The quantities given in "Guidelines for Library Services in Primary Schools" (prepared by the Primary Schools' Libraries Committee of the Schools Commission) are as follows:

Enrolment	Total Area of Library/ Resource Facility
1– 99 ..	No separate allocation, but facilities incorporated into the existing class areas
100–199 ..	67m²
200–299 ..	128m²
300–399 ..	172m²
400–499 ..	214m²
500–599 ..	256m²
600–699 ..	300m²
700–799 ..	342m²
800–899 ..	384m²

The following points should be noted:—

1. The "Guidelines for Library Services in Primary Schools" are guidelines, not standards, and are not intended to be prescriptive for either government or non-government schools. 2. Our standards were formulated in 1971, accepted in April 1972. The guidelines were accepted by the Schools Commission in mid-1974. 3. Our standards are seen as a desirable minimum towards which we are working as funds become available. 4. During the 1974–75 financial year construction work was done on sixty-six (66) library projects in our primary schools representing an expenditure of some $2.4m. 5. It is a design specification that our libraries be capable of further expansion at a future date. In view of these considerations our existing standards represent a more appropriate strategy for the development of library programs in our primary schools than do the Schools Commission's guidelines. Secondary Schools. In general terms secondary school libraries are built to the

quantities specified in "Standards for Secondary School Libraries" (prepared by the Commonwealth Secondary Schools Library Committee). A major exception is that schools larger than 1,400 have received a library of the same size as schools of 1,400. In the seven year period from July 1968 to June 1975, some $5.24m has been spent on secondary library buildings of the new type.

26. TOWNSVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Mr. M. D. Hooper, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Education and Cultural Activities—

(1) As the enrolment at the Heatley Primary School, Townsville, is expected to reach 1,350 students in 1976, a figure approximately double the original intended enrolment, will he give an assurance that the expansion of accommodation on this site will cease, as it has already been detrimental to the availability of sport and recreation areas?

(2) Will his department erect a new primary school to cater for students in the rapidly growing areas of Heatley, Kirwan, Mountview and Louisaville.

Answers:—

(1) Accommodation has been planned at Heatley State School for anticipated increases in enrolment. This should cater for peak enrolment and no further classroom blocks should be necessary. I have been assured by the State Department of Works that the planned structure will not encroach on sporting fields. Also, the honourable member is aware of the spacious recreational facilities adjacent to the school.

(2) A school has been planned for Kirwan, and other sites are being investigated in the vicinity of Kirwan. The first school should cater for children on the western edge of the suburb of Heatley, on the south-western portion of Mountview. Louisaville is in close proximity to this first proposed school at Kirwan. A site has also been obtained at Mt. Louisa, approximately one mile due north of Heatley.

27. CAR-PARKING FACILITIES AT TOWNSVILLE GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr. M. D. Hooper, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Health—

(1) With reference to the proposal to expand facilities at the Townsville General Hospital in association with the development of a medical school in Townsville, what action has he taken in regard to the request of the Townsville City Council for an environmental impact study on the project, particularly in relation to the fact that the present plans indicate the closure of Clifton Street on the southern boundary and a half-width road closure in Gregory Street on the western boundary of the existing facility and that long-term planning allows for only off-street parking for 400 vehicles, whereas the council planning department estimates a requirement of 1,300 car parking spaces?

(2) As there is no provision at present for car-parking for staff and hospital visitors, what immediate action is contemplated to remedy the situation, even if the medical school does not proceed?

Answers:—

(1) The matter of an environment impact study in respect of the redevelopment of the Townsville Hospital is receiving consideration.

(2) Cabinet has decided that hospitals boards should not accept the responsibility to provide parking for all hospital visitors and hospital staff. No immediate action is therefore proposed in respect of the matter raised by the honourable member but consideration will be given in the redevelopment of the hospital to essential parking requirements.

28. DELIVERIES OF NEW MOTOR VEHICLES TO TOWNSVILLE

Mr. M. D. Hooper, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Transport—

(1) Is he aware that, in recent months, motor vehicle retailers in Townsville have been inconvenienced by the delays in the delivery of vehicles from Brisbane to Townsville due to the inability of the Queensland Railways to handle the demand for wagons?

(2) If so, what action does he propose to alleviate the hardship to retailers and people waiting on delivery of vehicles, particularly in relation to (a) the granting of approval for A.N.L. shipping services to operate intrastate between Brisbane and Townsville and other northern ports and (b) the granting of approval for road operators to carry motor vehicles from Brisbane to North Queensland by trailer?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) Yes, but the temporary shortage of wagons, caused mainly by the 12-day stoppage of railway employees in Townsville in May-June of this year, has since been overcome, and there is now no backlog of orders.

29. URI HIGH-RISE HEAVY-DUTY BOTTOM TRAWL

Mr. Yewdale, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement and Fisheries—

(1) Has his attention been drawn to a new type of fishing net known as the Uri high-rise heavy-duty bottom trawl, which is designed in America and is described in detail in the June edition of the "Australian Fisheries"?

(2) As the net takes both bottom-dwelling and high-swimming fish, which makes for more economical fishing, will he have his department investigate the bona fides of this net for the purpose of having this information made available to the fishing industry?

Answers:—

(1) The Queensland Fisheries Service is aware of the Uri high-rise heavy-duty bottom trawl. The publication "Australian Fisheries" is available and well known to the majority of the commercial fishermen in Queensland and the information published on this new American net, together with other experimental fishing methods, would already be circulated to the industry.

(2) The Uri net appears to provide an efficient means of mid and deep-water trawling in overseas conditions which may not necessarily apply to Queensland conditions and available fish species. At this stage, the suitability of this style of net for Queensland fisheries appears doubtful, largely owing to the physical configuration of Queensland's fishing grounds. The Queensland Fisheries Service will, as opportunity presents, certainly seek to establish if this type of net can be used to advantage.

30. ROAD TRANSPORT STUDY PROPOSALS, ROCKHAMPTON

Mr. Yewdale, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Local Government and Main Roads—

(1) In view of the recent announcement relating to the deferment of the construction of a new traffic bridge over the Fitzroy River at Rockhampton, what other work will be carried out in the North Rockhampton area with regard to a Moores Creek crossing, the resumption of private property and houses and other road works proposed by the Road Transportation Study?

(2) Does his department intend to advise residents likely to be affected by the new road system as to when their properties will be required?

Answers:—

(1) Four-lane reconstruction on the Bruce Highway will continue in North Rockhampton and provide for the Moore Creek route from where it joins the existing highway.

(2) It is proposed to continue to acquire property to preserve the right of way within the available funds. Where cases of hardship are established, these will be given priority.

31. THEFT OF BELONGINGS OF MURDER VICTIM CATHERINE GRAHAM

Dr. Scott-Young, pursuant to notice asked the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General—

(1) Has he noted a Press report that the person who found the belongings and cashed the social security cheque of Catherine Graham, a recently raped and murdered girl, was given a small nominal fine in the Magistrates Court?

(2) Is he aware that this person did not report to the police until a considerable number of days had passed, thus giving the murderer or murderers time to escape from the area?

(3) Will he refer the case to the Crown Law Office for a decision as to whether the person could be charged (a) with compounding a crime or (b) as an accessary after the act?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) I am aware of the Press report. The motive which existed for any delay in advising the Police is vital in determining any criminal liability for such delay. This is essentially a question of fact and is a matter to which the police can be expected to give consideration, including the seeking of any Crown Law opinion as to the criminal responsibility of any person.

32. COMMONWEALTH FUNDS FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Mr. Row, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Education and Cultural Activities—

In view of the proclaimed increased expenditure on education by the Commonwealth Government, will he make representations to the Commonwealth Minister for Education for an extension of Commonwealth library facilities to more country schools?

Answer:—

Funds from Commonwealth sources have been applied in the construction of library facilities in Queensland Government schools since the implementation, in the 1969-71 triennium, of the States Grants (Secondary Schools Libraries) Act 1968. I wish to make clear that the expenditure of these and subsequent funds has been at the discretion of the Queensland Government. The priorities have been, and are, determined by us. There is no need therefore to make representations to the Federal Minister for Education. A decision was made at the outset to build libraries in the largest schools first and then to continue in descending order of enrolment. This policy resulted in library facilities being provided to the maximum number of children, while at the same time providing a spread around

the State to stimulate development of the over-all programme. Cost escalation was a problem even then, and the provision did not flow as rapidly as expected to the smaller schools. A further problem was that the funds for building in the 1972–74 triennium were reduced to $1,992,819 as compared with $2,181,300 in the first triennium. This was caused by change in the formula from one based on State populations to one based on secondary enrolments. Costs continued to rise. Some of the early impetus was restored to the programme by the provision of $2,050,000 under the States Grants (Schools) Act 1973 for the 1974–75 biennium. While many country centres were included, the programme still did not extend beyond the provincial cities. Mindful of this problem the priority list was re-organised in relation to the planning for the 1976–78 triennium. The intention now is to include two strands to the programme. The first and major strand is to continue building libraries in schools in descending order of enrolment. The second strand is to build libraries in smaller country schools according to need. I must stress, however, that implementation of this policy will be conditioned by the funds available. In primary schools, while the main emphasis has been on the larger schools, smaller schools have been included also. There has also been a spread according to the nine educational regions. Finally, I would like to say that Commonwealth funds for school libraries have been applied in only three areas—buildings, learning resources, and staff training. The State also has applied funds in these areas, as well as providing specialised equipment and services, and salaries for teacher-librarians and aids. Over-all the Commonwealth funds currently amount to less than half the total spent.

33. PRE-SCHOOL, ANNIE STREET, NEW FARM

Mr. Ahern for **Mr. Lane,** pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Education and Cultural Activities—

When will the State pre-school at present under construction in Annie Street, New Farm, be completed and when is it planned to open it for enrolment?

Answer:—

Work on this pre-school centre is well advanced and it is anticipated that the building will be complete by 17 October. Enrolments would normally be taken at about the same time as completion. The centre should be able to open within one or two weeks of the workmen leaving the site depending upon the provision of all necessary items of equipment.

34. HOUSING COMMISSION PROGRAMME FOR BUNDABERG

Mr. Jensen, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Works and Housing—

When will further tenders be called for Housing Commission houses and pensioner units for rental in Bundaberg and how many in each category are in the programme for 1975–76?

Answer:—

Three houses are under construction. Calling of tenders for another six houses had been programmed, but this and the possibility of further pensioner units will have to be reviewed in the light of the reduced allocation to this State by the Commonwealth for Housing Agreement purposes in 1975–76. This allocation, smaller than in 1974–75, will also involve a reduction in the amount of $540,000 which had been anticipated could be available this financial year to terminating societies in Bundaberg. The honourable member will appreciate that it is impossible to plan ahead with any confidence when, with the financial year well advanced, we are advised of an allocation nearly 30 per cent below last year's figure.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

APPEAL BY CROWN IN SOUTHPORT S.P. BETTING CASE

Mr. MELLOY: I ask the Minister for Police: What stage has been reached in the Government's stated intention of lodging an appeal against the decision of the magistrate in the Southport Court in the Saunders S.P. betting case?

Mr. HODGES: That matter is outside my administration.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I rule that the matter is sub judice.

LORD MAYOR'S REPORTED ALLEGATIONS ON POWER SHORTAGE

Mr. DOUMANY: I ask the Minister for Mines and Energy: Is he aware of an article appearing in today's "Courier-Mail" at page 12, under the caption, "Walsh to air power secrets", in which the Lord Mayor reiterates his assertions regarding the validity of power restrictions and specifically refers to the availability of oil fuels to fire Middle Ridge and Swanbank "C"? Is it true that there is any record to support the Lord Mayor's claims that restrictions are unnecessary and that the crisis is a political stunt?

Mr. CAMM: Some of the allegations made by the Lord Mayor were brought to my attention. I said that they must be the result of one of his irresponsible moments, which

we know he has periodically. If the documents he claims he has are publicised I will be only too pleased to examine them and discuss them with anybody. If his claims are in accordance with what he said on television on Sunday night, we can treat them with utter disdain. In that telecast he said that there were 170,000 tonnes of coal at Swanbank Power Station. My records from the Queensland Coal Board, the S.E.A. and the State Electricity Commission show that there are 144,006 tonnes of coal at Swanbank. Mr. Walsh also claimed that 3,000 tonnes of oil an hour are being put into the boilers at Swanbank. The use of 3,000 tonnes of oil per hour would be equal to 72,000 tonnes a day or 14,400,000 gallons of oil a day. It would be running down the Bremer River! But that is the claim made by the present Lord Mayor. He claims that he has some documents to support his allegations. I hope that they stick closer to the truth than the statements I have outlined. He claimed also that coal is coming down from Central Queensland at the rate of 29,000 tonnes a week. Last week we got 27,829 tonnes; the previous week we got 27,672 tonnes, and so far this week we have got nothing. Yesterday 5,953 tonnes were delivered from the West Moreton field.

This morning I was apprised that the miners at West Moreton have voted to continue to supply coal to the Swanbank Power Station. I hope that they continue to supply coal to the Swanbank Power Station at the rate of which they are capable; but even that quantity will not be sufficient to maintain a reasonable burn without eating more and more into our stockpiles. As a result of the critical situation of coal supplies for electricity generation, South-east Queensland still faces hardships.

It is true that we have gas turbines that can operate on oil. The capacity of the gas turbine at Swanbank is 30 megawatts. The installed capacity at Middle Ridge is 60 megawatts. In reply to a letter from me, the S.E.A. advised both the State Electricity Commission and me that they are burning in the most economical way all the oil and coal they can get. It must be remembered that, when oil is burnt in the Swanbank Power Station furnaces, a large amount of coal must be used as well—oil constitutes only a certain percentage of the fuel to be burnt in the furnaces—so the generation of electricity there depends on a supply of coal. Thirty megawatts from the gas turbines does not go anywhere near meeting total demand, which ordinarily is about 1,100 megawatts of installed capacity.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The time allotted for questions has now expired.

AMBULANCE SERVICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION

Hon. L. R. EDWARDS (Ipswich—Minister for Health): 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 Ambulance Services Act 1967-1974 in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

GREENVALE AGREEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. Sir GORDON CHALK (Lockyer—Deputy Premier and Treasurer), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as would otherwise prevent the immediate initiation in Committee of the Whole House of a Bill intituled 'A Bill to amend the Greenvale Agreement Act 1970-1974 in certain particulars and for related purposes', and the passing of such Bill through all its stages in one day."

Motion agreed to.

GREENVALE AGREEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. Sir GORDON CHALK (Lockyer—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (12.14 p.m.): I move—

"That a Bill be introduced to amend the Greenvale Agreement Act 1970-1974 in certain particulars and for related purposes."

The purpose of the proposed amendments is to make it possible for the Government to guarantee the repayment of and payment of interest on an additional borrowing of $7,000,000 by Metals Exploration Queensland Pty. Ltd. for the Greenvale nickel mining and treatment project and for the Government to guarantee the payment of interest on deferred borrowing payments of $12,746,036 arranged as part of a financial rearrangement.

Mr. Hanson interjected.

Sir GORDON CHALK: The honourable member for Gladstone is a little impatient; but he will hear the whole story if he is prepared to wait.

Opposition Members interjected.

Sir GORDON CHALK: Honourable members opposite made a mess of the Gladstone operation. We are trying to make a success of this one.

Honourable members will recall the history of the project and the continuing part which the Government has had in seeing its potential to add greatly to the industrial strength of North Queensland brought to fruition.

Provision was made in the original agreement for it to be amended with the approval of the Governor in Council by Order in Council subject to the Parliament's not disallowing the Order in Council within the prescribed time. The agreement has been amended a number of times by this procedure.

As authorised by the principal Act, the original agreement provided for the State to guarantee the repayment over 20 years of up to $43,000,000 of the companies' borrowings which was approximately related to the cost of providing railway assets. That was the estimated requirement at the time the agreement was authorised. However, it will be recalled that the procedure adopted was that the original agreement did not become fully operative until the companies furnished satisfactory evidence on certain matters, including the securing of satisfactory borrowing arrangements. When all details had been completed, costs and borrowing requirements were such that State guarantees totalling $50,000,000 instead of $43,000,000 were appropriate and the required increase in the guarantee amount was effected by an amending agreement executed on 11 November 1971 in conformity with the amending procedures stipulated in the principal Act.

At that time the total capital cost of the project was estimated at $223,000,000 after making allowance for price escalation and contingencies. However, owing to the very high cost increases experienced during the construction period, the final cost was estimated last year to be $261,000,000. Australian institutions agreed to provide the additional financing of $20,000,000 required. Most of these institutions had contributed funds previously under the initial State guarantees. Together with the other lenders involved, they sought State guarantee coverage of the additional lendings. Honourable members will recall that the Greenvale Agreement Act Amending Act 1974 passed last September provided these additional guarantees of $20,000,000, thus bringing the State's total guaranteed commitment in respect of the project at that stage to $70,000,000.

After operations commenced at the Yabulu treatment plant, difficulty was experienced owing to mechanical problems and the build-up of production through-put was slower than anticipated. This reduced the inflow of funds below that anticipated. Cost inflation, particularly in respect of fuel oil, also resulted in the feasibility study cash outflow estimates being greatly exceeded. It was therefore necessary for a financial restructuring of the project to be undertaken earlier this year. Broadly, the arrangements arrived at were that the two companies would each provide a further $10,000,000 to the project and that the various lenders involved would defer for a period certain loan payments falling due.

To assist in securing the necessary commitments the Government earlier this year agreed to provide guarantees in respect of certain of the reconstruction arrangements.

As the balance remaining of its $10,000,000 contribution, Metals Exploration Queensland Pty. Ltd. was able to secure loans totalling $7,000,000 from a number of the existing lenders to the project subject to the Government's agreeing to provide a State guarantee therefor. The loans agreed to for guarantee purposes carry interest at 12½ per cent and are repayable over the three years commencing 30 September 1985, or earlier if cash flow permits. For security purposes, the loans rank as having first priority equally with those of the previous senior State-guaranteed loans.

The lenders, who had previously contributed a total of $70,000,000 under State guarantee, also agreed to defer interest payments totalling $12,746,036 falling due on the seven quarter days 30 June 1975 to 31 December 1976, on the basis that interest on such deferrals would be guaranteed by the State. The interest being deferred is already guaranteed to the extent of 8 per cent per annum under the previous arrangements.

Subject to the State guarantee becoming available as provided for in the Bill, the arrangement is that the interest payments in respect of the various lenders will be deferred for repayment over the period 1986-1988 in the case of all but two of the loans, and over the period 1981-1983 in respect of the other two loans. Interest is to accrue on the deferrals at a rate of 10½ per cent per annum, and for security purposes it will be covered by the first charge taken under the previous guarantee arrangements.

Because of the legal necessity to have all arrangements firmly established in time to overcome the project's liquidity crisis, relevant deferral and borrowing documents were executed on the basis of an interim guarantee given at that time by the Treasurer on behalf of the State pursuant to authority granted by the Governor in Council. The documents require new substitute guarantees to be provided pursuant to an amendment to the Greenvale Agreement Act before 31 August 1975, in order that the deferral arrangements may continue.

The purpose of the proposed amendments is therefore to provide the guarantees outlined, as agreed to by the Government earlier this year. The total commitment under the Greenvale guarantees will now be $86,800,000, plus any interest unpaid in the future. The swift action by the Government in agreeing to support the further arrangements necessary to consolidate the project's financial position is tangible

evidence of the great importance the Government attributes to the Greenvale nickel-mining and treatment project as a source of employment and general stimulus to economic development and activity in North Queensland.

For those reasons, I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (12.24 p.m.): This is not the first time that this Assembly has been asked to rush through a Bill dealing with this project. On 8 December 1970 a similar Bill was introduced and the second reading was rushed through on 9 December, the next day. "The Australian" headlined this action, "M.Ps. Rush Bill for Nickel Project." Exactly the same thing is being done today. I, too, am concerned about looking after the jobs of the people employed on the Greenvale project, but I am also concerned that we obtain some guarantees and answers on the viability of the project. Surely we are not going to rush in with $70,000,000 or $80,000,000 on nothing stronger than emotion. Surely we must examine the case presented to see if the money is being spent wisely, and if guarantees are being obtained for the people of Queensland. This would probably be the first private company which has received major guarantees of this sort from the State Government. As I said, the Opposition supports the Bill but we believe there are important questions which the Treasurer must answer during the debate.

The Greenvale nickel project has had, to say the least, a turbulent, tenuous existence. According to reports as late as 29 May this year, it was within seven days of shut-down. National and international negotiations involving millions of dollars were necessary to secure its survival. I speak on behalf of all Opposition members when I say that I hope the period of uncertainty has passed and that the people employed at Greenvale may anticipate a new sense of job security. This rescue operation involving $70,000,000 or $80,000,000 is one that must concern us. When such a sizeable amount of Queensland money is at stake the Queensland people, who are, in reality, the investors, are entitled to frank answers to questions associated with this project.

Too many agreements are finalised by this Government in an atmosphere of semi-secrecy, with Queenslanders not being informed of the degree of the State's commitment. For example, I discovered this week that the price paid for the coal used at Swanbank recently has been the export price. Because of devious leaks of information made to us, we have been led to believe that we were getting it at a cheaper rate—in fact, that Cabinet had demanded that the price paid should be the cost of production—but it did not work out that way. The overseas companies concerned were able to tell us the rate we should pay and we paid the export price for that coal, which added to the cost of the electricity each and every one of us is consuming in this city and in the rest of South-east Queensland. This sort of secret dealing has happened time and again in relation to our mineral assets.

In regard to Greenvale I want to know before the legislation is passed what the present position is in relation to guaranteed future contracts? What are the final terms and conditions for the repayment of capital and interest by the partners in this project? As the Premier earlier this year said that more than $80,000,000 of the State Government money was involved—the Treasurer has now said it is $70,000,000—and there have been other quotes, just how much has the Government now guaranteed and what is the security of repayment? Has the State Government paid any interest under its guarantee and when do these payments fall due? I know the Treasurer has mentioned the matter of interest, but has any been paid?

Has current production at Greenvale reached the originally estimated monthly levels or is it short of these anticipated figures? What is the present rate of production and what level is required to make the project economically sound on current nickel prices? What is the present position in regard to future contracts? Are these secured and at what prices? At the time of increasing State Government commitments to the project, what reviews were made of its economic feasibility? I am certain the Committee will agree these are pertinent questions about the present legislation and I hope that the Treasurer will provide the necessary information.

Sir Gordon Chalk: Will you give me a copy of your speech so I can answer your questions?

Mr. BURNS: Yes, and some of my notes.

Sir Gordon Chalk: There is no need to give me all of them. I want only the guidelines. I have an answer for every one of your questions.

Mr. BURNS: This is a project that has been subject to uncertainty, a project that has been poised on the brink of collapse. It is a project to which the Queensland Government is heavily committed and it now proposes to extend that commitment.

On 23 April this year "The Australian Financial Review" reported from New York under the headline, "Little Cheer for Greenvale in Freeport Annual Report". The newspaper article stated that the Freeport Minerals Company, which has a controlling interest in the scheme, confirmed reports that the project was faced with serious production and financial problems. That was only four months ago. On 25 May, only three months ago, the Chairman of Metals Exploration Pty. Ltd., the Australian partner in Greenvale, said the project would be forced to close down within seven days unless assistance

was obtained. That is the financial situation we are talking about now. As I said, that gloomy forecast was made only three months ago.

On 6 June we saw the headline, "Greenvale not at full output". There we had the question of output in addition to the financial problems. I must admit that the position on the 1st of this month appeared much more promising. "The Courier-Mail" reported on that day a marked improvement in the operations of the project in the three months ended 30 June. Has this improvement been maintained? I suggest that this Committee and the people of Queensland are entitled to that information because the viability of this project has been clouded by conflicting reports. As I stated, this is a project to which we are heavily committed in terms of finance and also in terms of employment opportunity.

I remind you, Mr. Hewitt, of this headline in "The Courier-Mail"—

" 'No idea' where the Government would find $70 million: Chalk"
"Greenvale Talks"

The article reads—

"The Queensland Treasurer (Sir Gordon Chalk) said yesterday he had no idea where he would find the $70 million if lenders to the Greenvale nickel project insisted the Government should meet its guarantee. If the State had to pay the $70 million it would give the State about a one-third share in the project."

The way things are shaping up, if this new move does not work, the Government could easily have to find the $70,000,000. I am reminded that it is now $86,000,000. In a situation such as that, in which a private company has already borrowed on State Government guarantees, say, $86,000,000 of the total cost of the investment, one must ask the question whether or not the State Government would obtain an equity interest in the project if the company was unable to meet its financial obligations. Would the Government do its money—or, should I say, the people's money—cold, or would that come within the general economic philosophy of the Petersen plan?

The questions that I have raised are, I believe, relevant and deserving of a reply before the conclusion of the debate, and I thank the Treasurer for his offer to take the questions and supply the necessary information.

Sir Gordon Chalk: I am willing to answer every question you ask, provided you give me a list of the questions afterwards.

Mr. BURNS: Right. I think Queenslanders are entitled to have answers to them.

Mr. Hanson: He is like George Washington.

Mr. BURNS: Yes, like George Washington.

Hard-headed businessmen have said that, at best, the prospects of the Greenvale project are marginal. It has been suggested that the decision to proceed with the investment was taken at a time when the mineral boom was running down. The principals concerned made very optimistic projections even though the mineral boom had begun to slide, and honourable members were given similarly optimistic projections by the Premier in his introductory speech on the Greenvale Agreement Bill.

Mr. Moore: What did you say about it at the time?

Mr. BURNS: I was not in Parliament in 1970. I would have found it rather difficult to make speeches in Parliament in 1970 when I was not elected till 1972.

Members of the Opposition are now asking these questions: as we accepted assurances by the Premier and others at that time that the project was economically sound, have checks been made again, who made the original checks, and why were they so far out? When introducting the Greenvale Agreement Bill, the Premier said—

"A preliminary examination of the financial prospects of the companies' operations has been made by the Government, and no doubts are held as to the soundness of the venture. Indeed, the Government's claim for a higher State return than the companies were then prepared to accept was based on our assessment of very substantial profits arising out of the venture. However, no commitment will arise with respect to the guarantee until such time as the companies have produced for the Treasurer's examination a report on their final feasibility study and evidence of long-term sales contracts, availability of sufficient finance to carry out the project and availability of sufficient technical information and assistance, and these have been found to be satisfactory."

In a statement by the Premier in 1970, members of the Opposition were told all those things. Now we are being told a completely different story; in fact, the story has changed almost from day to day between 1973 and 1975. And the Government wonders why we want answers to these questions and why we will not accept assurances of that type!

Not very long after the Premier had made that statement in Parliament, the Chairman of Metals Exploration, Mr. Hare, made statements to dispel doubts about the future of the Greenvale project. He said that he had full confidence in the future of the Greenvale project.

The project has had its problems. On 4 September 1973, the Minister for Transport announced that work had begun on building a $60,000,000 railway line for the project, but on 21 December 1973—three months later—Thiess Brothers Pty. Ltd. issued a

$15,000,000 writ for work on the Greenvale rail link. The company was concerned and withdrew its men from the job. In spite of this continuing turmoil, the Government now expects the Opposition to accept its assurances!

Even though in February 1974 newspapers were pointing out that nickel prices were weak, the Treasurer assured the House, when answering a question asked by the then Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Houston), that the Government was still confident that the venture would be able to service its loan commitments. A month earlier "The Australian Financial Review" put forward the suggestion that metal prices were dropping and that this would cause some uncertainty. Since then, Mr. Hewitt, we have seen headlines such as "How mighty nickel miners have fallen". Does not that begin to cause some concern about how much further the State would guarantee a project that many people say was not economically viable in the first place?

We have read all these conflicting stories, Mr. Hewitt, that could foretell future problems for this project. We have been told that Canada International Nickel's decision to have a major nickel plant of a similar type in Indonesia would cause concern and result in pricing problems for the Greenvale plant. We do not know whether that is true, but surely the State Government is considering that possibility before undertaking this further guarantee.

We are also told that the project is operating well below target. That has been said time and time again. I am informed that the plant has technical problems.

Mr. Row interjected.

Mr. BURNS: It has major flow-on problems. That has been said by Mr. Hare, the chairman of the company. The honourable member cannot very well deny his statements about some of the problems of production. Then there is the problem associated with the decision that we made to assist the company by allowing it to use as fuel petroleum products with a high sulphur content. The increase in the cost of petroleum products and production difficulties are two of the major causes of the company's economic problems.

I do not know much about the technical details of the company's operations, but I wonder why in a State like Queensland with all its coal resources the company even envisaged the idea of using oil or petroleum products. Why is our own natural resource not being used as fuel? It could be that the company has good reasons for what it is doing; but we are posing these questions to the Treasurer.

Mr. Katter: Would you dump the project?

Mr. BURNS: No. At the start I said that that was exactly what we did not want to do. We want the project to succeed. There should not be any political interjections in this debate. I am sure all honourable members want the answers to the questions I am putting. We want the men to keep their jobs. We want the project to keep going. But we want to make certain that we do not see another newspaper headline, such as the one I have here, indicating that the State Treasurer said that the Government has to find $70,000,000.

Sir Gordon Chalk: The honourable member for Port Curtis is determined to knock it.

Mr. BURNS: I do not think he is. The honourable member for Port Curtis has spent all of his time in this Parliament——

Sir Gordon Chalk: Working out how much his liquor bill is.

Mr. BURNS: No. All along the line he has been working for the good of the workers of the State. We want to see some guarantee that the workers are going to be protected.

It appears that the State Government is trying to inject enormous quantities of Queensland money to keep a highly questionable enterprise going. If it can prove that it is not a highly questionable enterprise, that is the sort of proof we want. In this Chamber we hear a lot of talk about free enterprise and socialism. On this occasion the Government is trying to subsidise profits. Certainly that is a peculiar type of activity for a free-enterprise Government. It is a very unsound principle to be adopted by honourable members opposite, who do not believe in Government intervention in such matters. All of a sudden they are strongly in favour of Government intervention. A non-socialist group is suddenly introducing some socialist principles into its activities.

Government Members interjected.

Mr. BURNS: I have them stirred now!

Let us look at what the Federal Liberal Government would have done if Mr. Fraser had been in power. As Treasurer Dr. Cairns made approaches to Malcolm Fraser, as Leader of the Opposition, for the co-operation of all parties in the national Parliament in support of a national-interest inquiry. I ask honourable members opposite to get that point clear. It was to be a national-interest inquiry. He was not talking about the economics of it. He was saying that even if it were not economic, in the national interest we ought to have this particular project.

Dr. Cairns's proposal was that a joint parliamentary committee would assess the national-interest inquiry report from the A.I.D.C. But Mr. Fraser washed his hands of the whole affair, and has resisted all efforts to encourage him to take a responsible interest in the matter, at least if only to assess the committee's worth. For all their defects, the Federal Liberals appear to be

not as fool-hardy as the Queensland Government has been in coming into this project without proper knowledge of what was going on.

As I understand it, the Queensland Government has guaranteed $86,000,000. I believe that much of the money it has provided in the past has gone into rail communications. Perhaps the Treasurer might like to answer that one. I will rephrase my question. Have we put any money into rail communications in the area?

Sir Gordon Chalk: No.

Mr. BURNS: Prospects for the project are highly speculative, with more cause for doubt than evidence that it will be a viable proposition. The fact that the A.I.D.C. considered the project earlier (when it was in trouble) as a national-interest case is an indication that the A.I.D.C. is not prepared to regard it as a commercially viable project. That causes me some worry.

Sir Gordon Chalk: That is not quite factual. It made a certain recommendation but it was not accepted.

Mr. BURNS: That's right. The fact that neither Dr. Cairns nor his successor (Mr. Hayden) has followed up the A.I.D.C. national-interest inquiry seems roaring evidence that even on a national-interest basis, that is, with the commercial aspects submerged to other non-economic considerations, the project cannot be established as one worthy of more support.

Mr. Katter: That is evidence that they are disinterested in the project.

Mr. BURNS: I do not know, but I do not think so. The Liberal Party moved the amendment to the proposal in relation to national interest and the party to which the honourable member belongs refused to have anything to do with it. It refused to set up a joint party committee. In those circumstances it would be very hard to convince me that my party can be blamed.

The cold-headed business approach to this is that we want jobs. We want the project to go ahead. We will do nothing to try to stop it from being a success. But we want to know the answers to the questions I have raised. In the past the Opposition has accepted assurances, and the Government has accepted assurances or recommendations. But since then the Government has had to extend its advances, loans, commitments and influence to the stage that this must be the largest single private-investment project guaranteed by it. We support the proposal, but we are concerned about getting answers to the questions raised.

Dr. SCOTT-YOUNG (Townsville) (12.41 p.m.): I wish to correct the statement by the Leader of the Opposition about the national-interest committee. It is not for the Opposition to form this committee but for the Government, and the Federal Government failed to do it. That point was made very strongly by Mr. Fraser. If the Leader of the Opposition re-reads his information on this, he will get a better appreciation of the problem. By the same token, it is not the job of the Opposition to project to the Federal Government ways and means of saving industry.

The Greenvale nickel project has been in trouble from the start. I congratulate the Treasurer on his stand and the magnificent work he has done to save this very worthwhile project. In years to come Queensland will find that the Greenvale nickel project is similar to the Mt. Isa project, which, in its early days, was nobody's baby. The British failed and the Russians failed and then American and Australian interests took over. We know what Mt. Isa is today. It is magnificently managed with wonderful community and international flow-ons. It is one of the world's large producers. The Greenvale nickel project will be the same.

The original estimate of cost in the feasibility study, which was completed in 1971, was about $223,000,000. The present estimate of cost is $261,000,000. If the project were to be started now, in the light of inflation and spiralling wages it would cost about $400,000,000. It is therefore apparent that, comparatively speaking, our present commitment of $261,000,000 is not very large. It is obvious that the Treasurer in taking this action is using his business acumen and his shrewd understanding of the value of the dollar, which have been well to the fore in his stewardship of Queensland's finances.

It is interesting to note that construction costs of this project have spiralled 123 per cent, while the value of world nickel sales since 1971 has increased by only 31 per cent. The value of the product has not offset the cost of preparing for production.

Varied comments have been made about the management of Greenvale nickel but the cost of errors in management are microscopic when compared with the over-all cost. They do not warrant consideration by the critics. The spiralling price of fuel has added to the increased cost. The original estimate of the annual cost of fuel to run the project was $4,000,000. It is now estimated at $20,000,000—an increase of $16,000,000—and it could quite easily go higher than that.

Despite the statement of the previous speaker that the plant is not at full capacity, interest on the money presently invested will be met quite easily. It is because of teething problems that the plant is presently operating at only about 75 per cent of its capacity. All projects encounter teething problems. I can see no reason why this one should not soon be in full production and earning a quick return on the world markets.

The Opposition has been careful not to mention the industrial problems that have beset Greenvale. Industrial action commenced the moment the report of a feasibility study was published. The Communist Party of Australia immediately blasted off on the environmental issue. In Townsville we are still experiencing it. It has not been allowed to die down. The Communist Party is stirring up the farmers by pointing out the problems that will confront them. So the environmentalists are still agitating and the industrial unions are still fighting and squabbling. Even though strict, binding agreements were entered into, they were broken. The unions did not abide by them. Constant pinpricking action led to colossal delays and those delaying tactics considerably increased construction costs. On one occasion the men walked off after a minor argument and left 100 cubic yards of concrete to set unfinished. The next day it had to be broken up with jackhammers before a new pour could be made. Contracts were broken half way through their terms and arguments were started over minor details—all in an endeavour to disrupt construction. Several unions were involved but the guilt lay not with the members but with their officials, who were strongly affiliated with the Communist Party. Many workmen protested to me about the delaying tactics and the consequent personal hardship through loss of wages. Many of them left the North and most probably they will never return to another project there.

This legislation relates to what I believe has been an extremely useful exercise in negotiation by the Treasurer. This project will be viable if sufficient funds can be injected into it. Nickel is an essential metal and the world demand for it will not decline. The Queensland Government is not putting money into the project but is guaranteeing the payment of interest on money borrowed. The argument advanced by the Leader of the Opposition does not hold water. Bearing in mind the end product, the project cannot fail and the interest payments will be met by the company.

Mr. M. D. HOOPER (Townsville West) (12.49 p.m.): As the Treasurer pointed out, initially the development of the Greenvale nickel mine, the building of 220 kilometres of railway line from the Greenvale township to Yabulu and the construction of the treatment plant itself was estimated to cost somehing like $220,000,000. Later, with an escalation in costs, the estimate rose to $250,000,000. It has now gone much higher. The project has been the most significant mining and industrial development ever undertaken if not in North Queensland then certainly in the near Townsville area.

The Leader of the Opposition said that profitability of the project was always considered to be marginal. I concede that for some considerable time that was so in some respects. For many years the Department of Mines was aware of the existence of this deposit of nickel at Greenvale. It was not until some eight years ago, when Metals Exploration undertook the investigation of the lease, that hopes were raised in North Queensland that this mine would eventually be developed.

The area of the mine site itself is something less than 800 acres, which is rather small for a nickel mine considering that, of the nickel ore that is actually mined or treated at the treatment plant, only 2 per cent is recovered in nickel; the other 98 per cent is complete waste. That is why, in some respects, it was considered marginal in the early days. It has only a limited area with a limited quantity of nickel ore available and the recovery rate is only 2 per cent of the actual ore body.

Mr. Jensen: Very low grade ore.

Mr. M. D. HOOPER: Low grade on world standards, but not on Australian standards.

The project itself was examined by Metals Exploration which, in association with Freeport Sulphur of America, developed a new company called Queensland Nickel. It received world-wide financial backing for the project and, with the guaranteed 20-year life of the mine, was able to obtain guaranteed markets for the nickel. So that whilst it might originally have been said to be marginal it was definitely viable because a 20-year market was obtained for the product of the mine.

Apart from its viability to the investors—the people who put their money into the project—the development of the Greenvale nickel mine had great significance for Townsville. It provided approximately 1,000 people with permanent job opportunities. Naturally, those people wanted homes. New suburbs and new schools had to be built and generally our economy was boosted.

Moreover, the development of large-scale projects at the Townsville Harbour was precipitated. At that time the harbour could take ships of only up to approximately 20,000 tonnes dead-weight capacity whereas, after a $4,000,000 dredging project, the Townsville Harbour Board can accept ships of up to 50,000 tonnes capacity, including the large tankers carrying oil products for the Greenvale mine. As most honourable members would know, the Greenvale mine uses mainly oil fuel—it uses a lot; more than 1,000 tonnes of oil fuel is burnt at the mine each day—so that Townsville is importing over 400,000 tonnes of oil products a year purely for the Greenvale project. That is double the previous figure. The Townsville Harbour Board stood to gain quite a considerable amount of money, and more waterside workers and wharf labour generally could be employed.

But from the outset the project was plagued with industrial troubles. Like all other mining projects in Queensland, it experienced industrial unrest. All sorts of

trivial reasons were given by the Communist-controlled unions to pull the men out on strike—for instance, not having a particular brand of sauce on the dining table. Often such trifling reasons were given at the mine site for not allowing miners to go back to work. The associated costs—the cost of the importation of oil, the cost of labour and the many months of work actually lost at the site—brought about a tremendous increase in the over-all cost of this development.

A few months ago it was mooted in local circles and indeed all over Australia that for want of finance the project might close down. I commend the State Government for taking immediate action, and particularly the Treasurer for his quick intervention and meeting with overseas lenders. He did his utmost and persuaded the Queensland Government to come to the party with a rescue operation. At that time, in Townsville, somewhere between $3,000,000 and $4,000,000 was owed to local merchants who supplied goods to the Greenvale complex.

It was vital that the project be kept going to preserve the jobs of 1,000 men. If the mine had been closed down, it would have remained closed for two to three months, which would have been a very costly operation. During that period it would have to be kept in mothballs, with the high cost of employing maintenance staff and, if it ever opened again, it would cost something like $20,000,000 to get the treatment plant at Yabulu completely operational. The Government's part in this rescue is worthy of note, and all Government and Opposition members should be extremely proud of it. I can do no better than repeat what I said earlier: the Treasurer has done a good job for Queensland, and I strongly urge all members to support the Bill.

Mr. KATTER (Flinders) (12.56 p.m.): I begin by saying that my standpoint is diametrically opposed to that of the Leader of the Opposition. I might say that I had an altercation indirectly with the Treasurer when this situation at Greenvale arose. Once again the Leader of the Opposition is trying to stall the immediate help that the Greenvale project desperately needs. He claims to be acting responsibly when he says that we should stand aside whilst all the core holes, all the market contracts, and all the other things are rechecked. That would take about two years. In that time, 300 to 400 people employed at Greenvale would be thrown on the tender mercy of the Department of Social Security, but only after waiting three or four weeks for their unemployment benefits. I addressed myself to the Premier and the Treasurer at that time because I wanted to be able to assure the working men that they would not have to pack their goods and chattels in their cars and set off hopefully to a place such as the area of the honourable member for Port Curtis, which is fat and prosperous and has all the money because it has been developed. The Greenvale area was not developed, and the workers there had no alternative employment. They were waiting desperately for word from Brisbane.

Once again they are waiting for word from Brisbane, and once again they are being subjected to attempted stalling tactics by Opposition members who in recent times have consistently shown more concern for pollution and a few people running round with placards over their heads at the university than they have for the people who put them in Parliament, namely, the solid trade unionists and workmen of Queensland. Although originally shearers formed the backbone of the A.W.U., more recently miners have been its real strength, and the A.W.U. and the Australian Labor Party were virtually synonymous. In recent years, however, friction has rubbed the whole fabric thin, and there is now a great gaping hole between the miners, who were once represented by the A.L.P., and what is now the A.L.P., because the A.L.P. now represents the placard-carriers.

Mr. Hanson: What has this to do with the Bill?

Mr. KATTER: It has a lot to do with it, because Opposition members are adopting stalling tactics on the Bill. I want help to be given immediately so that the people concerned can go to bed at night unworried in the knowledge that this money is coming forward, approved by the State Government, to secure their jobs.

Another by-product of the rift that has arisen between Opposition members and the miners of Queensland has resulted from Opposition members' complete ignorance of mining. Mining is a project that is very different from any other. Until hundreds and thousands of holes have been driven deep into the earth, at enormous expense, it is not known what is below. Mining is by its very nature a gamble, and following the opening of every mine in Australia there has been a long and heart-rending period of teething problems. This arises because both the entrepreneurs of mining and the prospectors are gamblers, irrespective of whether they sit in sophisticated offices or are in Land Rovers with their picks and shovels out the back of Cloncurry. They always were, and they still are.

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

Mr. KATTER: I reiterate that on this issue the tactics of the Opposition are, and were originally, stalling tactics motivated by the commitment of Opposition members to conservation, an issue which is very near and dear to the heart of the Leader of the Opposition. Although stalling on such issues and making the best deal may be very important, what is lost is consideration of the workers at Greenvale. I would have liked the Leader of the Opposition to be on the telephone to some of the union men

at Greenvale as I was on the nights leading up to the announcement by the Treasurer. I would have liked him to have had to explain to them what we were attempting to do and to tell them that we have to worry about where this money is going, how it is to be spent, and so on.

I am not asking the Government to throw money around or to make irresponsible loans. All I am asking the Government to realise is that individuals are concerned and that jobs are at stake. This is the point that is being lost.

I explained, I hope in some detail, that most mining projects go through a teething period. In North-west Queensland in my electorate the teething period of the mines at Mt. Isa led to six consecutive companies going bankrupt and it was 25 years before Mount Isa Mines Limited made a profit. The company which originally operated at Gunpowder went bankrupt after it had been operating for six years. We can look at the phosphate deposits north of Mt. Isa. In spite of statements by three or four companies that these deposits would be mined, not one was able to get off the ground.

Honourable Members interjected.

Mr. KATTER: I am sorry, I missed the point.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: Pity the poor capitalists!

Mr. KATTER: Pity the poor capitalists! That is just the sort of attitude I expect from honourable members opposite. I was trying to understand what they were saying and it is, "Pity the poor capitalists." It is regrettable that honourable members opposite forget that many people depend on those particular capitalists for their jobs and the money they bring home at the end of the week to feed their children and meet repayments on the house, the car and the washing machine.

It is all very well for the honourable member for Archerfield to talk about capitalism, but it is a matter of profits, and as long as there are profits any decent, experienced union man knows that there is a fund from which his wages will come. I think I was reading this morning where Ned Hanlon said that once the contents of the jug are poured there is nothing left, and that is the situation if there are no profits or if there are no "capitalists", as they have been termed. We are talking about people's jobs.

I want to switch now to a subject which has a lot to do with this particular Bill and that is Mary Kathleen. The same situation has arisen there. Dedicated conservationists through stalling tactics have tried to prevent the mine opening because of the fear of some imagined pollution of the air or pollution of something else. The A.L.P. is becoming the spokesman for the conservation issue. Greenvale almost did not get off the ground because of an organisation called GASP. This organisation was run by a Mr. Fabian Sweeney, who was a candidate at the last Federal election and he made every endeavour to ensure——

Mr. Aikens: Do you know where he is now?

Mr. KATTER: No.

Mr. Aikens: He is over in Asia teaching the Asians to breed cattle—at the Commonwealth Government's expense.

Mr. KATTER: He is apparently trying to wreck our cattle industry in the same way as he attempted to wreck our mining industry. Returning to what I was saying, I have spoken about teething problems in the mining industry and the conservationists on the Opposition benches. I would like to add one further dimension to this issue and that is the basic attitude of the conservationists, that of leaving it in the ground. They say, "Leave it in the ground for another generation." I can take honourable members to some 30 or 40 very good lead lodes around Cloncurry and Mt. Isa, where the lead will lie in the ground not only for this generation but for ever because as a mineral lead has been passed over. We have found superior substances which have made lead an irrelevant metal. Those areas were never opened, so people will never have the opportunity of taking jobs there. As I said, lead has been passed over. Labor left that metal in the ground; therefore people did not have opportunities for employment.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I think the honourable member should come back to the motion before the Committee.

Mr. Houston: He doesn't know anything about the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! My judgment is that all the comments of the honourable member for Flinders have been pertinent till now.

Mr. KATTER: Thank you, Mr. Hewitt. The question that the Committee is discussing is whether the Act should be changed to enable the Greenvale project to continue. At I understand it, that is what the Bill proposes. It is desirable that honourable members give a considered decision on the proposed Bill because people say that the Government is being irresponsible in this matter. The opposition is coming from people who are on record as being dedicated conservationists. Their tactics are simply to endeavour to draw a red herring across the trail or to put up a smokescreen to obscure their dedication to the cause of conservation.

I have referred to the attitude of honourable members opposite to leaving metal in the ground. Let me conclude by reiterating the other pertinent points that I have made. The conservation lobby has achieved some

remarkably good results because it has good representation in the Federal Labor Government in Canberra. Whereas 90 mining companies were once working around the Mt. Isa-Cloncurry field, there are now only two. Because of conservation issues, only one mining town has been opened up on the field in the last three years, since the Labor Government came to office in Canberra. On the other hand, before that Government came to office and the idea of leaving metal in the ground came into being, and before stalling tactics such as those we are seeing today came to the fore, two towns were being opened every year, which meant jobs and money.

I refer the Committee to the very extensive work done by Professor Gifford, which proved conclusively that the wages paid to workers throughout Australia depended less upon Arbitration Court rulings than upon the opening up of new industries and the bidding up of wages. Greenvale is a classic example of that. I discussed the question with a gentleman who employed five men at a fibreglass factory in Townsville. He had had a turnover of more than 25 men in a four-month period and all of them had gone to Greenvale to take advantage of the higher wages there. To retain the services of his employees, he simply had to pay higher wages. That is an indication of the real cause of wage increases. In the light of that, I say that members of the Opposition who support the conservationists are not only keeping men out of jobs and throwing them onto the dole but also restricting the growth of wages.

Members of the Opposition say that they want to see a more responsible attitude to the borrowing of money. Who would be more responsible than the Treasurer, and who would know that better than I do? I attempted to get the Treasurer to take very hasty action. However, he has deliberated on this issue very astutely and got an excellent deal both for the State of Queensland and for the workers on the Greenvale project who, of course, are anxiously awaiting word on whether or not they will have jobs next year.

Mr. HANSON (Port Curtis) (2.24 p.m.): When the Greenvale Agreement Bill originally came before honourable members, I remarked that probably amending legislation would be necessary and that this Chamber would see a considerable number of amending Bills in the years ahead.

It is passing strange that although the Premier introduced the Bill some years ago, today, when a rescue operation is on the drawing board, when various negotiations and conferences are to be held and senior Cabinet Ministers are facing many late nights, the Premier conveniently ducks out of his responsibility. He was associated with the glamour of introducing the original measure, but he has virtually dumped the problems onto the Treasurer, the Leader of the Liberal Party, his partner in the coalition. It is not the first time this has happened in this Chamber. It is quite evident to the Committee that there is considerable confrontation between the leaders of the coalition parties, and incidentally between the back-bench members, about this unhappy alliance.

Mr. Camm: When the Bill was originally introduced, Mr. Tucker was Leader of the Opposition.

Honourable Members interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member for Port Curtis has sought my protection. I afford it to him.

Mr. HANSON: Thank you very much! Don't worry about protecting me. Any type of rules will suit me. The Minister for Mines and Energy is no match for me. He is inept and weak. After all, as he is the Deputy Leader of the National Party, one would have expected the Premier to give him the task of introducing the Bill; but apparently he could not trust his own party deputy so he had to thrust the task onto the Treasurer. Living up to his responsibilities the Treasurer tried very hard, although he was guilty of making many snide remarks about Opposition members. But that is all by the way.

It is a matter of sincere regret that the honourable member for Flinders should rise to his feet and rant and rave. He talked about every single mining field in the North West and of his own claims to expertise. I do not know whether he was out there evaluating minerals or prospecting. I do not know whether he has done any gouging out in the West. I know he would be around wherever there was a sale of a few shirts or suits. He made snide and offensive remarks about Opposition members who are trying to be very helpful. No-one can deny that the lead set by the Leader of the Opposition was productive. We have indicated our official stand on the matter, but we still believe that it is the responsibility of the Opposition to draw attention to what the taxpayers of the State have to put up with.

I draw attention to the remarks of Mr. Hare, General Manager of Metals Exploration, which were in direct contrast to the snide remarks of the honourable member for Flinders. When Mr. Hare spoke of the company's difficulties he did not criticise trade unionists, conservationists and everybody else about the place. He put the facts fairly and squarely. He spoke of the floods in 1974, the fact that world oil prices were responsible for inflation in many lands, and the downturn in world base metal prices. Those were the three factors responsible for the company's difficulties up to the end of June this year. It ill behoves Government members to cast aspersions on honourable members on this side who are trying to give a responsible lead to the taxpayers of Queensland.

When I spoke to the original Bill introduced by the Premier I said—

> "This agreement is a departure from the normal financial arrangements made with mining companies. Certainly it could possibly lead to the creation of wonderful opportunities for further industrialisation and expansion in the State—I am not arguing about that—but we, as members of Parliament, are entitled to some firm understanding of the conditions, terms and arrangements applicable to this guarantee."

As responsible members of Parliament that is all we seek. The erudite interrogation by the Leader of the Opposition this morning was very searching indeed. His questions call for answers.

It is well known that Australia now produces at least nine per cent of the world's nickel output. That figure could easily be lifted to 14 per cent if we so desired if market conditions improved. In this country there is no problem in finding nickel deposits. The real problem lies in creating conditions under which it can be mined and sold at even a modest profit. That is how the world's base-metal market is placed at the moment. I do not know whether Government members are conscious of that, but they should get the message straight from the shoulder.

Under the agreement introduced by the Premier three or four years ago, we were told that, should the operation fail, the railway line and rolling-stock would not be available to the creditors but would become the property of the Commissioner for Railways. It is to be hoped that, under the new arrangements, that provision will be adhered to. We were told that lenders, who, incidentally, are guaranteed by the State would hold a share of first-ranking security over the mine, treatment plant and other assets of the project, and they would share in the realisation of assets ahead of lenders secured by a second equity charge and the company's own equity of $40,000,000. We were told that the State would be responsible only for meeting the deficiency between the amount guaranteed (with interest rate not exceeding 8 per cent per annum) and the amount so realised, while receiving at no cost to itself a railway line, locomotives and rolling-stock for use on it.

We were further informed, as the Leader of the Opposition made quite plain this morning when quoting the Premier's remarks, that a very comprehensive examination had been made of the whole deal. When the Premier introduced the measure he assured us that he had no doubt about the soundness of the undertaking. He said that the Government even expected a higher return than the company was prepared to offer in the light of the substantial profits that could be made from the venture. That was only a few years ago. The company was told that no guarantees would be given by the Government unless a final feasibility study was presented to the Treasurer and evidence was produced that long-term contracts were in the offing with sufficient finance available to proceed with the project. The Premier assured the House that there was absolutely no risk about this project. Today, we know that there have been certain deferrals by lenders and, as I said, a rescue operation has been undertaken by the Treasurer involving the State.

In view of the huge involvement of State money, it is passing strange that no consideration has been given by the State to seeking representation on the board of directors of this company, even in a non-voting advisory capacity or an invitation directorship. The Treasurer should realise that there are many men in the Opposition (even if there are not in the Government) who are well qualified to sit on the board of directors and properly scrutinise the many matters raised. Doubtless he will counter that there is sufficient protection in the form of freight-deposit advances concerning nickel and goods not transported over the line. But in view of the ramifications of the company in recent times, that proposition would not be feasible.

I maintain that the State is virtually a partner in this venture. This morning we were told that while costs had increased from $220,000,000 to $260,000,000, the Government guarantee on the project had increased from $40,000,000 to $83,000,000. That is a substantial proportion.

These important considerations naturally exercise the minds of Opposition members. If the State has such a high equity in the operation, surely it is not unreasonable to ask that it be given—through the Treasurer or his representative—a seat on the board of directors to advise the company.

As I said many years ago, this represents a most unusual departure in the field of financing mining companies. Any suggestion of Government participation in private enterprise usually evokes from National-Liberal Party members charges of socialism. But this is the classic old Tory type of socialism —capitalisation of profits and socialisation of losses. Government assistance is sought immediately the project faces losses or difficulty. If the enterprise is profitable, however, any Government interference whatsoever is regarded as arrant socialism.

It must be accepted that in times of difficulty the State's rural producers should be assisted in an effort to relieve their stress and anxiety. In the present economic climate, I refer particularly to beef producers. Government members, in putting forward the policy on which this measure is based, claim that it is a very wise move indeed, but if the Labor Party had proposed it, it would have been labelled socialism on a grand scale.

Government members say it is all right for the taxpayers of this State to guarantee a project to the tune of $83,000,000, but

seeking Government representation on the board of directors would be a form of socialism—an intolerable intrusion into a consortium of this kind. The Government's proposition is that Queenslanders have virtually a 30 per cent equity in the project but no say whatsoever in its management. What a shockingly irresponsible attitude!

The Treasurer, who introduced this measure, is responsible for the State Government Insurance Office (Queensland) Act. He has often stated that under that Act the State Government stands behind every insurance policy written by that office. He said that it is only right that two persons from outside the Government who shall not be public servants should be appointed to the board of the State Government Insurance Office. As he has pointed out, the State itself is guaranteeing the S.G.I.O., Government funds are involved and the Government should have a majority on the board.

Mr. Lowes: You've got the wrong page.

Mr. HANSON: Don't worry about me. The pages can slip out at any time. I don't need the pages. I am not like the honourable member for Brisbane or the honourable member for Townsville, who get briefs from the Government and bellyache trivial hypothetical nonsense about a so-called politicalism. I can make my own speech in my own way.

I stress that, if it is good enough to appoint representatives to the board of directors under the State Government Insurance Office (Queensland) Act to achieve a directorship that is amenable to the Government of the day, surely such a monumental use of State funds as this calls for the appointment of a representative of the State to the board of directors in this case.

The Treasurer indicated to the House that this is a measure of great urgency that needs to be passed very quickly. He asked the House to allow the Bill to be passed through all stages in one day. Fair enough. But this session began last Tuesday and what did we see? We witnessed an exercise by the Minister for Mines for purely political purposes. He tried to tip the can on the Labor Opposition; that is all it was. It was a very unhealthy exercise and I do not think he gained many points from it, but it was indicative of the type of operation that the Government involves itself in.

Now the Government comes into this Chamber, as it did with the original legislation and then the subsequent amendment, saying, "Boys, we have to save this project."

Any member of the Opposition who demands answers to certain pertinent matters, as the Leader of the Opposition did, or offers constructive suggestions on the matters covered by this measure is accused of stonewalling. The honourable member for Flinders cluttered up the debate with talk of conservation and other rubbish that he tried to introduce. Surely the time is long past when we have to put up with nonsense of that type.

An Opposition Member interjected.

Mr. HANSON: As my friend remarked, the honourable member for Flinders is what is known in politics as a oncer. I sincerely hope, for the sake of the people of Queensland, that that will prove to be true.

A very important matter that has come into the discussion involves the whole financial structure of the measure. It is this. Many of the lenders to the project are large overseas financial institutions. I understand that the money that was originally advanced by them attracted a rate of interest of approximately 8¾ per cent. But what do we find? Many of those people would be able to obtain gilt-edged securities on the overseas market that would attract 12½ per cent interest. We are wondering whether many of those companies desire to transfer their financial involvement to other enterprises to obtain the more attractive interest rate. Is this the insidious or secret exercise behind this company's present difficulties.

Mr. Hartwig interjected.

Mr. HANSON: The honourable member for Callide has become very vocal. I am only asking. I hear that the honourable member for Callide is well versed in finance. Every time he gets into a taxi his eyes do not leave the meter. But that does not matter. I hope that if the Government survives long enough, we will see the day when that very astute, erudite and knowledgeable gentleman is elevated to Cabinet rank. I think he will share that hope.

We are anxious to know the ramifications of international finance behind this measure. Has the Treasurer, in his conferences, come up against this particular problem? Did he sense the difficulty associated with the problem of increased interest rates that I have mentioned?

I want to say, in line with the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition, that we want the Greenvale project to proceed to the advantage of the people of Queensland and particularly the people of North Queensland. If this happens it will provide outstanding job opportunities for many young people in the North and Queenslanders generally. That is very desirable. At the same time, questions have been raised by members of the Opposition. The Treasurer referred to major lenders to the project in his opening remarks, which he galloped through as he usually does through his speeches. Incidentally, he took his notes out of the Chamber at lunch-time. Perhaps he thought I might have got a peek at them, but that is by the way.

(Time expired.)

Mr. McKECHNIE (Carnarvon) (2.44 p.m.): As usual, the previous speaker did not listen very intently. I was quite pleased to see him sit down at long last. I feel that I should comment on a couple of the points he raised in his speech. He said that a parliamentarian's job should be to create conditions under which minerals can be mined and companies can make a small profit. I think the people of Queensland should be made aware of this point. As a senior Opposition member, his knowledge of economics is shocking. Who would go out and spend a great deal of risk money searching for minerals and developing this State if he was going to be confined to making just a small profit if he happened to make good? Let the difference between the policies of the National-Liberal Government and the Opposition be noted. The Government is bending over backwards to give security to the people of North Queensland. The Opposition, led by their mates in Canberra, is mainly interested in providing jobs of a non-productive nature that do not increase the real wealth of this country.

The honourable member spoke of problems associated with Greenvale, and he mentioned the world oil crisis and inflation. No doubt they have played some part in bringing about the present position. But other countries have come to grips with inflation, whereas, to the shame of the Federal Government, Australia has not. The honourable member mentioned the collapse of world metal prices. That no doubt has had a major bearing on the problems at Greenvale, but there are many others. Has the honourable member ever heard the old saying about the last straw that breaks the camel's back? What about all the strikes that have plagued the Greenvale project ever since it started? I have a friend who worked on the construction of the Greenvale railway line. Part of his job was to dig post-holes. He told me that working at a fair rate he could dig eight a day. But that was too good for the union. He was told that if he did not slow down, the union would bring on a strike. He therefore slowed down to six holes a day. That still was not good enough for the union.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. McKECHNIE: Opposition members do not like hearing the truth. He had to slow right down to digging one post-hole a day—and he could dig eight quite easily. This illustrates part of the problem at Greenvale.

Mr. Hanson: Old Henry told you a lot of bedtime stories.

Mr. McKECHNIE: Unbeknown to the honourable member for Port Curtis, I lived only 20 miles from the Greenvale railway line, and I was there whilst most of it was being constructed. I can assure the honourable member that the people of the North were very pleased that the Government encouraged the establishment of the Greenvale nickel project in North Queensland. But there have been strikes, industrial trouble and fake conservation problems, and this has been the straw that has broken the camel's back.

What does the Opposition do? Every time there is a strike, members opposite condemn the Government and apologise for the unions. This is not good enough, and it is one of the reasons why a good Treasurer has had to go overseas in an attempt to rescue this project from the problems that the A.L.P. socialist Government in Canberra has inflicted on it in addition to the other problems that it has had to face arising from the world oil crisis and the flood. When one sees the corrupt way in which the A.L.P. governs in Canberra, one wonders why God did not bring them down, too.

The policy of the Queensland Government is to help those who try to help themselves. Before resuming my seat, I should like to ask the people to reflect and compare our policies with those of the A.L.P. socialists both here and in Canberra. The Queensland Government is trying to do something constructive to save the jobs of the people at Greenvale; to give business confidence; and to rescue this nation from the threat of depression. But we are not getting much help from the Opposition.

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) (2.49 p.m.): I am frequently regaled by the oratorical meanderings in this Chamber of the honourable member for Port Curtis, a silver-tailed socialist who pretends to be a great friend of the working class. Incidentally, he seems to think that we do not read the newspapers; that we do not watch television; that we do not listen to radio; and that we do not hear anything. He seems to think that all the other members in this Chamber walk round in a zombie-like attitude knowing nothing and learning nothing.

Today I heard him claim that the Premier had squibbed, that he had introduced the original Bill dealing with Greenvale, that now when Greenvale needed a rescue-and-resuscitation operation he had to send for the Treasurer, and that the Treasurer was filling in for the absent, and shall we say, craven Premier. Those are in effect the words of the honourable member for Port Curtis. He gets tangled up sometimes in his platitudinous ponderosity and does not know what he is saying. But that is what he meant to say and that is what we understood him to say.

Coming from the honourable member for Port Curtis, that is astonishing because only a week or so ago he stood up in the Labor Party caucus and made certain dramatic statements about his own leader. At least the action of the Premier in handing this Bill over to the Treasurer indicates to the world that the Government is not a one-man

band, that there are members of the Government other than the Premier who can, and at times do, take important positions of trust and, shall we say, responsibility.

That was the statement by the same honourable member for Port Curtis who only a couple of weeks ago—and it was fully reported in "The Courier-Mail" and never denied by the honourable member for Port Curtis—charged this motley collection of 11 to which he belongs with being a one-man band led by the Leader of the Opposition, the honourable member for Lytton or wherever he comes from. He said that the Leader of the Opposition cannot keep his mouth shut and that he can even talk under water. That was one of the accusations he laid against his own leader and he charged the A.L.P. in this Chamber with being a one-man band. At least it has been demonstrated today, with the Treasurer introducing this Bill, that the Government, whatever its failings—and it has its sins of omission and commission—is not a one-man band.

Then we had some astonishing contributions, more by interjection than in any other way, from other members of the A.L.P. who claim to know all about mining. As a matter of fact, I think that at the outside there are only two members of the Opposition who would know anything at all about mining. All that the other nine members of the Opposition know about mining is "mining" their mate's beer on the bar while he goes out to the urinal, yet they pose as mining experts when a Bill like this is before the Committee.

I will not weary the Committee with a long and erudite oration. I know you are sitting there hopefully thinking that I will, Mr. Hewitt, but I am going to disappoint you, and probably other members of the Committee.

Let us deal with Greenvale as it is today. Right from its very inception, and because of the nature and the composition of the Greenvale consortium, the policy of the A.L.P., openly and overtly espoused, was, "Knock Greenvale. Stop Greenvale from getting off the mark and if it does get off the mark stop it from operating successfully." The real reason for that is that Greenvale is operated by a consortium and there is no payola for some of the leaders of the big trade unions in Queensland. It is very easy for a trade union leader to go to a company which is not part of a group and say, "We want a certain percentage of your pay-roll every fortnight. We want this concession and that concession and we want something else." It is impossible to make that approach to a group like the Greenvale consortium, which is composed of three, if not four, companies—perhaps the Treasurer can tell us that. There may even be more companies tangled up in it.

The State Government, too, is mixed up in it and so if the general manager of the Greenvale consortium said to his other mates, "Look, I have received a demand from this trade union leader or that trade union leader that I have to hand over some payola", the other members of the consortium would be likely to say, "No." What would be the position of the State Treasurer if he were advised, for instance, that some of the trade union leaders in Queensland had demanded payola from the Greenvale consortium? He would know that he could not agree to payola being handed over by the Greenvale company, because sooner or later it would have to be censured by the Auditor-General and mentioned in the Auditor-General's annual report to Parliament. That is the basic reason for the shocking and continual industrial unrest that has plagued the Greenvale company ever since it began building and doing something for North Queensland.

The real reason for the opposition by the A.L.P. and all its industrial union toadies to the Greenvale project is that Greenvale is in North Queensland. If Greenvale were down here, close to the Queen Street circle, they would be in favour of it. But it is not; it is in North Queensand. Consequently, the Townsville Trades and Labor Council, of which my A.L.P. opponent Mr. Alex Wilson is the president (he was recently re-elected to that position), and all the other A.L.P. toadies in Townsville give full backing to the A.L.P. policy of "knock Greenvale". They have done nothing but knock Greenvale at every possible opportunity.

Mr. Dean: Is this your Senate-election speech?

Mr. AIKENS: No, I shall deliver a much more fiery oration than this. I do not know that I will be elevated to the Senate. I think the honourable member will agree with me that such a move would be a gross denigration of my abilities. However, if it is in the interests of the people whom I serve, I will suffer that denigration.

The Queensland Trades and Labor Council, the A.L.P., the trade union branches in Townsville—there are not many of them left, Mr. Hewitt; if ever an organisation has been decimated, it is the A.L.P. in the Townsville area—and the A.L.P. toadies, as one one would expect, called to their assistance the riff-raff section of the James Cook University. Not all the people at the James Cook University are in the riff-raff section; it is really only a small group. However, like all riff-raff sections, it is very vociferous. Not long ago that riff-raff section formed an organisation called GASP—I think it stands for Group Association to Stop Pollution or something like that. It was under the control of a visiting lecturer in English at the James Cook University (I think his name was Spiers), a most obnoxious person. Of course, being obnoxious, he was welcomed with open arms by the A.L.P.

If I may digress a little, Mr. Hewitt——

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member has done that more than a little already. I hope he will relate his comments on GASP to Greenvale.

Mr. AIKENS: It all impinges on the Greenvale project, because GASP was going to take action there.

I should say that one of the finest jobs done by successive Townsville city councils —it was begun by the council of which I was a member, carried on by the council led by Angus Smith, and continued by the councils led by Harold Phillips and the honourable member for Townsville West—was to clean up all the stinking, festering mangrove swamps in the middle of Townsville. Those areas are now a credit to the councils. GASP and Wilson opposed the reclamation of mangrove swamps, and they were going to take similar action at Greenvale. They said, "When you fill in a mangrove swamp, you stop the mullet from swimming up amongst the mangrove roots and eating the soldier crabs that are their food."

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Let us get back to Greenvale.

Mr. AIKENS: The trouble experienced by the company at Greenvale is similar to that experienced by every other organisation in Australia today. It is the result, of course, of the shocking inflation arising from the machinations—many of them dishonest machinations—of the Whitlam Government and the way in which it has juggled with the Australian currency. I would not mind betting that if the scandalous Khemlani deal had come off and this country had been placed in pawn to the Arabs for $4,000 million, with certain A.L.P. politicians both inside and outside Parliament receiving a rake-off of $160 million, the Whitlam Government might have trickled a little bit of that to Greenvale. But there was no graft. The Khemlani deal did not come off. Consequently, Greenvale has to stand on its own feet and the Townsville people have to watch what happens. I can assure the Committee that they do watch with keen interest not only the back-stabbing tactics of the A.L.P. and the trade union movement but also—not the empty vapourings of the honourable member for Port Curtis—what is done by the Treasurer with regard to the saving of Greenvale.

I do not know how far Greenvale has gone into the red as the result of inflation caused by the direct action of the Whitlam Government and its juggling of the currency. The Treasurer might inform us about that at the second-reading stage. It is true that Greenvale is struggling to survive; it is true that the A.L.P. wants it to crash; it is true that the trade union movement wants it to go bust; and it is true that the riff-raff section of the James Cook University wants it to go bust. But it is equally true that this Government wants to save it and that the great mass of people in North Queensland want it to be saved. So the issue is quite clear-cut. It is a matter of whose side one is on. Is one on the side of those who want to knock Greenvale, that is, the A.L.P. and the trade union movement, or is one on the side of this Government, which wants to save Greenvale?

Having put those salient facts to the Committee, I finish on a warning note. You have been in Parliament a considerable time, Mr. Hewitt. You have served Parliament with distinction to yourself and credit to the State. You have heard me say this before, and you know it to be true: time always vindicates me. I have made statements in this Chamber and subsequently people have said, "Tom is drawing a long bow there. That can't possibly happen." But it has happened. I do not wish to embarrass you in your position, Mr. Hewitt, but you know I have been vindicated in the past.

Today I say that the very thing that is happening at Greenvale is going to happen at Duchess with the phosphate deposits. The A.L.P. and the trade union leaders in North Queensland who toady to the A.L.P. are going to do all they possibly can to stop that project getting off the ground. They are going to stop the phosphate deposits adding to the wealth and prosperity of North Queensland. Those deposits could benefit North Queensland, but that sort of thing is anathema to the A.L.P. It is anathema to the honourable member for Port Curtis; it is anathema to every toady to the A.L.P., whether he happens to be at the James Cook University or elsewhere.

I will be in this Chamber when many of the present members are not even faint memories. As a matter of fact one will not even be able to smell where they sat.

Mr. Moore: Have you given the Senate away?

Mr. AIKENS: I may be in the Senate. Wherever I am, it will not matter. Wherever I am I will be serving the people. I am an old man. I have gone grey in the service of the people, and I am proud of it.

We must be on our guard. I feel sure that the Treasurer will be on his guard. I am also sure that the Premier will be on his guard, and that every member of the Government will be on his guard to see that the A.L.P. and the trade union movement do not do with the Duchess phosphate project what they have been trying to do, and have almost done, by knocking Greenvale.

Hon. Sir GORDON CHALK (Lockyer—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (3.5 p.m.), in reply: As normal procedure one might leave his reply to many things that have been said until the second-reading stage. That gives one an opportunity to study what has been said and to give a considered opinion in reply. On this occasion, as one

who has lived with the Greenvale project from its infancy, there is no need for me to call upon my officers or refer to departmental records to be able to indicate to the Committee just what the Greenvale story is.

I propose to preface my remarks by replying to the points raised by the honourable member for Port Curtis. One was that I am handling this legislation. It is true that this legislation normally comes within the ambit of the Premier's Department. The Premier introduced the original Bill and the amendments to it. Because of the nature of this Bill, its financial implications and some of the points that it was anticipated would be raised by the Opposition, it was considered by Cabinet that it would be better to entrust to me as Treasurer the responsibility for introducing this Bill because I have been so closely associated with the total financial dealings relative to this project.

Mr. Aikens: There is delegation of authority in your party but none in the A.L.P.

Sir GORDON CHALK: I cannot answer that, but what the honourable member has said is probably true.

It is not a matter of the Premier ducking the situation in any way. It is a question of entrusting the matter to one who has been closely associated with it and is able readily to provide the Opposition with the answers to the questions that they have raised.

As the honourable member for Townsville South said, this project has been knocked in many places. I well recall the former honourable member for Townsville West (Mr. Tucker) time after time raising issues in this Chamber to the detriment of the Greenvale project and Townsville in general. Some of his remarks caused some of the difficulties which have confronted this project.

I shall deal not with the past, but with the situation as it is at present. There is need to clarify the whole situation. The honourable member for Port Curtis made quite a song and dance about the fact that the Queensland Government had guaranteed some $80,000,000 for this project. He wanted to know what the equity position was. The guarantee provided by the Queensland Government is not a guarantee to some overseas organisation. We have guaranteed the funds invested in this undertaking by Australian lenders. The majority of the risk funds in the undertaking comes from overseas. It should be realised that German and Japanese interests and United States lenders have the majority of the money in this project as risk capital, with no chance of getting any recoupment from the State if the ship sank, and that we have not previously guaranteed outside finance. We have encouraged Australians to finance this project and we have guaranteed them. That is the Government's attitude to the guarantees which we have provided in the past.

Let no member say outside this Chamber that we are assisting some multi-national overseas company. My biggest problem in the meeting at Melbourne was not to get the overseas lenders to come in with larger funds, but rather to convince Australian lenders that there was a vital need for them to allow their funds to remain within this project because Queensland had every confidence in its ultimate success. That is the position as it presently stands.

May I take the time of the Committee to give what I might describe as the Greenvale story? I believe it is essential, particularly for the younger members in the Chamber, to make known this project's background. I travelled in the first aircraft to fly over the Greenvale nickel deposit. It had previously been passed over by geologists, but after it was located a decision was made that someone might develop the nickel deposit. At that time Metals Ex, which was a small Australian organisation, was interested. It had lease rights but what might be described as little know-how. However, the company had a keen desire to see the project successfully established. It was through that company's endeavours that Freeport Sulphur of New York was induced to join the undertaking.

Much has been said in this country about the need for Australian equity in large undertakings. When this project was first proposed, it was hawked around Australia—and I use that term deliberately—by both Metals Ex and this Government to see what funds could be raised. The maximum amount of capital available in Australia for this project was in the vicinity of $40,000,000. I was one who went to the United States to discuss with Freeport Sulphur the possibility of its assisting in the raising of approximately $130,000,000. One of the members of Freeport's board had access through German banking connections to funds available in Zurich. They were the people who canvassed for and were able to obtain the $130,000,000 necessary, together with the $40,000,000 of partners' capital, to allow the project to get under way.

We as the Government hammered out a contract with them. That was in terms similar to those that have been entered into previously with other mining companies. The company provided every dollar of capital and accepted total responsibility for development of the project. Queensland received a completely new railway line and the necessary locomotives and rolling-stock. The money for that did not come out of the coffers of this State's Treasury but rather from funds provided by the proprietors of the project.

As time went on after the project was commenced, it became evident that the original estimates in feasibility studies had

not adequately provided for the ever-increasing inflationary trend. When it became evident that the cost of this project would be something like $223,000,000, the State Government, appreciating the difficulties experienced in raising $130,000,000, decided that it would be advantageous to raise additional money in Australia rather than approach the original lenders. That was the basis on which the original $50,000,000 was guaranteed. Certain insurance companies and banking interests did come into the project at that time. So the project continued. It then had something like $223,000,000.

As has been said in this Chamber by one or two previous speakers, the inflationary trend continued and because of that there was a need for additional finance when the project was nearing completion, and those who were involved were again able to come to the rescue. I believed at that particular time that provided the output of the project ran to schedule, the cash flow from the sale of the product would be sufficient to give the project liquidity so that it could, as it were, live within its own means.

There were some difficulties that were somewhat unforeseen. One of the major difficulties was dealt with this morning by the honourable member for Townsville. The Leader of the Opposition rightly asked why this project did not use coal. The original analyses that were made into the cost structure of oil at the time the project's feasibility was studied and the orders were placed for the boilers and the other equipment involved showed that oil was the most economic fuel. Also at that particular time there was a need to be competitive in price structure if the product of the project was to be capable of being sold on the world market. Consequently, the design was based on the particular circumstances at that time.

No-one in this Chamber could have envisaged that the price of oil would increase by 500 per cent over the past four years. The figure quoted by the honourable member for Townsville is perfectly correct. He said that the anticipated figure for a year's operation to obtain maximum output of this particular project was $4,000,000. It is equally true that the figure today is approximately $19,800,000. What company in its infancy, or what organisation no matter how well planned, could possibly anticipate that in its teething years, when possibly there would be little or no profit at all, its cost factors in oil alone would rise to that extent? We have had something like a 30 per cent increase in the wage structure. That was anticipated to a large extent. But nowhere was there provision for something like an extra cost of $15,000,000 for fuel. It was because of that additional cost structure and, could I call it, a technical mishap or oversight in design that a crisis occurred two or three months ago.

The original tests of the Greenvale ore were made on the basis of cores, and these tests showed the need for a mixing of lower-grade ore, which was relatively close to the surface, and higher-grade ore, which was deep below the surface. But engineers do make mistakes. I am not saying that they did on this occasion, but that appears to be the case. In determining the equipment necessary for crushing the ore, they decided on a type of crusher that would handle quite capably the blended ore, but it did not prove capable of handling what I might describe as the higher-quality ore embedded in the harder stone or metal. This has been the cause of some of the problems at the treatment plant.

The productivity of the plant, instead of increasing as anticipated to approximately 60 per cent towards the end of April, fell considerably. There was need for a hold-up, and need for revision. Consequently, the cash flow that was expected from the sale of the product did not eventuate. I do not think any honourable member in this Chamber would condemn the management at Greenvale for those happenings. They cannot be blamed for the inflationary trend; nor can they be blamed for the extra cost of oil. They cannot be expected to take major responsibility for what might be described as a flaw in design. But these are the things that have to be grappled with.

A very crucial position was therefore reached. It is true, as the Leader of the Opposition said, that "The Australian Financial Review" published a story that said, in effect, that the project had seven days to live. It is known by many people that those who were the guaranteed lenders were somewhat shaken. They believed that they had the first claim on the Government, which they did, although it is doubtful whether they had the right to take the $70,000,000 out of the project the morning after default, or whether that $70,000,000 should be repayable over the period of time in which the loan was to mature. In that situation, a move was made to try to force the company into a position in which the Government would pay over the $70,000,000 and allow those who had provided the money to invest in what was considered to be a more profitable venture at that time, and possibly at a different rate of interest.

It was for those reasons that I decided to go to the meeting of the lenders in Melbourne. I was not asked to the meeting. In fact, at the beginning I was denied entry to it. But I went to that meeting for a purpose, because I had faith in Greenvale and I believed that the workers there were entitled to be protected. I also believed that those who went into this venture backed by the Queensland Government, and who were Australians, were not entitled to leave it, as it were, to overseas lenders to either succeed or lose their interest in this State. A major failure of that nature would have been to the detriment not only of Queensland

in the eyes of overseas lenders in the future, but also to the detriment of the State of Queensland and its workers. I therefore went to the meeting.

After a number of hours' discussion (we did not adjourn for lunch) there were certain people who believed that they had a right to see this issue through. Finally, late in the afternoon, we were at least able to come to a tentative arrangement, and I returned to Brisbane. A week or so later, we were able to get a draft agreement. That draft agreement had then to be approved by overseas lenders as well. Again, practically one whole night was spent making telephone calls around the world to ensure that what we had been able to hammer out in this country received acceptance from overseas investors. That was finally achieved. When that was achieved an agreement was drawn up and that agreement is the basis of this legislation.

I have been accused of rushing it through the Chamber. When we were discussing the issues, undertakings were given by the Government that this agreement would be ratified by the Parliament. I gave an undertaking that it would be completed before 31 August and that is the plan to which we have been working. Even after the agreement was signed certain problems arose because lenders were asking for certain other things. To some degree that was why I was in Chicago some four weeks ago, where I met the principals of Freeport Minerals Co. Freeport Queensland Nickel Inc. is a registered subsidiary of Freeport Minerals Co. The principals of Freeport Minerals wanted a full explanation of just what the position was in regard to this project. I was able to meet their chairman of directors both in Chicago and New York. I met other officers of their engineering and design section in New Orleans and to a man everyone is prepared to do all he and his organisation can to back this project.

We were able to hammer out answers to just a few of the other problems that were confronting the board of directors of Freeport Minerals. They wanted to have some discussions with some responsible member of the Queensland Govenment. This agreement has finally been accepted by all concerned. However, unless it is completed by Thursday or Friday morning of this week there just could be some slip between the cup and the lip. After my officers received this agreement and what might be described as the green light last Friday, Cabinet decided yesterday that it was essential in the interests of the project and, as I say, in the interests of the State's security, to ensure that this legislation was immediately passed through the Parliament and this Bill has therefore been brought forward today.

I believe that I have given the Committee, first of all, a clear run-down of the things that have eventuated and how this project got under way. It has not been without its difficulties. It is true, as the honourable member for Flinders has said, that there have been difficulties in relation to ecology and union problems. There have been difficulties also in contracts for the building of the railway, which stemmed from disagreements among contractors, and there was difficulty in obtaining labour. These are the problems that have to a degree bugged the project right through, but it is to the credit of those responsible for management that they have been able to overcome these difficulties and they now have sufficient liquidity to enable them to carry on.

One of the things that still concerns me and, of course, concerns those running the project is the price which the company is being charged for oil. I have given an undertaking to have discussions with the oil companies, particularly the Shell company. Very few people know that the Shell company has an investment of about $4,000,000 in this project. That is completely separate from the investment in the project itself. It is a facility provided by that company for the distribution of fuel, and I hope that the Shell company may be able to provide a better and—I think I might use this word—cheaper operation than that now existing.

While I was in Chicago, I took time to discuss with both the management and engineering sides of the operation the possibility of a switch-over to coal. It is true that about 70 per cent of the operation might be able to go over to coal; it is equally true that the cost of that would be in the vicinity of $10,000,000. When one takes into consideration the amortisation of the $10,000,000 over a period and the savings that would be effected, one sees that it is very doubtful whether the change-over would be of financial benefit; on the other hand, there is no assurance that the world market price for oil will remain as it is for ever and aye. It would be a straight-out gamble to spend $10,000,000 to go over to coal today when it is possible that there may be some reduction in the price of oil now or in time to come. Those are the problems that have confronted the Government, and those are the reasons why the legislation is before the Committee this afternoon.

I promised the Leader of the Opposition that I would not duck any of the questions that he asked, and I appreciate the fact that he has given me a copy of eight questions that were embodied in his speech. The Government has nothing to hide. As I said, it has full confidence in this project. It believes that the action it is taking is in the interests of Queensland, of those who are engaged on the project and of the development of North Queensland. I reiterate that I do not propose to duck any of the questions asked by the honourable gentleman, and I shall conclude my remarks by referring to them one by one.

He asked first what the present position is relative to the guarantee of future contracts. In telling my Greenvale story, I

omitted to tell the Committee of the original basis of agreement for this whole project. First, there was a determination of the proven resources of the field. The company then sold approximately 80 per cent of its known resources. It sold them under long-term arrangements and gave undertakings that deliveries would begin from a particular period. It laid down a price structure that provided for an escalation figure based on the price-structure escalation of nickel. There was no other basis on which the company could possibly write an increased price structure.

There has been an improvement in the price of nickel since the company made those arrangements; but, as the honourable member for Townsville said this morning, costs have increased by about 130 per cent and the price of nickel by only about 31 per cent. However, there is one important factor that the company is hoping will eventuate (I will not say "on which the company is gambling"). I suppose few people realise that the price structure of nickel is not set in this country. It is set principally by Inco, through its Canadian set-up, which has the major control of the nickel resources of the world. Consequently, the fact that the price structure has remained relatively steady recently has been due to the action taken by Inco.

On the other hand, it is believed by all those with whom I had conferences in the United States a fortnight or three weeks ago that there will be a substantial increase in the price of nickel in late September or early October. At that time of the year the cost structure throughout the world is reviewed and new prices arrived at. Consequently the company is hoping that there will be some increase in price.

Let me assure the Committee that contracts were in the safe of the Treasury before this undertaking ever came before the Committee. They were sighted by me and responsible departmental officers. As long as the company continues to function and provide the tonnages listed therein, those contracts are sound. They have provisions for escalation in keeping with the increase in the price structure of nickel.

As his next question the honourable member asked, "What are the present terms and conditions for the repayment of capital and interest?" I believe that the legislation we have brought down since the inception of the project answers that question. There is a guarantee; there are time factors. In the principal agreement there is a listing of when a return of capital would commence. That is one of the reasons why the legislation is here. It is here because certain interest is now falling due. It is here because the amortisation of certain capital is necessary. It is to the credit of all concerned that we have been able to arrange a deferral of, and an extension of time for, the payment of interest and capital.

The honourable member said that in earlier years the Premier had stated that more than $80,000,000 of State finance was involved, whereas I as Treasurer had mentioned $70,000,000, and he asked, "Just how much has the Government guaranteed?" I take it that the honourable member wrote down that question before I introduced the Bill. In my introductory remarks I clearly indicated the amount of money involved and how it was made up. Originally it was $50,000,000, and then there was $20,000,000. Now we have a figure which raises the total amount to $86,800,000. That is the amount that the State has guaranteed.

I was next asked, "How much has the Government now guaranteed and what is the security of the repayment?" The position is that the Government has guaranteed $86,800,000, which includes deferral of interest. As to the security for it, we have the first claim, as it were, over the venture. We have already a completed railroad. We have existing railway rolling-stock, which is handed over the moment the operation starts. We control the operations of the railway and the rolling-stock. We collect the total freight structure of the operation. In my opinion the $86,000,000 would be recoverable even if there were failure, but I do not believe there will be failure. I accept that there is an honest desire by all concerned to ensure that the project goes ahead.

I was asked whether the State Government had paid any interest under its guarantee, and when the payments fall due. The Government has paid nothing by way of interest. What the Government has done is arrange for a deferral of the interest that is due and payable, and covered by this legislation.

I was asked "Has the current production at Greenvale reached the originally estimated monthly level or is it short of these anticipated figures?" The original feasibility-study estimates of production have not been reached. The operation has achieved better than 60 per cent production, and it has had its problems at that figure. The technical officers with whom I spoke in the United States indicated to me that the problem can be overcome without any major shut-down, as it were, in the project. Everyone is hoping that the output anticipated in the feasibility studies will be reached by Christmas. If it does, it is expected that the cash flow will be sufficient to meet requirements.

The Leader of the Opposition asked what the present rate of production was and what level was required to make the project economically sound. I believe I have answered the major part of that question. On the matter of economic soundness, it is believed that, given a price-structure rise in September, at little better than 65 per cent production the project will at least maintain liquidity and ultimately bring the company to successful operation.

The honourable member then inquired about the present position of future contracts and asked if they are secured. At this stage the company has not gone seeking new contracts. As I said, it was committed already for 80 per cent of its output and, on the basis of committal of 80 per cent of output, there is no need to go looking for new contracts, not that they would not be acceptable to the company, because it is continuing to try to prove extra resources.

He then asked what reviews were made of the economic feasibility of the company at the time of the increased State Government commitments to it. The Government has examined very carefully every step it has taken. It has had additional feasibility figures, and it has had estimates taken, some provided by the company and some by my Under Treasurer and his officers. These things have been examined carefully. The Government has not gone into this project willy-nilly. It has gone in believing that what it is doing is in the best interests of the company and the people of Queensland.

The Leader of the Opposition said that the position at the first of the month appeared more promising.

Mr. Burns: It follows on from there, "Has that improvement continued?" There should be another bit there.

Sir GORDON CHALK: The improvement has continued. There is a problem relative to the time when it will be necessary to do a certain amount of changeover of machinery. At present certain crushers are in operation, and it looks as if an additional crusher will have to be put in. There are also some teething problems with what might be described as the by-product. These are a few bugs which are quite common in any industry but, unfortunately, the inflationary cost structure took from the company what might be termed the liquid finance it had and which it anticipated would be available to take it over this particular period. As I said, my information is that, by Christmas it is hoped that the production of the plant will be in keeping with what was anticipated originally.

The Leader of the Opposition asked if the improvement had been maintained and said that Parliament and the people are entitled to know. I hope that some honourable members will take a copy of my remarks this afternoon and see that they are circulated in certain areas. I have outlined an impromptu story of what has occurred based on what I know to be factual. I have outlined the happenings in series, step by step. Today we have a project that is employing some 1200 men. We have a project that is entirely different from any coal operation.

We have been accused of having sold the farm in our coal dealings; that we are exporting coal and getting nothing in return. The return to the State was one of the factors that caused the Government to encourage the Greenvale project. Not only is the ore to be mined at Greenvale and the railway to be constructed, and not only are railwaymen to be employed, but a treatment plant costing $120,000,000 odd has been provided at Townsville. Over all, something like 1,200 men will be employed. The treatment of this commodity in our own country will create greater opportunities for employment. Finally, it is to be sold on the markets of the world and exported throughout our ports, which again will provide additional employment.

Mr. Aikens: The A.L.P. wants to throw them on Whitlam's relief.

Sir GORDON CHALK: I do not know what the A.L.P. wants. However, I believe the Leader of the Opposition was sincere when he said that he wanted the project to go ahead. Any person in this country who does not want the project to go ahead should not call himself an Australian or a Queenslander.

I have no objection to the points raised by the Leader of the Opposition. On the other hand, I do object to those of the knocker from Port Curtis. I recognise that the Leader of the Opposition entered this debate sincere in purpose, seeking information. I believe that information has been given to him. However, the honourable member for Port Curtis, whose only concern was to get a hotel at Greenvale, has been prepared to knock and damn the project because he could not expand his liquor interests.

We have overcome difficulties of finance, and I believe that this is worth-while legislation that will provide security to the lenders, clear up the situation for the Government and provide, I hope, continued employment for Queenslanders for the betterment of this State and the community.

Motion (Sir Gordon Chalk) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

Bill presented and, on motion of Sir Gordon Chalk, read a first time.

SECOND READING

Hon. Sir GORDON CHALK (Lockyer—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (3.48 p.m.): I move—

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

I think I have clearly indicated to the House the purpose of the legislation. There is nothing I can add at this stage. However, any members, including the Leader of the Opposition, now have an opportunity to reply to any of the comments I have made. If they choose to do so, I will avail myself of the opportunity to answer them in my reply.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (3.49 p.m.): It makes it difficult to discharge one's responsibility properly when a Bill of six pages is placed in one's hands just as one is rising to speak on it. It is rather ridiculous to be debating the second reading while the attendants are still distributing the Bill. No matter what rationale is used, that cannot be regarded as a fair go or a reasonable way to consider legislation relating to $86,000,000 guarantees and 3,000 jobs. It certainly is not the proper way to be conducting the business of the Parliament and the State. If Government members see nothing wrong with such a procedure, we have reached a farcical situation.

However, I wish to raise a number of matters. This morning I omitted to mention that in the list of Australian lenders to the project is included Patrick-Intermarine (Aust) Ltd. It has been suggested that this company is involved in this project to the tune of some millions of dollars; in fact, I think the figure is $7,000,000. I ask the Treasurer: what is the position in relation to this particular group? It is under intense investigation at the present time and I believe it is in the hands of liquidators. It is my view that a large number of people involved with that company should end up in court as a result of their activities. Patrick-Intermarine (Aust) Ltd. is one company that we as a Government have guaranteed. The Deputy Premier said today that all of the Australian lenders, with the exception of the A.N.Z. Bank, are the ones whose money we are guaranteeing.

A Government Member: The repayment.

Mr. BURNS: Yes. If this $7,000,000 from Patrick-Intermarine has to be withdrawn, we might have to move in and make up the $7,000,000.

Mr. Greenwood: It is already lent.

Mr. BURNS: Yes, but if the liquidator decides to sell up that company's assets or to use its money to pay off the people who have investments in that group, obviously we will have to come to the party.

Sir Gordon Chalk: We won't. If those people have put $7,000,000 in, it will be returned to them at the appropriate time. Under the liquidation, they will collect when the time comes.

Mr. BURNS: I will be interested to see how that happens. I suppose that the matter will be in the hands of the liquidators.

The State Government Insurance Office is also involved at that particular level. On the S.G.I.O., I think that the point made by the honourable member for Port Curtis is quite a good one. Because of the amount of money we are guaranteeing, it is probably in our interests to have someone on the board of this company and, as the S.G.I.O. is among the lenders to the organisation, representing the Government, probably someone from the S.G.I.O. should be appointed to that position.

The Deputy Premier said also that 80 per cent of the material coming from Greenvale was subject to contracts of sale. What worries me about this project is the different stories we keep getting. On 29 November 1974, Mr. Hare said that the total output of the plant was the subject of contracts of sale. Today, the Deputy Premier said 80 per cent is. I am not denying that the Deputy Premier is right. What I am worried about is that all we seem to read about companies that go broke is that some of the earlier statements about them were not correct, that some of the statements given to the investors, lenders and other people involved were untrue. It is then too late because the money has gone.

As I said earlier today, we want the project to continue and we want the jobs. At the same time, we are talking about a lot of money. I strongly supported the Treasurer's view when I picked up the paper one morning and read that the bankers were asking us to come good with our $70,000,000. We would have been placed in the position of worrying not only about the jobs for the people at Greenvale but also about how we could take $70,000,000 out of the State's economy to overcome the problem as well as prop up the company.

The two partners in this company that originally demanded of us a guarantee for their loans are major international companies. It seems passing strange that right at the start they demanded from us a guarantee for their loan raising and that companies of that stature—world-wide companies—did not foresee the problems. Or perhaps they did, and brought us in to help bolster them up. Thus we became involved. I am not being critical or personal in this. I am trying to sort out in my own mind what has actually happened and to try to get to the facts.

The Deputy Premier said also that everybody is hoping that production will reach predicted levels by Christmas. That is not the way to go into a business deal—with everybody merely hoping. On 6 June we were told that the project's capacity was 67 per cent oxide and 15 per cent sulphite.

We were also told by the Deputy Premier that he could predict an increase in the price of nickel. This is very nice to know. But how does he reach this conclusion?

There was a very interesting article in July concerning Metals Ex. and its problems of pricing, which made the same point that the Deputy Premier made, that is, that the price of nickel-ore or of the nickel product is controlled by the Canadian group Inco. Because of its size and corporate strength, Inco has in the past worked fairly rough deals on nickel producers, including

those in the Greenvale project. It was able finally to force a reduction in the price of the products of some of its competitors.

Queensland is basing its forward planning on the Deputy Premier's prediction of a rise in the price of nickel. As I said, it seems strange that some questions on Queensland involvement are unanswered but the Deputy Premier can predict international prices. Between December 1970 (when the original Bill was brought down) and the present time, there has been a major collapse of nickel prices, and in many ways this has been brought about by manipulation by the Canadian group. How can we trust forward prediction on this evidence, especially as that same group is reported to be involved in the establishment of a major plant in Indonesia, where the investment figure is said to be around $600,000,000. No-one could convince me that this group that has already used its power to manipulate the price of nickel will not do it again when it gets such a project operating in a low-wage country like Indonesia. It's not a matter of being a knocker; it's a matter of wanting to be sure that we do not place a large section of our own community in peril as well as the Freeport investment.

Other considerations are involved, too. It has been drawn to my attention that when the Greenvale project was started it was of a size, scale and type not previously known throughout the world. We put our faith in this group and its management, and I believe it could have been faith misplaced. I do not deny that the Government did its best. I do not think that anyone would deliberately set out to create a situation in which the State would lose money and others would be thrown out of work. Certainly it has been a very difficult period, and I fervently hope that it will not be necessary in the future to legislate further for this project. I hope that never again will the jobs of the Greenvale workers be threatened or the State faced with an $86,000,000 payout that it really can't afford.

Mr. HANSON (Port Curtis) (3.57 p.m.): I do not intend to prolong the debate unduly. In racing parlance, all Opposition members hope that a favourite comes in on this project; it certainly does not look like what is commonly known as a shortener. The Treasurer, of course, would know the significance of that remark, because through devious means he is able to get a collection of shorteners before he reaches the course every Saturday. Incidentally, he is not averse to trying to get a bit over the odds, either.

However, I desire to take some issue with him over the management and the management structure of this enterprise. Those who we were told were well acquainted with technical know-how in the treatment of lateritic ore should have been aware of the vast amount of technical knowledge available throughout the world today. However, I note that recently Mr. Loy Hennessy, a former general manager of Mt. Morgan Limited, was seconded to the Greenvale enterprise, and I can assure the House that this very knowledgeable and capable engineer will do his utmost to get the project off the ground. I know full well the success that he has had in other mining ventures. He has a vast knowledge of mining engineering, and I personally wish him considerable success.

I do not want to go behind the door on a single issue or suggest anything that I did not raise in my speech on the initiation of this Bill. The Government, in view of its obvious equity and its avowed and professed interest in this project, should seek representation on the board of this company. We have listened to the Treasurer telling us at length the history of the enterprise, how he attended board meetings and how he met directors in the four corners of the globe trying to get the enterprise onto a viable plane. If a senior Minister of the Government becomes involved in this way, I see no reason why a representative of the Government should not have a seat on the board. There are people with the expertise necessary to serve in this capacity.

Mr. Ahern: Who would you suggest?

Mr. HANSON: Very many people who believe in the Labor philosophy would be only too happy to serve. They would be well qualified and, incidentally, would do a wonderful job. I might say that there is nothing unusual in the proposal. An engineering company in Bundaberg which faced financial difficulties recently has the Director of Industrial Development, Sir David Muir, on its board. Since he joined the board of directors the position of that company has improved considerably. I do not say that he has been the direct cause of the improvement, but I mention that in passing.

The present board of directors of Greenvale are supposed to possess considerable engineering and technical skill but a Government representative on the board might bring with him a greater awareness of the Government's attitude, and that of the public, as well as information about world trends concerning the operations of similar and competitive concerns.

Australia's greatest nickel producer is the Western Mining group, located principally in Western Australia. Over the years that group has been involved in all types of mining activity. It has been a large employer of labour and has made a significant contribution to the Australian mining industry. In the 1970's when it was obvious there would be a considerable slump in the mining industry, the worst effects of the recession on the Western Mining group were cushioned by long-term contracts and it was able successfully to ride out many a storm.

The world steel industry, a major user of nickel, has cut back on its orders. This is something that has not been mentioned in the debate. This cut-back has naturally had a very detrimental effect on the industry. Despite the snide comments of the honourable member for Flinders and the suggestions made by the honourable member for Townsville, the occasional little industrial confrontation has not been a major cause of the slump which has led to the company's difficulties. Of course, long-term contracts are the bread and butter of many of these large-scale mining concerns. A large percentage of their product is sold on the world free market. This sometimes occurs in the sugar industry in this State. Unfortunately there have been very few occasions when the free-market price has been higher than the contract or official market price for sugar.

Let me get back to Western Mining Corporation. It is an Australian company, and it has within its structure people who, at the request of the Queensland Government, would be willing to serve on a board such as the one to which I am referring and give it the benefit of their expertise. When the company saw the slump in 1971, when production outstripped consumption throughout the world by about 175,000 tonnes, it shrewdly continued production at the maximum rate and stockpiled supplies overseas, and it was then in a strong position when demand suddenly improved. That, of course, has been of benefit to it. It is a company that is not only well versed in problems of supply and demand; it is also very well acquainted with problems of concentrating, refining and smelting. If the Government had engaged the services of people with experience such as that, I do not think the Greenvale project would have been in jeopardy, as it was at the end of May. Government funds would have been more secure, and I think that taxpayers generally would have felt that their interests were being better protected.

In company with the Leader of the Opposition, I note with interest the involvement of Intercontinental Nickel in a project in Indonesia. It proposes to spend about $600,000,000 on a plant in that country that is expected to produce about 1,000,000 lb of nickel in a year. The enterprise will be based on lateritic deposits, which are completely different from those available at Poseidon and in the Western Mining Corporation area. It will also receive the benefits of low-cost wages, and thus may be able to flood the free markets of the world, as distinct from markets being supplied under long-term contracts. That is one of the worries being faced by the company at Greenvale.

I know that the Treasurer has many hopes. He has expressed pious hopes in the Chamber this afternoon. As a punter, naturally he believes that he is always on the favourite. All I can say is that I am not backing another horse but I, too, will be hoping that his particular fancy gets up, and that the company will continue to provide employment for young people for many years to come.

Mr. Burns: With someone else's money.

Mr. HANSON: Yes, with someone else's money.

The Opposition is very apprehensive about the fact that the lenders are people who are well versed in the ramifications of international finance and who reputedly have expertise in financial management. We certainly hope that the Government has not been placed in a position in which it will act as guarantor and the profits that accrue to the enterprise will go principally to people outside the guarantee—to the lenders overseas and to those who have a second charge —and the Government will not receive the profits to which it is justly entitled. I hope that, as the Treasurer suggested on this occasion and as the Premier suggested when introducing the original Bill, a very detailed examination of the financial arrangements has been made, that Government equity has been preserved, and that in the years to come the people of Queensland will not regret that this legislation was introduced.

Mr. GREENWOOD (Ashgrove) (4.10 p.m.): As I understood the Leader of the Opposition, he suggested that, before we propped up these two great international corporations by giving guarantees, we should have had second thoughts and, having had second thoughts, perhaps we should not have done it.

We should keep very clearly in mind just what the genesis of this particular scheme was. My understanding is that those two international corporations, wealthy as they are, were quite unable to find the finance needed for this vast undertaking from their own resources. The amount of money they were able to put in was of the order of $40,000,000 from Freeport Sulphur through its subsidiary Freeport Queensland Nickel, Incorporated and about $27,000,000 from Metals Exploration through its subsidiary Metals Exploration Qld. Pty. Ltd. Therefore that figure of about $67,000,000, when considering something in excess of $260,000,000, is not very great. To get the whole project off the ground, the partners had to seek large sums of money from overseas. They did this in a large measure from overseas lenders. I believe the Kreditanstalt Fur Wiede Rauf Bau in Germany and the Export-import Bank of the U.S. supplied funds, as did Japanese lenders, too. Even after they had got about $140,000,000 from those sources, there was still a shortfall of about $70,000,000, and that was financed from within this country.

When we talk about this Government giving guarantees for $70,000,000, what we are talking about is not giving guarantees to overseas people so much as giving guarantees to Australian lenders in Australia who are

trying to get an Australian project off the ground. It is to them for the most part that the guarantees were given by the Queensland Government. It is people like the A.M.P., M.L.C., T. & G., C.M.L. and National Mutual who are the recipients of these guarantees of $70,000,000. Far from being able to agree with the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition, I fundamentally disagree with him and say that we should thoroughly endorse, support and applaud the efforts of the State Government in giving those guarantees in order to get this very important project off the ground in Queensland.

The point made by the honourable member for Port Curtis was that in some way the State Government did not understand the principles of international finance. He even went so far as to suggest that somebody who shared the philosophy he represents—by that I understood him to mean the socialist philosophy of the Australian Labor Party—should go on to the board. Might I remind the honourable member for Port Curtis that it is those whose philosophy he shares, who, through the Exchange Control Department of the Reserve Bank, are now in effect putting an embargo upon borrowings overseas for a greater term than seven years? It is virtually impossible to borrow overseas for longer than a seven-year term without overcoming a most difficult series of obstacles with the Reserve Bank. That is the sort of international-finance expertise which presumably the honourable member would like to import into the board room of such an important industrial undertaking—an international expertise which would prevent that sort of long-term, stable borrowing which is so important to a long-term project such as this.

Hon. Sir GORDON CHALK (Lockyer—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (4.15 p.m.), in reply: I have very little to say in reply. The points made by the Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member for Port Curtis were canvassed fairly well at the introductory stage.

I appreciate the concern expressed by the Leader of the Opposition about what he has described as rushing this Bill through. I believe that, wherever possible, we should deal with legislation in such a way that there is an opportunity for all honourable members to study it carefully. Without enlarging on the circumstances, I tried to indicate in presenting the Bill to the Chamber that there was need for urgency. I assure the honourable gentleman that it is not my usual practice to follow the procedure I adopted today. At some appropriate time and place I can explain to him a little more fully why I adopted the procedure on this occasion.

Mr. Burns: Even half an hour to read the Bill would have been helpful.

Sir GORDON CHALK: Thoughts come to us, perhaps, at inappropriate times. I discussed with the Leader of the Opposition the fact that the Bill was being introduced, and I informed him and my own members about it late yesterday. Out of courtesy I probably should have entrusted him with a copy of the Bill. I am not altogether apologising, but I indicate that, if I had thought of it, it would have been made available to him because I consider it to be non-political legislation that is important to the people of Queensland and the Government.

Mr. Houston: Quite obviously you did not pass that message to your colleagues; they indulged in a political debate.

Sir GORDON CHALK: I shall not enter into that. I have tried to indicate the need for this legislation.

Naturally, production is causing us some concern. The Leader of the Opposition said, I think, that it was Mr. Hare who said that the total reserves were sold. I believe my "Hansard" pull will show that, at the time, I said that we had the feasibility study, that the approval of the Government had been given and that we had in our safe in the Treasury contracts covering the sale of 80 per cent of the output. I believe that a little more has been sold since then but I do not know whether it amounts to 100 per cent. However, I do know that we had contracts for more than 80 per cent at that time.

A question was asked about faults in the manufacture of equipment. Perhaps there were one or two oversights but, as I said earlier, engineers, like parliamentarians or other persons charged with responsibility for administration, make mistakes. I am assured that those things can be overcome.

The honourable member for Port Curtis was more temperate in his approach on this occasion. He made a more worth-while speech. I commend him for having seen the error of his ways at the introductory stage. He referred to the change in management. There has been a change in management. Mr. Loy Hennessy has been put in control. When that happened, I sent a telegram to the Chairman of Directors in New York complimenting the company on his appointment. I believe he has the managerial ability which is essential for this company. I am not reflecting on those who were in charge in the past, but certain developments require the full attention of a manager such as Mr. Hennessy.

Ken Fletcher was one of the persons originally associated with the financial side of this project. He has done an extremely good job. In the very early stages he was ably assisted on the administrative and legal side by a man named Mr. Geoff Howard, who ultimately left the company. I was sorry to see him leave at the time he did, because I believed his services were required. That left Mr. Fletcher somewhat on his own, although he obtained advice from others who joined the organisation. I agree with the

honourable member for Port Curtis that Mr. Loy Hennessy is capable of doing a very good job.

The other point made by the honourable member related to the appointment of a Government representative to the board of this organisation. The point he misses is that this is not a company, but a partnership between Metals Exploration Queensland Pty. Ltd. and Freeport Queensland Nickel, Incorporated, a company incorporated in the State of Delaware in the United States of America. I emphasise that Metals Exploration Queensland Pty. Ltd. is not really an international company. It is an Australian company the parent of which is Metals Exploration. Those two companies have linked together to undertake this project. What I did—and I believe it was done wisely—was to invest a small amount in the undertaking through the auspices of the State Government Insurance Office. It is no secret that we did that to have a voice at every meeting of the lenders who are guaranteed by the Government.

I have a very high regard for the ability, tenacity and, on many occasions, the forcefulness of Mr. Eric Riding, who is Chairman of the Board of the State Government Insurance Office. On all occasions he has sat in as a lender at meetings of representatives of the companies that have been guaranteed by the Government. He has always been in a position to advise me about those meetings.

This morning I mentioned that at the meeting of lenders that I attended in Melbourne, there were some 27 lenders in the room. At first, as I had no invitation, I was not admitted. However, I was told to return at 11 o'clock, by which time they would have considered whether they would hear me. When I received an invitation to join them, I obtained advice from one who had been at the meeting. That was extremely helpful to me. The information was conveyed, I believe, without any breach of faith, because the S.G.I.O. is part of the operations of this Government.

I hope that what we have set out this afternoon to achieve becomes a reality. The honourable member for Port Curtis termed it a pious hope. From my point of view, it is a hope that the project will not run into any industrial difficulties but will be able to overcome its technical problem and, if given equal opportunity to compete on the world nickel market, will prove itself worth while and for the benefit of the State.

Motion (Sir Gordon Chalk) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

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

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

Bill, on motion of Sir Gordon Chalk, read a third time.

COLONEL DANIEL EDWARD EVANS (WILLIAM PARRY MEMORIAL BURSARY) BILL

INITIATION

Hon. V. J. BIRD (Burdekin—Minister for Education and Cultural Activities) (4.26 p.m.): I move—

"That leave be given to introduce a Bill to make further provision with respect to the appointment and constitution of a committee for the purpose of carrying out the terms of a trust provided for in the will of the late Colonel Daniel Edward Evans; and that so much of the Standing Orders relating to private Bills be suspended so as to enable the said Bill to be introduced and passed through all its stages as if it were a public Bill."

In 1960, the Legislative Assembly considered and gave its approval to a Bill which established certain conditions to give effect to the last wishes of one of Queensland's best-known engineers, the late Colonel Daniel Edward Evans, whose name is carried on in the title of the company Evans Deakin Industries. Under the terms of Colonel Evans's will, dated 16 November 1951, he directed that one-half of his estate should be divided into 20 equal parts and that two of such parts be invested in the name of his trustee; the net annual income from this investment to be used to award an annual education bursary for an apprentice in an engineering trade in the Bundaberg engineering district.

In stating his wishes in his will, Colonel Evans required that the bursary winner be selected each year by a committee appointed by his trustee and comprising a director and the foreman engineer of the Bundaberg Foundry, "preferably officers who have served under the late William Parry", and a representative of the Queensland Education Department, preferably one dealing with technical education.

The late William Parry referred to was an engineer foreman at the Bundaberg Foundry in about 1902, with whom Colonel Evans served part of his apprenticeship. That Colonel Evans wished to endow a bursary in Mr. Parry's name is ample evidence of the high regard in which he held Mr. Parry throughout his adult life. His wishes were embodied in the Act now under review—the Colonel Daniel Edward Evans (William Parry Memorial Bursary) Act of 1960.

The trustee of the Evans estate is the Union-Fidelity Trustee Company of Australia Limited.

Bursaries have been awarded annually to Bundaberg district engineering apprentices upon selection by the local committee, on which my department is represented by the principal of the Bundaberg Technical College.

The bursary in 1975 is valued at $2,200 and the bursary fund at present stands at $24,650. In the past 10 years, $12,400 has been paid out and some hundreds of apprentices have benefited.

For a number of years, the local committee has been under the guidance of a well-known Bundaberg businessman, Mr. Robert Gibson. I am sure that honourable members who know Mr. Gibson would agree that administration of the bursary could not be in better hands than his.

I would draw attention again to the provision of the existing legislation that the bursary selection committee be appointed by the trustee (that is, the Union-Fidelity Trustee Company) and that it comprise a director and the foreman engineer of the Bundaberg Foundary, preferably officers who have served under the late William Parry.

Recently, Mr. Robert Gibson and the Union-Fidelity Trustee Company drew our attention to the fact that it would be increasingly difficult to meet these requirements in future years. Links with Mr. Parry were disappearing with the passage of time, and they felt it desirable that the requirements of the Act be broadened somewhat. The local committee and the directors of the Bundaberg Foundry have officially concurred in this view, and the legislation now being introduced is designed to give effect to these wishes.

The Bill provides for the bursary selection committee to continue to be appointed by the trustee. Further, two of the three committee members will continue to be nominated by the board of directors of the Bundaberg Foundry Limited, and one shall preferably be a person associated with the engineering trades or profession. One committee member will continue to be an officer of the Department of Education, preferably one involved with technical training.

However, there is also provision for the foundry's board to nominate somebody other than a person associated with engineering if, in the board's opinion, there is no-one readily available who is associated with engineering. Similarly, if a suitable technical education officer of my department is not available, the trustee may appoint some other officer from the department.

Opportunity has been taken to add some other provisions to the legislation to cover matters such as terms of appointment of committee members and removal of members. These matters are not covered in the existing Act.

I am sure honourable members will agree that the proposed amendments are desirable so that there is no possibility of interruption to Colonel Evans's programme of assistance for Bundaberg and district apprentices. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (4.32 p.m.): Having listened to the Minister, I think most members would agree that the Bill is somewhat of a machinery nature. It is important that we acknowledge the various requests made in wills, and that we do what we can to remove the problems that can arise in their administration. I sometimes think that mistakes in wills become lawyers' gold mines and executors' nightmares.

It seems that this legislation will overcome at least some of the problems arising in the appointment of the committee. It is important that we have educational trusts and encourage people to become benefactors, as many who have gained from society would like to see others benefit from their gains. I note also that the Minister has looked ahead, and I hope that there will be no administrative problems arising from the Bill. However, we will have to look at the legislation and, if necessary, comment further on it.

I take this opportunity to make some other comments because, as new members especially will note, the Minister sought leave to suspend the Standing Orders relating to private Bills for the purpose of introducing this legislation. The difficulty of introducing private Bills has been a rather sore point with me for some time, and I should like to make some comments on it. It would probably be worth while for honourable members, especially those who are new here, to go through Standing Rules and Orders and observe the hang-ups that there are in this Legislature when a Bill is to be introduced by a member other than a Minister. I refer honourable members to page 57 of the Standing Rules and Orders, where Standing Order 285 provides—

> "A Private Bill shall not be initiated in the House but upon a Petition first presented and received, with a printed copy of the proposed Bill annexed; and such Petition shall be signed by one or more of the persons applying for leave to introduce the Bill."

Standing Order 286 provides—

> "A Petition for a Private Bill shall commence by setting forth that, within the three months previous to its presentation to the House, the public notice required by the Standing Rules and Orders has been duly given, setting forth the general objects of the Bill and the intention to apply for leave to bring it in, and shall conclude with a true statement of the general objects of the Bill, and a prayer for leave to bring it in; and the production of the numbers of the Gazette and newspaper or newspapers containing the notice shall be sufficient proof of the notice."

It is obvious that bringing in a private Bill is quite a task, and it is no wonder that the Minister sought leave to suspend these and other Standing Orders relating to this form of legislation. But in practice it is far more difficult. Before the petition is presented, a member has to produce a draft copy of the Bill. This is a huge task, because it has to be in the appropriate Bill form. It is therefore necessary to send it to the Parliamentary Draftsman, or Counsel as we now call him. It would necessarily have to be printed by the Government Printing Office, and there would have to be sufficient copies available. It has been suggested to me that a sufficient number would be approximately 200.

The Bill has to be free of all the technical problems that could arise because of our Standing Orders such as that the preamble must clearly state the objects or the intentions of the person bringing it forward. This is vitally important. It must also state the actual grievance which prompts this person to bring forward the legislation. As I said, honourable members should note that such a person must advertise in the Government Gazette, in a Brisbane newspaper and in a newspaper which circulates in the area in which the grievance has arisen. All these advertisements must clearly state all the general objects of the Bill. Such advertisements must be inserted once a week for four consecutive weeks.

Then we come to the petition to Parliament. This is presented to Parliament with a printed copy of the Bill annexed to it, but before doing this one must prove in the petition that one has done all these other things. The petition must contain a true statement of the objects already stated and must conclude with a prayer.

Mr. Moore: What are you talking about?

Mr. WRIGHT: I think it is an important comment, and I would ask the honourable member simply to listen. One must produce all the evidence as to carrying out Standing Orders regarding putting things in the Government Gazette, the newspapers, etc. If the petition is received a fresh notice of motion has to be given for leave to bring the Bill into the House. We come back then to Standing Order 287, which states that the Bill must be brought in within 30 days of the petition being printed. Again one must have sufficient copies of the Bill and these must be made available to the Clerk of the Parliament.

There is another technicality before the Bill may be read a first time. The sponsor must pay $50 into Consolidated Revenue and he must produce a receipt. After the private Bill has been read a first time, the sponsor has to then give another notice of motion to appoint a select committee. This select committee must consist of not less than five and not more than nine members of Parliament.

The powers of the select committee are clearly shown in Standing Orders 290 to 294. The committee has the right to require of the person sponsoring the Bill proof of the allegations contained in the preamble. It can hear counsel if desired. It can make amendments and can hear objections other members might desire to bring forward. The committee then reports to the Parliament either for or against the Bill. I am told that if the committee reports against, there is some type of motion of rejection, but if it is in favour, the Bill is then ordered to be read a second time on a future day.

That is just a brief outline of the problems a member would have if he did not have the power to seek leave to move for the suspension of Standing Orders. It has been said to me by some Government members that that is not so, that all a person has to do is rise in the Chamber as a private member and, just like a Minister did, give notice that tomorrow he will move that a certain type of Bill be introduced. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that if those members had spoken to you, they would have found that the procedure is not as simple as that, and that if notice was given, the Bill would come under general business and it would be up to you, Mr. Speaker, to decide when it would come on. Finally, as we know, it would simply be defeated.

I stress to honourable members the importance of appreciating this, because people in the community think that we have virtually almighty power. They just do not understand our role as members of Parliament. This is not a problem faced only by the individual citizen; private members, too, do not understand their role in the Legislature. They do not understand in fact how ineffective private members can be. Whilst a Minister can seek leave of the House to have the Standing Orders suspended, we notice that throughout history very few private members or Government members or back-benchers, call them what you like, have ever been able to bring in private Bills.

To find the most recent Bills introduced under this petition system provided by the Standing Orders, I went back through copies of "Hansard". In 1914 the Honourable J. W. Blair, who was the honourable member for Ipswich and held the position of Secretary for Public Instruction—in other words the Minister for Education—introduced two pieces of legislation; firstly, the Longreach School of Arts Bill and, secondly, the Boonah Showgrounds Bill. Another Bill was introduced in that year by the Honourable J. Tolmie. Between 1925 and 1931 only seven Bills were introduced by Government back-bencher's by the procedure of moving for the suspension of Standing Orders. Referring not to a Minister or a Government member but to a private member of Parliament, I point out the last Bill introduced on petition in this

Chamber by a private member of Parliament was the Brisbane Hydraulic Power Company Bill introduced by A. S. Crowley on 29 August 1900. So 75 years have passed and no-one has been able, or has seen fit, or has had the financial capability, to bring forward legislation of this type. That is understandable, because it is costly, time consuming, and drawn out. There is no guarantee that it will ever be proceeded with, and, as I said before, the original motion can be defeated on the numbers.

I suggest that, as a Parliament, we might look at this because it is time we gave members of Parliament individually as private members a greater say in the legislative procedures in this State. At present we do not have very much say. The community does not have much say; the individual citizen does not have very much say. It is good that the Minister has been willing to bring this Bill forward as a private Bill. No doubt a request has been made to him to do so, and he has been able to meet that request. But the general public mistakenly believes that anybody can do this. I was told when I first came into this Chamber that there was once a member here who was called "Vomit". The reason was that whenever he was asked to do something he said, "I will bring it up in the House." I do not know whether he ever brought it up in the House, but that was his nickname.

I think it is a pity that sometimes members of Parliament give the wrong impression and people believe it is just a matter of getting up in this Chamber and changing all the laws of this State. That certainly is not so, but I should like to see members play a greater part in the legislative role of this Assembly. If we are to have real democracy, then the community should have a say and the individual citizen should have a say. Moreover, we, as private members of Parliament, should have a say. I suggest, therefore, that we need to upgrade the Standing Orders of the House and simplify the procedures.

I accept that we could have the danger of the time of the House being wasted. I accept that we could have hundreds of Bills of this type coming forward. But there is nothing wrong with our copying the New Zealand idea. In New Zealand there is a standing committee that has legislation brought before it. It then assesses the legislation and determines its worth, and all members consider it. I believe that there may be some merit in that system, and that would take place well before the cost factor and the time-consuming factor became involved.

A number of honourable members on the Government side have previously made statements along lines similar to those that I am putting forward. It always surprises me that once a Government member is elevated to the ministerial benches or is promoted to some other office of the Parliament, he seems to forget the desires he had when he was a private member. So I would ask the new Government members especially to use their time—it may be very short; they may be here for only a couple of years—as profitably as they can, and I suggest that it could not be used more profitably than in cleaning up the archaic and illogical rules under which this Legislative Assembly operates.

Mr. JENSEN (Bundaberg) (4.43 p.m.): I support the introduction of the Bill to amend the Act of 1960, and I cannot understand why my colleague considers that it is a private Bill. It is only an amendment of an Act first introduced in 1960 approving the provision of a bursary for engineering students in sugar mills and engineering factories in the Bundaberg district. The amendments are quite simple.

The committee comprises a director of the Bundaberg Foundry and a foreman engineer who received some training under William Parry. I know of only two men in the Bundaberg district who were trained under William Parry. One is Mr. Mikkeljohn, who is over 80 years of age; the other is Ron White, who was a member of the committee up to about 1969 and who now lives in Brisbane. The trustees can allow the committee to appoint a director or somebody suitable, and another person who is responsible—probably he should be an engineering foreman—also can be appointed.

The bursary is quite substantial, as the Minister said, and about $12,400 has been provided for the assistance of students over past years. When the Bill was introduced originally, Mr. Ted Walsh, who preceded me as member for Bundaberg, praised Colonel Evans for what he had done. Mr. Walsh said that he hoped other apprentices who achieved something in life would set up similar bursaries. As the Minister said, Colonel Evans served his apprenticeship under Mr. Parry in about 1902. He became a rich man and set aside a part of his estate for apprentices in the Bundaberg foundry or other engineering works and sugar mills in Bundaberg.

I know very well that Mr. Rob Gibson has been concerned because at the moment the Act does not cover certain categories. The Minister is changing that. It will mean that even Mr. Rob Gibson can be appointed to the committee. Under the present legislation, because he is no longer a director of the Bundaberg foundry or an engineer at the foundry, he should not be on the committee. Mr. Gibson has done what he could over the years to ensure that the bursary is administered in accordance with the terms of the will. Because of the terms of the will it is necessary to amend the Act slightly so that the committee can be constituted differently. The last engineer foreman was Ron White. Mr. Rob Gibson was an apprentice under William Parry. I knew William Parry's son—Eric Parry. He worked at Fairymead in my time. I did not

know William Parry. He was a foreman engineer at the Bundaberg foundry for nearly 40 years. I understand he retired somewhere about 1930.

I understand that Colonel Evans said, "William Parry taught us the common sense of engineering." He always praised William Parry because of his common sense in engineering. That is what should be taught. William Parry taught many of the chief engineers in the sugar mills of Queensland—many of the good, practical engineers who have run the sugar industry for the last 50 years. Those engineers are now passing on. William Parry was a great asset to Bundaberg and the Bundaberg foundry. Colonel Evans recognised that and provided the bursary.

The Minister has now altered certain conditions to ensure that in future the bursary is administered in accordance with the will.

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) (4.47 p.m.): I listened with considerable interest to the contribution of the honourable member for Rockhampton. Once again I must congratulate him on his ability to study. The speech he made this afternoon has been made at least 47 times since I have been in this Chamber by many men who were much more competent to make it than the honourable member for Rockhampton. Nevertheless, it is something that should be said again and again until something is done. When the Labor Party was in the full flush of its arrogant glory, far better speeches and far more vehement speeches on this subject were being made by members of the then Opposition who are now in the Government.

I will sum it up, Mr. Speaker. I will suggest something to you if members want to do something that is really worth while and if you want to bring this Queensland Parliament up to the level of other Parliaments in Australia and in the world where democracy is the order of the day. Unless one has the hide of a pachyderm, the resilence of Muhammad Ali and the wealth of the honourable member for Port Curtis, one has no possible chance of moving a motion for the introduction of a private member's Bill in this Chamber. That is all there is to it. Elaborate on it as much as you like, but that is it. It is an absolute impossibility for any honourable member to bring in a private member's Bill.

I want to deal with something else that might be of interest to those who are interested in the law. Very few honourable members are interested in the law, and most of them are prepared to let the lawyers tell them the law. When a lawyer tells a person the law, that person finishes up knowing less than when he started. I clearly remember a particular case. I read it in a legal booklet. Colonel Daniel Edward Evans left two bursaries as a matter of fact. Under the law as it exists today, any citizen of Queensland who has the foolish idea that, having amassed money by legal or illegal means, he can leave that money to any person of his choice has another think coming. He simply cannot do it. A person may make a perfectly legal will leaving money to a perfectly reputable person or organisation, but it requires only one disgruntled person who thinks that he or she should have been a beneficiary to approach the Full Court of Queensland for that court to determine how the testator should have disposed of his money. The Full Court will wipe out any bequests that it thinks should not have been made. Such was the case in point.

I am glad that the honourable member for Ashgrove is listening to me. No doubt he will look up this case after hearing what I have to say. Colonel Daniel Edward Evans left a lot of money to various people and made two bequests—one to establish a bursary for engineering apprentices employed by the Bundaberg Foundry and the other for a bursary for engineering apprentices anywhere in Bundaberg. The will was taken to the Full Court. Thanks to my remarkably retentive memory I recall that the late Judge Jeffriess was one of the judges on the Full Court. Without giving any reason the Full Court wiped out the bequest to apprentices living in the Bundaberg area and allowed to remain in the will the bequest to which this Bill refers.

If honourable members want to do anything to earn their salary—I note that our niggardly salary is to be increased by a very parsimonious amount from 30 June, not that it matters very much to me—let them delve into this matter. Why cannot citizens of Queensland leave their money to whoever they want to leave it to? I ask the honourable member for Ashgrove, or the honourable member for Brisbane—he is a solicitor, and solicitors know more about the law than barristers—to dig up this case. There are many such cases. A man named Pianta—he was a brother of the man involved in the tobacco case who came down with Ned Goldfinch and left a big truck, with illegal tobacco in it, parked beside Tom Foley's house—left all his money to the Communist Party of Queensland. I do not hold any brief for the Communist Party, but at least it was his money and he thought that he should leave it to the Communist Party of Queensland, which, in any case, is a legal organisation. Someone applied to the Full Court, which ruled that, even if a person wanted to, he could not leave his money to the Communist Party. If we do not improve it will not be long before any reputable Full Court in Queensland will rule that people cannot leave their money to the A.L.P. Isn't that a monstrous state of affairs?

Mr. Jensen: You can't do that?

Mr. AIKENS: Yes, it can be done. The Full Court decides to whom money can be left. That is a monstrous state of affairs.

The honourable member for Rockhampton, who fiddles around with the law, reads what other people say and then passes it off as his own observations, will be astonished to know that this is still part of our law. My mental machinery was jolted when I saw that we were to deal with a bursary under the will of the late Colonel Daniel Edward Evans and I said to myself, "This is the famous case in which two bursaries were left to two groups of apprentices in Bundaberg, one of which was wiped out by the Full Court without giving any reasons." The Full Court simply said, "He cannot leave his money to that group of apprentices but he can leave it to the other group." The money that he left is the subject of this Bill. If we really want to stop back-stabbing, fighting, pettifogging and skullduggery, with the Opposition playing all sorts of pranks, let us get stuck into matters we can do something about.

There are two matters. One was raised by the honourable member for Rockhampton for the 47th time since I first entered this Chamber—that is, the right to move a private member's motion. The other matter is more important because it affects every citizen in Queensland. It relates to the right of every reputable citizen in Queensland to bequeath his or her money to any person or reputable organisation that he or she desires to bequeath it to. Under our law a person just cannot do it.

The affluent honourable member for Port Curtis—the Croesus of the Parliament—is now entering the Chamber. He is a very wealthy man and a very generous man. I have no doubt that before he dies he will give considerable thought to whom he will bequeath his money, and I tell him that he cannot leave it with certainty to anyone. Someone else might apply to the Full Court and the Full Court might say that the money cannot be left to that person or that organisation—and give no reason for its judgment.

I have mentioned those things for your information, Mr. Speaker, as I always do inform you when I stand up to speak. If honourable members really want to do something to earn the miserly pittance that they get as members of this House, they might consider those two matters for a start.

Dr. LOCKWOOD (Toowoomba North) (4.57 p.m.): I rise to make the point that this simple administrative procedure is costing something of the order of $4,400 per hour, which is more than the amount mentioned for the lucky student involved. It is a pity that a great many of these simple bequests become tied up in legalities and that they cannot be carried out more simply. Perhaps the House should consider ways and means of making bequests much more simple to administer.

Similar cases abound in a great many places. Money is tied up for ages and ages. The machinery originally set up for its administration becomes impossible to implement. Perhaps the House could legislate so that when a trust is set up in perpetuity the machinery is also in perpetuity.

Hon. V. J. BIRD (Burdekin—Minister for Education and Cultural Activities) (4.58 p.m.), in reply: When I introduced the Bill, I realised that its contents would not be debated at length. I felt that all honourable members would agree with the spirit in which the late Colonel Daniel Edward Evans bequeathed money to establish a bursary to be known as the William Parry Memorial Bursary. My belief was proved to be correct, because during the ensuing debate no members who spoke to it devoted a great deal of time to its contents.

The honourable member for Rockhampton spoke lightly on the contents of the Bill and then took the opportunity to debate the matter of private Bills. As honourable members know, I introduced this as a private Bill. I can understand his feelings and I cannot really blame him for taking this opportunity to debate the difficulty honourable members have of introducing a private Bill.

Mr. Aikens: It is not a difficulty: it is an impossibility.

Mr. BIRD: I will take the honourable member's word for that. Perhaps it is something that could be considered in the future.

The honourable member for Bundaberg, who I suppose is very familiar with the bursary and knows some of those who have benefited from it over the years, spoke of the late William Parry and the people who served under him. He mentioned that he was one of the old-style engineers. Doubtless many people in engineering trades today owe their excellent training to the late William Parry. I suppose it was for that reason that Colonel Evans regarded him so highly and saw fit to make this bequest.

There is one misconception in the mind of the honourable member for Bundaberg that I should like to clear up. He said that Mr. Gibson had resigned as Chairman of Directors of the Bundaberg Foundry and therefore could no longer continue to serve on the committee. That is not correct. He can continue to serve on the committee although he has resigned from the Bundaberg Foundry and I hope he will continue to do so.

Mr. Houston: Even without this Bill?

Mr. BIRD: Yes. There is no real problem. He can continue.

I was very interested to hear from the honourable member for Townsville South that the late Colonel Evans intended to set up two bursaries and that through the processes of justice one of them was done away with and we ended up with only the one. I was not aware of that and I find it is nevertheless of interest.

The honourable member dealt with the legal difficulties associated with bequeathing money. I suppose we all appreciate and are aware of the problems. Although we would like to do certain things or see certain things done with our money when we pass on, we realise that if somebody decides to take the matter to a court of law, our wishes could be denied.

The honourable member for Toowoomba North spoke briefly about the time of the House and the cost of introducing Bills of this nature. I suppose that if we were not discussing this Bill we would certainly be doing something else in the House, so I do not think we can say it actually costs $4,000 an hour to discuss a matter such as this.

Nevertheless, this is the way the matter has been dealt with. The original legislation was introduced some years ago; there has been a need to amend it, and today I have been given the opportunity to introduce this Bill.

Motion (Mr. Bird) agreed to.

FIRST READING

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

CONSTRUCTION SAFETY ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(Mr. Row, Hinchinbrook, in the chair)

Hon. F. A. CAMPBELL (Aspley—Minister for Industrial Development, Labour Relations and Consumer Affairs) (5.4 p.m.): I move—

"That a Bill be introduced to amend the Construction Safety Act 1971-1973 in certain particulars."

The proposed amendments to the Construction Safety Act are mainly intended to extend safety provisions of the Act to ensure off-site inspections of construction equipment and gear whether for hire or otherwise and to improve administrative procedures in certain respects.

Complaints have been received that some construction equipment available for hire has been found to be so defective that its use is likely to ,cause loss of life or serious bodily injury to persons using it.

Also, over recent years, there has been an increasing trend in the building industry to use concrete panels which have been pre-cast off site. On arrival at the site, these panels are lifted into position by means of the attachments or inserts fitted to them at the time of manufacture. In the interests of safety for both members of the public and the workmen on the construction site, it is important that the lifting attachments are securely incorporated at the time of manufacture.

Members will be aware that legislation exists to license persons such as crane drivers and dogmen, so ensuring that competent and experienced men are employed in the handling of such components on construction sites. In addition, overhead protection is prescribed where loads are lifted over pedestrian thoroughfares. Although these measures are designed to ensure safe working conditions, it is considered that, as the safe lifting of these heavy panels depends on the inserts, additional safety measures are required.

At present there is no provision in the Construction Safety Act to inspect construction equipment available for hire or for the inspection of attachments or inserts in pre-cast panels other than on arrival at a construction site.

It is proposed that inspectors be empowered to examine, inspect and issue necessary directions whilst equipment available for hire is at the hirer's premises and, in respect of panels, the inserts may be inspected during the manufacture of the panels. To enable the provision of off-site inspections of this equipment and gear, it has been necessary to rephrase a number of sections of the Act.

In addition to the above, the tripartite Building Construction Industry Safety Council, which is constituted under section 63 of the Construction Safety Act, also recommended that certain other amendments should be included with the object of incorporating the latest methods and practices in use in the building construction industry, thus assisting and improving the administration of the Act.

The amendments are summarised as follows:—

(1) The definition of "construction work" has been amended to include the installation and dismantling of machinery, plant and equipment. As hazardous situations can arise during this work, it is important that in the interests of safety the work is covered by the Act. The carpeting of floors has been exempted, as it is considered that such work should be exempt.

Provision has been made to exempt the installation of telephone equipment, erection or maintenance of electric lines on poles, maintenance of electric lines on towers and laying of railways, as such work is carried out by statutory authorities which enforce strict safety measures and employ experienced and trained workmen.

A definition of "crane chaser" has been included. This new definition is in accordance with a uniform agreement between States.

(2) Offences against this Act are normally proceeded with under sections 20, 21 and 22, which specify the duties of constructor, subcontractor and employer. In 1973, a precedent was set in the matter of Robinson v.

Electric Power Transmission Pty. Ltd., when a successful defence was advanced under section 23 of the Criminal Code.

To date, at least three matters which have involved death of, or serious bodily injury to, a workman have not proceeded, on the grounds that a defence existed under section 23 or 24 of the Criminal Code.

The inclusion of a clause providing for a new section 22A will provide the absolute liability on a constructor, subcontractor and employer. This clause will remove defence based on sections 23 and 24 of the Criminal Code.

(3) At present it is required that all directions by inspectors be issued in writing. This creates additional administrative work, and on many occasions a verbal direction will achieve the necessary results without causing ill feeling between the builder and the inspector. It is proposed to empower inspectors to give directions to secure compliance either verbally or in writing.

(4) At present where an inspector gives a written direction to secure compliance to a constructor, subcontractor or employer, he is also required to give such direction to the workman. In practically all instances only a direction to the constructor, subcontractor or employer is considered necessary. The proposed amendment provides for the issuing of a direction to the workman where the circumstances warrant it. In addition, it is proposed that directions be issued either verbally or in writing.

(5) No provision exists at present for an inspector to extend the time of a direction where the circumstances warrant it unless the previous direction is revoked and a new direction issued.

For example, a direction may be given to have certain safety requirements carried out but, because of inclement weather, industrial unrest or the unavailability of material, it may subsequently be impracticable for the direction given to be complied with in the originally specified time. The proposed amendment will enable an inspector to extend the time period of an existing direction.

(6) At present it is not mandatory for a constructor, subcontractor or employer to submit for approval of the Chief Inspector methods of work which are not prescribed by the Act.

For example, to enable the form work to be removed from sheer concrete walls it is sometimes necessary for workmen to work on scaffolding which is suspended from a crane. Such operation, unless properly controlled, can be very hazardous. The proposed amendment will make it mandatory that methods of work be approved prior to the commencement of such work.

(7) The work that can be carried out by a non-certificated scaffolder in relation to the erection of scaffolding on a dwelling-house of not more than one storey in height and on certain other construction work has been clarified so that the section is in accordance with the present practice of the industry.

(8) On large projects such as Yabulu, Queensland Alumina Ltd. and the Gladstone Power Station, it is impossible for one project safety officer to cope with the volume of the work. However, under section 58 of the Act no provision exists for the appointment of assistants. It is proposed that the Chief Inspector will be able to direct the constructor on a large site such as Yabulu to appoint assistants where the need arises.

(9) At present there is no provision to enable the registration of construction equipment. Therefore, items such as mobile builders' hoists may not be inspected for lengthy periods. It is proposed that provision be made for the registration of such equipment, thereby enabling regular inspections.

(10) Several prosecutions under the Act have been dismissed on the grounds that the constructor of a project could not be established or identified. In each case the defendant was a corporate body operating as a number of companies with the same governing body in each company. It is proposed to include a new section 74A to enable, when doubt exists as to the authenticity of a constructor being one company or another, prosecution of a member of the governing body, unless he proves he had no knowledge of the commission of the offence at the time of its commission and could not by the exercise of reasonable diligence have prevented the commission of the offence.

The provisions contained in this Bill have been carefully examined by the Tripartite Building Construction Industry Safety Council, which unanimously recommends the enactment thereof.

I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. YEWDALE (Rockhampton North) (5.15 p.m.): It is obvious, I think, that the Opposition would welcome legislation of this type, particularly because it tightens the regulations relating to safety in industry. In the long term, it is in the best interests not only of workers at job level but also of employers, because it enables employers to avoid incidents at job level that are not in their interests.

I should like to touch briefly on the Act. I might mention first that the Minister's decision to introduce the proposed amendments is in furtherance of the amendments made under the Scaffolding Act Amendment Act of 1960, when provision was made to cover the deeper excavations that were then being carried out and also much higher buildings that were then being built. Provision was also made at that time for inspectorial reports on accidents, to protect any person injured or, in the case of death, the families of workers killed.

Section 6 in Part II says—

> " 'scaffolder' means a person who is responsible for the erection or demolition of scaffolding and who is the person to whom a certificate is issued under this Act that authorises him to so act;"

I think it is worth mentioning that the Minister said that scaffolding from private sources that is used on a construction job could probably be covered by a person coming within the definition of a scaffolder to which I have referred. However, although that may be correct, I suggest very strongly that we should get to the source of the problem—where the material is being constructed and supplied. I believe that, in the past, many scaffolders have not been sufficiently vigilant when inspecting such scaffolding when it comes onto the job.

Section 6 of the Act also says—

> " 'scaffolding' means any structure, staging or platform set up or used or intended to be set up or used for or in connexion with the performance of construction work within the application of this Act, or for or in connection with the support or protection of workmen engaged therein and includes the materials used or to be used in the erection of such a structure, staging or platform;"

Again the point I made is valid—that the responsibility is on the scaffolder or the constructor and that there has been negligence in that area in the past.

Section 13 (c) of Part III of the Act, which deals with the functions of inspectors, says—

> "to ensure, as far as is practicable, that the provisions of this Act are complied with;".

The Minister did say that there is a shortage of inspectors on large construction sites and that there is no provision for assistants. I should say that that applies in industry generally not only in Queensland but also in other States, and that is the point at which I think additional inspectors ought to be employed by the department, or by the constructor or contractor, to handle the inspection of jobs.

Section 13 (f) says—

> "to investigate and report on accidents that occur in connexion with such work;".

I might digress slightly, Mr. Row, and raise what I think is a very pertinent point. I have received information about a case that occurred in Townsville early in 1973 when a workman was injured as a result of the collapse of some scaffolding and other structural material on a job. The workman concerned is now in the Princess Alexandra Hospital. He is completely paralysed from the hip down, and it is suggested that he might not walk or work again. I refer again to the remarks I made about investigation and report on accidents. The Act contains provisions regarding boards of reference and inquiries into accidents. I will not go into details, but the pertinent point I wish to raise is included in section 50 under the heading "Board to investigate accidents." I am sure the Minister is conversant with this, but I stress it. It provides—

> "The Minister may, from time to time, set up a Board of Reference charged with the function of investigating, determining and reporting on the cause of the accident."

From the information I have before me, I feel that in this specific case the injury to the worker did warrant the Minister's setting up a board of reference. That might be open to argument, but I believe that an amendment to section 50 should be made so that after the words "The Minister may" the words "and shall if requested by a person injured in an accident or his representative" would appear. I will take the opportunity of reiterating this case to the Minister at another place at another time.

Division I of part IV of the Act is headed "Duties of Constructor, Sub-Contractor, Employer and Workman." Section 20 is headed "Duties of constructor." It refers to "all construction equipment used or to be used in or for construction work." We keep talking about the equipment that is used, and I think the matter comes back to the question of job site—the involvement of the contractor, constructor or employer and the employees. It seems to me that not enough attention is given at the job level to overcome the problems.

Many other sections talk about the serviceability of materials. Again that is the responsibility of contractors. The section dealing with construction materials provides—

> "A person shall not make, sell, let or hire, part with possession of for valuable consideration, lend or dispose of to another construction equipment unless—
>
> (a) it is of a description and a standard prescribed; or
>
> (b) it is of a description and a standard approved by the Chief Inspector."

To my mind this creates an anomaly. I cannot relate that to the current need to introduce legislation to cover this particular scaffolding material that is coming from outside the job. It says in the Act quite clearly that nobody is allowed to make, sell, let or hire or make profit from material that is not up to the standard. If the material is not up to the standard at construction level by the producer of that material, it seems to me that there is something wrong.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber and a lot of members are moving around without any deference to the Chair. I remind honourable members that decorum will be maintained in the Chamber.

Mr. YEWDALE: I will again digress briefly. I took the trouble to read some material about industrial accidents and their incidence. Research into industrial accidents shows that for every occupational disease that is ascertained in industry, approximately 19 physical injuries are suffered in industry. The very important point here is that for every occupational disease in industry there are 19 accidents. It is obvious that something should be done about a 19 to 1 ratio, and it should be done at job level by all concerned. Research has indicated that for every $1,000,000 worth of building or construction work carried out we can expect to have one person killed. That is an indictment of society. It means that if a $10,000,000 building is to be erected, 10 people will die on the job. Those are not my figures. They represent an assessment by people who have taken the trouble to study the industry.

There is a much greater need for employer-employee involvement at job level on safety. When one considers the statistics I have just referred to and the number of industrial stoppages, it becomes very clear that the area of industrial safety is of vital importance. Too often shortcuts are attempted by employers and, in some cases, employees. Later disputation is likely to be the result of safety matters not being looked at properly in the beginning. For too long too many people have adopted the attitude, "It's all right, mate. We'll carry on. If anything goes wrong, we'll fix it up later."

The matter I raised concerning the injured worker in the Princess Alexandra Hospital is valid. That man now has no redress. He obtained legal advice to determine his rights but he has now reached a dead end and he could be crippled for life.

I noted the other amendments referred to by the Minister. The matter of having the inspector deliver his direction to the contractor or employer in writing is a good move. When a document setting out a direction is placed in a person's hand it avoids later argument. In the event of later argument a contractor or employer could be duty bound to accept that he had been given the direction in clear and concise terms. The extension of time for carrying out a direction, because of industrial stoppages or inclement weather, is a practical proposition. Its inclusion will be an advantage to industry.

The amendment dealing with work on suspended scaffolding, with prior permission, is also fairly practical. If people give notice of a need or requirement to do work of this nature and present their case to the appropriate people and it is endorsed or accepted by the department, the employer will, at that time, have indicated to his employees that the work is to be carried out and that it is endorsed by the relevant department.

The amendments outlined by the Minister are of advantage in the industrial sphere and in construction work. In most respects they will be of advantage to the people engaged in the industry. As I said earlier, the Opposition welcomes the legislation.

Dr. SCOTT-YOUNG (Townsville) (5.27 p.m.): The amendments to the Act are worth while. It is intriguing to note that equipment-hire undertakings can hire out equipment that has not been checked in any way. I have yet to see any stamps on hire equipment, other than on electrical equipment, showing that recent inspections have taken place. I include Acrow jacks and scaffolding, much of which is sent with bolts missing, or chains missing from retention bolts. In many cases scaffolding clips are not maintained. Any person can hire this equipment and there seems to be no onus on the hirer to ensure that it is in good condition.

I note that the Bill also provides means of establishing who is a constructor. Formerly some law suits failed, or were not proceeded with, because a party could not define the constructor. Provision is made in the Bill by which the constructor may be defined as a member of the company or an official of the company undertaking the construction. This at least gives some legality to the whole procedure. It is only common sense that someone must be responsible. It is a wonder that the provision was not written into the Act a long time ago.

I am interested in the policing of this legislation. I suggest that local authorities, which should issue building or construction permits, should notify the scaffolding inspectors in regional areas that buildings are under way. In my own case a scaffolding inspector came along to inspect my building only because he saw the scaffolding when passing along the road. The local authority had not notified him that a building was being constructed. A local authority should be required to notify the scaffolding inspector that approval has been given for construction to commence. The inspection should be made at that stage, not when construction has been half finished.

In the terms of the contracts relating to larger projects the scaffolding procedures to be carried out should be specified. If that were agreed to by the contractor, a lot of work would be taken off the shoulders of the local inspector. It would be a straightforward matter if, when a contract was let, it contained in addition to the specifications, details of the extent of the scaffolding, the quality of the scaffolding and when it was last inspected. That should be signed by the contractor to signify his agreement. If the contractor fails to agree to those terms, the building should not be allowed to be commenced.

One thing intrigues me. I ask the Minister to indicate whether the new provisions apply to a person who wishes to paint or repair

his own property, whether it has one storey or several. Some individuals might own their own scaffolding and equipment. Is that to be inspected regularly or is it exempt from the provisions of the Act? Small builders with scaffolding equipment—jacks and wooden or steel scaffolding—may lend or hire it out without the knowledge of the inspector. If the equipment is not properly maintained it may be dangerous. However, if the scaffolding inspector in the region were notified by the local authority of all building approvals, that difficulty would be overcome and safety would be preserved.

I agree with the provision relating to the inspection of panels. I believe they should be very carefully examined on the construction site. The scaffolding inspector should be furnished with details of the size and quality of the steel hooks attached to the panels. It is useless putting up safety barricades to protect people on pathways or to insist on workmen wearing safety helmets if a 20-ton sheet of pre-stressed concrete lands on their backs. It does not improve their looks at all.

I consider that this is a very worth-while amendment to the Act. Obviously it is based on the sound principle of protecting the employee as well as the employer. It removes a considerable amount of danger for the employee and can only lead to great improvement in the construction industry.

Mr. McKECHNIE (Carnarvon) (5.33 p.m.): I commend this measure to honourable members. It is very worth while and will help both contractors and their employees.

Mr. Hanson: You don't have scaffolding out there, do you?

Mr. McKECHNIE: Actually we do. The trees grow fairly tall out our way!

I am pleased to see in the Bill a provision relating to hire equipment. It may not always be desired, but I am sure that bringing hire equipment under the protection of the Act represents a very worth-while contribution to safety.

I express concern about the inspection of equipment in isolated areas. I hope the Minister will give us an assurance that the commencement of work will not be delayed because people are awaiting inspectors. It is impossible to legislate for every aspect of safety.

Mr. Moore: We overlegislate now. We have too much of it.

Mr. McKECHNIE: I agree. If we legislate to cover every eventuality, our Statute Book will be full of legislation but there will be nobody to police the laws.

In this day and age it is very important that we take steps to halt the growth of our Public Service, as the economy is not what it might be. Possibly Opposition members could talk their Canberra colleagues into giving some incentives for private enterprise. If they do not, many of their Left-wing union supporters—and they are the only supporters they have left—will be out of a job. Unemployment will possibly rise to 10 per cent if the Federal Government does not start taking drastic steps to encourage private enterprise.

I hope that none of the restrictions contained in the Bill will create any more burdens for private enterprise. I understand that the Minister is very concerned about the safety of employees; so are all Government members. I cannot help repeating the need to avoid overlegislating. Generally, I commend the Bill.

Hon. F. A. CAMPBELL (Aspley—Minister for Industrial Development, Labour Relations and Consumer Affairs) (5.37 p.m.), in reply: I thank honourable members for their constructive approach to this very important Bill.

An Honourable Member interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! I will not tolerate unparliamentary remarks in the Chamber.

Mr. CAMPBELL: I am sure that the proposals will greatly assist the chief inspector and his officers in the great steps that are being taken to overcome grievous accidents on construction projects.

I particularly thank the honourable member for Rockhampton North for his constructive comments. The Bill is in keeping with the theme of the Act. It is designed to provide for greater vigilance in this very important area. The honourable member said that perhaps we should conduct greater research into the cause of accidents and take action on the information flowing therefrom.

In this regard I pay a tribute to the chief inspector and his officers. Honourable members would be surprised at the number of approvals to prosecute that I have to authorise where there has been negligence. My officers are most vigilant in policing this aspect of the legislation, as they are in all matters with which they are entrusted. Where there has been a lack of vigilance on the part of the person responsible, we do not hesitate to take remedial action.

The honourable member made reference to the obligations of the constructor. This is really the kernel of the amendment.

He referred also to the disposal of construction equipment and asked whether there was sufficient supervision of this. It is most difficult to supervise the disposal of construction equipment when a job has been completed. The very fact that we are introducing a Bill to empower inspectors to go onto premises where equipment is hired should convince him that we are endeavouring to cope with this problem.

He referred also to industrial accidents and quoted some death statistics in the construction industry. Nothing grieves me more than to receive from my inspectors

reports of fatal accidents or accidents in which workmen have been grievously injured. To err is human, and many accidents are caused by human error.

I am afraid that the statistics in the table quoted by the honourable member do not accord with general experience. In his report for the year 1974-75, my chief inspector indicated that the value of work was $437,000,000, and fatal accidents, grievous as they undoubtedly are, numbered only 10. There was therefore one fatal accident to $43,000,000 worth of construction work.

Mr. Wright: Is that only over one year?

Mr. CAMPBELL: I am quoting statistics for one year. Whilst any loss of life causes hardship and grief to those left behind, we have to keep things in perspective and, grievous though they are, the numbers of deaths on construction work, compared with the loss of human life in all aspects of society, are quite minimal. Of course, I am not in any way condoning industrial accidents.

The honourable member referred also to the need for the involvement of employer and employee at job level. Since the introduction of the Act and the strict requirements that it imposes on constructors, and as a result of the appointment of safety officers and the supervision that has followed their appointment, we have gone a long way towards the objectives mentioned by him.

I should like to record at this stage that the Construction Safety Act has broken completely new ground in industrial safety. I say that because of the complimentary remarks that have been made to me by my fellow Ministers in other States in which the Queensland Act seems to have earned universal acclaim. I am greatly disappointed that the Federal Government has been disinclined to follow Queensland's lead in construction work under Federal Government supervision. As honourable members will appreciate, the Queensland Government has no jurisdiction over Commonwealth operations. Despite repeated references to the Prime Minister concerning construction of the Woolloongabba Telephone Exchange, which does not conform to the requirements of the Queensland Act, I am disappointed that there has been a disinclination by the Commonwealth to implement safety measures on that job.

The honourable member for Townsville made some reference to the supervision of electric equipment. The law on the maintenance of electric equipment is quite clear and unambiguous, and he would be aware that it was necessary to take certain action following a fatal accident that occurred with the use of electric equipment under the jurisdiction of the Townsville City Council. The law imposes a great and quite clear obligation on the users of electric equipment.

The honourable member referred to the term "constructor" and until one clearly appreciates the implications of this term it seems a curious designation, but the adoption of this designation in the original legislation was a novel approach and the great value of it is that it clearly identifies where the final responsibility for construction safety lies. Until the introduction of the original legislation nothing bedevilled the chief inspector or his officers more than trying to sheet home the final responsibility for construction safety in a high-rise building, where there would be an owner, a prime contractor, dozens of subcontractors and other people associated with its construction. Until this term "constructor" was written into the legislation, it was most difficult to identify who was responsible for construction safety.

Since the adoption of that designation in legislation introduced a few years ago, 99 per cent of the problems in identifying the person responsible has been eliminated and I think that is one of the gems in this legislation.

The honourable member also questioned the notification of work which is about to commence. The Act clearly sets out the obligation of the contractor to notify the chief inspector and it contains consequential penalties if this obligation is not carried out.

The honourable member for Carnarvon referred to inspection in isolated areas. As I said in reply to the honourable member for Townsville, the Act imposes an obligation on the constructor, before construction work commences anywhere in the State, to notify the chief inspector or his officer of such commencement. We have many industrial inspectors throughout the State who may act as agent for the chief inspector.

Reference was made to house construction but I understand that houses are exempt from this legislation.

Motion (Mr. Campbell) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

VALUATION OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. W. D. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Survey, Valuation, Urban and Regional Affairs) (5.51 p.m.): I move—

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

In winding up the debate which ensued upon the introduction of the Bill, I thanked honourable members for their constructive remarks, and I hope these will continue during the second-reading debate because I

can assure the House that it will be my endeavour while I am responsible for the Valuer-General's Department to explore every avenue of improving the Valuation of Land Act. I will, during my speech, make some general observations regarding the provisions of the Act, and I will also deal in more detail than I nave previously with the remarks made by the various speakers during the introductory debate.

The honourable member for Nudgee was concerned with the onus of proof being placed on an appellant. This provision is already contained in section 21 subsection 3, and the amending Bill does not alter the provision in any way. The provision was inserted by the amending Act of 1959, which Act made the Land Court the appellate body for the Valuer-General's valuations instead of the Valuation Court which was constituted by a stipendiary magistrate or a judge of the Supreme Court.

The section is logical because the Valuer-General is a determining authority himself and the appeal is really to another determining authority, namely, the Land Court. It is a general principle in law that the appellant in all cases must prove his case.

In dealing with appeals against the Valuer-General's valuations, the Land Court is in a totally different position from when it is dealing with the determination of rentals for the Lands Department. In the latter case the court itself is the determining body.

It is worthy of mention that the Income Tax Assessment Act also places the burden of proof on the taxpayer when objecting or appealing against an assessment.

An examination of the objection system as provided for in the Valuation of Land Act reveals that it would be extremely difficult to provide a less expensive, less formal or less technical process. The landowner is given every opportunity to object to the amount of a valuation, and every facility is made available to him if he wishes to do so.

As regards the appeals, although I have always held the view that it is not appropriate for an appeal against one determining authority to be heard by another determining authority, the system appears to work reasonably well and is certainly not bound by formalities. This Bill removes further technicalities.

The honourable member also referred to the case of Dennis v. Valuer-General in the Shire of Albert. He instanced the case of a reduction from $88,500 to $20,650. I am aware of the decision and, indeed, in company with the Valuer-General, I have inspected the general area and the subject property. The decision in the case rested upon an interpretation of section 11 (1) (vii), a section which I mentioned during the introductory debate and which is the section dealing with land used exclusively for purposes of a single dwelling-house or for purposes of the business of primary production.

The Dennis property is one of about 59 acres on Daisy Hill Road, Slacks Creek, off the Pacific Highway, in an area which has over recent years been the subject of intensive subdivision for suburban home sites. The area was adjudged by the valuer as being suitable for subdivision and was valued accordingly at $88,500.

On the property is situated a single dwelling-house and the land is not used for any other purpose, not even primary production. The Valuer-General's officer very fairly stated that if section 11 (1) (vii) applied, the value should only be $20,650, even though the owner had placed before the court a figure of $30,000 as being his estimate of the value. The court found that section 11 (1) (vii) did in fact apply, that is the single dwelling-house provision, and determined the valuation at an amount of $20,650, which was the Valuer-General's alternative figure. The Land Court member commended the Valuer-General for the way the case had been presented and refused the appellant's application for costs.

As a matter of interest, during the year ended 30 June 1974 reductions in valuations as a result of appeals represented 0.03 per cent of the valuations of the local authorities in which the lands were situated.

Mr. Wright: Is that all appeals or all valuations?

Mr. LICKISS: The percentage of the reductions as the result of appeals against the total rateable valuations of the relevant local authorities.

The honourable member also commented on the valuation of the city of Brisbane. The recent revaluation increased the valuation of the city from $878,833,810 to $1,598,381,050, an increase of 81.88 per cent. The revaluation involved 214,069 rateable valuations. The first 12 divisions to be released attracted 2,792 objections against an amount of $43,631,490. This represented 2.24 per cent of the number of valuations or 5.7 per cent of the amount of the valuations in those divisions. In reality the actual amount in dispute, of course, would be infinitely less than the 5.7 per cent mentioned. I feel that honourable members will agree that this is a very moderate rate of objections.

Conferences in respect of the objections to the residential valuations in the divisions of Sandgate, Toombul, Hamilton, Balmoral, Ithaca and Windsor have practically all been concluded, and conferences in respect of objections to the commercial and industrial valuations are scheduled to commence on 9 September 1975. Conferences in respect of the objections in the divisions of Stephens, and Toowong commenced yesterday. Conferences in respect of the division of Taringa

will follow the completion of those in the division of Toowong and will continue through to October.

As soon as objections close in each division they are listed, and it is planned to issue decisions upon the majority prior to 31 December 1975. I have been given to understand that these conferences in the main are proceeding harmoniously.

The honourable member for Ithaca mentioned, inter alia, valuations made by people other than officers of the Valuer-General's Department. I cannot be fully aware of the circumstances surrounding those valuations and therefore I cannot comment regarding them. However, I feel I must point out that if a valuation has to be split because of a subdivision, the separate parts would be valued on the same level as comparable parcels of land irrespective of the price paid for the parts contained in the split valuations. In fact the split valuations would be related back to the date of valuation of the whole local authority in which the lands are situated. The price paid could, of course, be a factor influencing values at the time of the next revaluation.

As regards the valuation of an area in Milton Road of about 14.1 perches mentioned by the honourable member, I would mention that it is believed this is the subject of an objection and that the owner has been notified of a conference in the matter. The owner will be given every opportunity at this conference to submit his reasons for considering that the new valuation is too high. Perhaps I should mention that there are many parcels of land in Brisbane of a lesser area than 16 perches and upon which residences are situated.

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

Mr. LICKISS: Before the dinner recess I was answering matters raised by the honourable member for Ithaca. During the introductory debate I mentioned the honourable member's worry about maisonettes, or one flat attached to an existing home, as against high-rise blocks of flats. Wherever we draw the line someone must miss out and the line is clearly defined under the Act. There are no shades of grey. The Act gives the concession solely to single dwelling-houses and the valuer must follow the Act.

In my view concessions in rating should be contained in legislation relating to local government financing. Such responsibility should not be placed on the Valuer-General, who, after all, is responsible for a service department providing valuations in accordance with the various statutes and is not—I repeat "not"—a taxing or rating authority.

The honourable member for Rockhampton made mention of usage of land and its effect on valuation. My remarks regarding section 11 (1) (vii) of the Valuation of Land Act are appropriate in answer to the honourable member. He also remarked about the onus of proof and I have already dealt with this matter. I have also previously mentioned that the objection and appeal system as provided for in the Valuation of Land Act is as informal and as free from technicalities as is possible. The provisions of this Bill will assist the landowner further.

The honourable member also made mention of the added responsibilities in my portfolio because I am a valuer myself. I do appreciate this and the honourable member can be assured that I am not underestimating the added responsibilities which have been imposed upon me.

The honourable member for Wynnum, who also is a valuer, drew attention to some of the difficulties confronting valuers and I look forward to the additional remarks which he has indicated he will contribute during the second-reading debate. I feel certain they will again be of a constructive nature. I am confident from the remarks of the honourable member that he fully appreciates the provisions of the amending Bill regarding the date of valuation.

I believe the honourable members for Rockhampton, Wynnum, Townsville West, and particularly the honourable member for Bulimba, all in different ways, made mention of the difficulties of assessing unimproved value, more particularly the difficulty in envisaging the land more or less as Captain Cook would have seen it. They have indicated that they would be in favour of the adoption of the "site value" concept and I must agree with that view.

I indicated that a valuer is required to consider a parcel of land being valued as being in its virgin state, but with all the surrounding land developed to the extent which it is, and with all services such as roads, channelling, water, sewerage and the like existent in the locality being available. Further, with statutory town planning, bearing in mind the provisions of section 11 (1) (vii) of the Valuation of Land Act, he must take into consideration the optimum use to which the land can be put.

This then brings up the question—and I think that in the near future we may have to give consideration to it, at least for urban lands—of what is known as site value, that is, considering the parcel of land as a vacant site and making no allowance for invisible improvements such as filling, drainage and clearing. I venture to suggest that in many instances nobody can speak with certainty of the quantum, and hence the present value of such invisible improvements effected on land. It is worthy of note that under the provisions of the Act no allowance is now made for such work if it has been performed by the Crown, by a local authority or by a harbour board, unless the constructing authority has been recouped for the cost.

The present amendments do not include anything of this nature and I am only mentioning them as matters for future consideration and by way of reply to remarks made by the honourable members who contributed to the introductory debate.

The honourable member for Townsville West, who is also a valuer, made mention of valuations performed for compensation purposes. The Valuer-General is always willing to perform valuations of this nature for a local authority and in fact section 27 of the Valuation of Land Act 1944–1974 states that he "shall, as and when required by any State Department or Sub-Department or Crown instrumentality, make any valuation of real and/or personal property for such department, sub-department or instrumentality". He is of course obliged to charge fees as prescribed for performing such valuations.

These valuations represent an important part of the Valuer-General's functions and, following a reorganisation within the department, which is at present proceeding, it is expected that he will be more able to efficiently perform these functions in the future.

As a matter of interest, I would inform honourable members that during the year ended 30 June 1974 the department performed 2,497 special valuations amounting to $40,149,769. It performs valuations for many Government departments, local authorities and Crown instrumentalities.

It is worthy of mention that the honourable member for Townsville West, who in his capacity as a valuer would have had experience in these matters, commented upon the informality of objection conferences, and I am very happy to see that he agrees with me that such conferences do offer a very informal and inexpensive method for a person to present his grounds of objection to a valuation.

The honourable member also mentioned that it would perhaps be advantageous for the State to have only one valuing authority. This has been advocated on previous occasions and of course has merit. Perhaps this is another matter worthy of consideration in the not too distant future.

I would like to make some general remarks about the Valuation of Land Act and the Valuer-General's Department generally.

Firstly as regards the department, I would mention that its administration and workings are at present being reorganised following a survey by officers of the Public Service Board in conjunction with the department's own officers.

New district offices are to be opened at Mackay and Bundaberg and sub-offices at Longreach and Mount Isa.

It is expected that the reorganisation will be reflected in more efficient working of the department and consequent better service to local authorities and others. This better service would include more expeditious dealing with split valuations and special valuations and is also aimed at producing in urban, and particularly in developing urban areas, a more frequent revaluation. By this I mean that it will be the aim of the department to perfom new valuations of these areas at the minimum period of five years rather than a longer period.

I must also state that all the valuations in the State, about 810,000, will, prior to the end of 1976, be recorded on the computer. The computer will be used also for extracting information, such as statistics and sales, to assist the valuer, but its use could be likened to a tool, which assists the valuers but is certainly not the valuing instrument itself. Often people are misled when they are told that a computer has been used. It in no way replaces the valuer. It merely assists him in more readily obtaining information necessary for the valuation process.

I stated at the introductory stage that the valuers of the department are professional officers and I am satisfied that they and all other officers of the department are endeavouring to administer an Act which at times can be difficult to interpret. However, I can assure honourable members that they perform their duties conscientiously and to the best of their ability. I think that if on occasions we are critical of them, we should at the same time examine the legislation under which they are operating and for which Parliament is responsible. Therefore it will be my aim, while I am responsible for the department, to keep the Valuation of Land Act constantly under review. Accordingly, I will always welcome any suggestions of a practicable and constructive nature calculated to improve its workings. Honourable members who spoke at the earlier stage approached the Bill in this light.

Mr. Wright: Would you consider group claims so that a group of people could challenge assessments as a body rather than individually?

Mr. LICKISS: If the honourable member would ask that question at the appropriate time later on, I will be only too happy to answer it.

Having now had an opportunity of examining the Bill in detail, honourable members will have determined the aims of the Bill are to—

(1) Enable the Valuer-General to assess unimproved values more in conformity with the real estate market at the date of issue of those valuations.

(2) Enable the Valuer-General to make a request that a local authority area valuation remain in force for less than five years, in the same manner in which a local authority itself may presently do so.

(3) Assist a landholder appealing to the Land Court against a valuation by the Valuer-General, from having his appeal ruled invalid by some failure to comply with a technicality.

(4) Bring the provisions of the Valuation of Land Act dealing with appeals from decisions of the Land Appeal Court to the Full Court into line with provisions of the Land Act relating to the same matter. It also updates references to the Land Act.

(5) Clarify that the date of issue of a notice of valuation or notice of decision on objection is prima facie the date shown on the notice.

Mr. MELLOY (Nudgee) (7.28 p.m.): The Opposition has had a look at the Bill and generally goes along with the proposals which, to a large degree, provide more flexibility for landowners, especially in the matter of appeals. There are some matters covered by the Bill which we feel should be looked at again, and the Act is still open to further improvements.

Earlier in the passage of this legislation, the Minister said that, in assessing the unimproved value of land, the valuer has to work on the assumption that improvements on or appertaining to the land do not exist. This is a very difficult matter for the valuer.

Further on the Minister said that in some areas the valuer was unable to adjust the level of values of a shire in conformity with the disastrous fall in cattle prices. After all, the valuer is assessing the unimproved value of the land. There could be comparable areas in the country. The owner of one is running cattle and his neighbour is not. If a fall in cattle prices is to be taken into account in the valuation of land, an injustice will be done one way or the other.

If the valuation is readjusted downwards because of a fall in the price of cattle, an injustice is done to the owner of the adjoining land. In effect, he is being told, "If you want your valuation reduced, we suggest that you run cattle and show you have made a loss." That is not the intention of the Act, and I doubt whether it is the intention of the Minister. But that is a statement that he made. Anything that makes for discrimination should be disregarded. I do not see what bearing the price of cattle has on the value of land. I would assume that the land in an area would have equal value. The grassing and carrying capacity would be the same, and the fact that one man is running cattle and another is not should not make any difference to the value of the land. I do not think that that is right.

Another matter to which I wish to draw attention is the frequency of revaluation. I think that we should set out to make everything as easy as possible for the property owner, and there is no doubt that frequency of revaluation is a disturbance to him. It is a worry, and it results in many objections being made to the Department of the Valuer-General. If the Minister will not extend the period between revaluations, he should at least give consideration to revaluing smaller areas at a time so that there would not be such a time lag between the revaluation of a property and the issuing of a new valuation. The smaller the areas that are to be revalued at one time, the sooner the property owners will receive their new valuations. Property owners now have to wait until all the revaluations in their shire or area are completed, and it could be two years between the date of revaluation and notification of the new figure. Revaluations within a shire are issued at the same time and if large areas are revalued, delay is inevitable. I do not think the Valuer-General issues them as the work proceeds. The only answer to this problem is to reduce the areas in which revaluations are made at any time.

The Minister said at one stage in his speech today that there is a possibility of more frequent revaluations in developing urban areas. This again raises the matter of the unimproved value of land. Does development in a residential area affect the unimproved value of the land, or, as we have heard it expressed several times, the land "as Captain Cook saw it"? It is certain that the value, so far as sale and resale are concerned, is upset by the subdivision of land, but the unimproved value cannot be affected. This is one of the snags in revaluing, and trouble is caused when the valuer takes into consideration the amenities provided in various areas. When he takes them into consideration in making revaluations, he is not making an assessment of the unimproved value of the land.

Mr. Moore: There is no "unimproved" value. There is no such thing.

Mr. MELLOY: That is true. The valuer is making an assessment of the unimproved value of the land, and he has to disregard any improvements.

Mr. Moore: There may be a road 100 miles away, but it can improve the land.

Mr. MELLOY: That is the point I am trying to make. A basic value has to be placed on the unimproved land. As the Minister said earlier, the purpose of land valuation is the assessment of land taxes and rates. Any difference in valuations is taken into consideration by the rating authority. The local authority then, of course, varies the rate in the dollar.

The local authority sets out to obtain a certain amount of income from rates on properties within its control and it varies the rate according to the valuation of the land. The only reason for this constant and, in some cases, extreme increase in the valuation of land is resubdivision or provision of new amenities affecting the land, and the Valuer-General feels that he should revalue the property in accordance with market variations although he is not supposed to

revalue the properties in that fashion. In fixing the unimproved value of land, a valuer cannot reasonably take note of recent sales in an area.

But these are just side comments on the situation. Generally the Opposition welcomes any action taken to facilitate dealings between the public and the Valuer-General, dealings which have caused so many heartaches and headaches over many years when revaluations have taken place. We will have a further look at the clauses of the Bill during the Committee stage.

Mr. ROW (Hinchinbrook) (7.37 p.m.): I wish to mention one matter which is pertinent to this Bill and which has been drawn rather forcefully to my attention. A Press release of 20 August from the Minister's office on the valuation of Kolan shire read—

> "The new rateable value is $3,236,780, an increase of 129.62 per cent over the subsisting rateable value. It takes into account the downturn of cattle prices experienced in the cattle grazing industry but also the upturn in the sale prices of sugar lands."

I am not here to argue the merits of the viability of the sugar industry. I think that the sugar industry is fortunate at this time in the light of the unfortunate events that have taken place in other industries, particularly the cattle industry. If we did not have a viable sugar industry in this State, we would have a much more serious situation than now exists, and that is serious enough, but I would point out that the method of valuation of land which has recently been purchased for the purpose of acquiring its cane assignment is one of considerable concern to the sugar industry.

The traditional and, so far as can be seen, most practicable method of ascertaining the unimproved value of a parcel of land is for the valuer to refer to recent sales of comparable land in the district the subject of the valuation, and to deduct from the sale price of such land the value of the various other items included in the sale together with the value of the improvements made to such land. Recent indications would point to the fact that the Valuer-General has, to some extent, departed from the previously mentioned procedure when he has undertaken the valuation of land having a cane assignment.

The preliminary inquiries of the officers of the Valuer-General's Department in these cases have been directed towards the production capacity of the assigned lands. The officers seek information as to how many tonnes of cane per hectare an assigned parcel of land can produce, and it would appear that the resulting so-called unimproved valuations are based, at least in part, on the information gathered from such inquiries. This approach by the Valuer-General is considered to be invalid for a number of reasons.

The intrinsic worth or unimproved value of cane land is probably rarely, if ever, reflected in the so-called economic approach to valuations, as the productivity of land is due in the major part to the skill of the individual farmer and to the expenditure by him of money for the purposes of the acquisition of plant, the application of fertiliser, clearing, levelling, cultivation, drainage and irrigation. The grower who spends less on these items will, in the usual run of cases, grow the poorer crop.

The apparent departure by the Valuer-General from the traditional approach to valuations appears even more invalid when one considers that assigned land may be sold only within a controlled market if the assignment is to be preserved thereon. All sales of assigned land are subject to the approval of the Central Sugar Cane Prices Board, and the board may, and often does, refuse to consent to an application to transfer assigned land if it considers that the price is too high. So I think one can amply demonstrate that in fact the unimproved value of land is subject to many considerations that are intangible at the time of valuation, and it is doubtful whether some of them are ever fully realised.

In the recent moderate expansion of the cane-growing industry, it became obvious that land suitable for growing sugar cane was in short supply in many sugar areas, with the consequence that producers were forced to pay high prices for unassigned land which is not subject to the board's control at that stage. It is a well-known fact that in the arable coastal strip of Queensland, the supply of land suitable for growing sugar cane is quickly running out in many districts. Much of the land that people are now moving onto is marginal land needing a considerable amount of improvement that is probably not assessable at the time of valuation; nor is the productivity of that land assessable.

Mr. Jensen interjected.

Mr. ROW: The honourable member who interjected owes a great deal of his success to the sugar industry, so I do not think he should be too hasty to criticise any request that the industry makes in this respect.

In addition to the high prices demanded for unassigned land capable of growing cane, growers were also faced with uncontrolled prices relating to clearing, levelling and ground preparation. When this land becomes assigned, however, it may not be transferred and still remain assigned unless the Central Board approves of the price. Growers are therefore faced with uncontrolled costs relating to the purchase, clearing and cultivation of unassigned land while at the same time the same land, once assigned, can be sold as a cane farm only through a controlled market, and experience shows that the controlled market prices for

the sale of assigned land are ordinarily much lower than the initial cost of purchase, clearing, cultivation, etc.

I think it is a very well-recognised fact that when expansion in the sugar industry is contemplated there is, naturally, some form of panic buying of land because of unavailability, and I do not think that is a valid reason, as I have endeavoured to point out, for assessing the valuation on that basis.

The Valuation of Land Act provides in effect that the alteration of the value of land by the acquisition of an assignment shall be taken into consideration by the Valuer-General in making his valuations; but it is felt that the Valuer-General in recent times has failed to acknowledge that, where costs are uncontrolled while the market for assigned land is controlled, the alteration in the value of land, once assigned, is downwards.

It is acknowledged by the industry that the acquisition of an assignment may, depending on circumstances, alter the value of land either upwards or downwards, but it is felt that the Valuer-General does not have a full appreciation of the fact that in most sugar areas in Queensland it is only unassigned land suitable for cane-growing which is sold at premium prices, the sale price of assigned land remaining very firmly controlled by the board.

Another factor which should be taken into consideration is that access and services to the land are frequently denied, or no undertaking is given by the shire involved to provide access or services. The eventual assignee is therefore faced with extremely high costs in providing access to the land for the purpose of removing his crop and, if he intends to reside there, of getting to his home. Therefore it would appear that the method of ascribing unimproved values to assigned lands should remain the traditional rather than the economic method, as the traditional method must necessarily produce a correct valuation whether the existence of an assignment with respect to a parcel of land enhances or diminishes the value of that land.

I can assure the Minister that the sugar industry would not seek any particular privilege in relation to the valuation of land. That industry has always been very responsible in the control of its operations and affairs. But the point I have raised is a very valid one, and I wish to draw it to the Minister's attention.

Mr. DOUMANY (Kurilpa) (7.46 p.m.): I support the Bill. It is quite clear from the speeches of honourable members at this stage and at the introductory stage that we are faced with a task in one of the most vexed areas of human activity, namely, land valuation.

At the core of valuation every landowner or other person who has an interest in land valuation looks for equity, because we are all concerned about what we believe to be a just deal in terms of our interests.

The Bill contains amendments to the Act that will assist in obtaining greater equity for landowners in Queensland. On the one hand it allows for greater responsiveness by the Valuer-General to changes in circumstances and conditions upon which valuations are based. On the other hand it allows for greater opportunity for appellants to lodge their appeals. It allows them more time to lodge appeals and, in the event of their not fulfilling various requirements they will be given a second chance. If the Bill did nothing more than assist appellants in submitting their case and giving them a more simplified procedure and assistance in what is really a very difficult and complex arena, it would certainly serve a very useful purpose.

Tonight we have had many examples of anomalies. We have had examples of aberrations in the valuation process. In the area of agricultural land, which is one of the most difficult areas to judge, the whole philosophy of valuation must always be subject to a lot of argument. Irrespective of the unimproved-value philosophy, there can be no doubt that when recent market performance is taken as an indicator, there must be an influence by the current or very recent prosperity of a particular activity that is carried out on the land. Irrespective of how much discretion is applied there is no questioning that in, say, the beef-industry area, land prices to some degree will reflect the prosperity of a particular activity that is time. It would take the wisdom of a Solomon to devise a system of land valuation that would overcome all the inequities and bring us back to a theoretical unimproved value. It is extremely difficult but, on the other hand, I do not think we should stop trying for equity.

The Bill has a definite value for groups of people who, from time to time, are subject to inequity or the threat of inequity in land valuation. One particular group comprises people in parts of Queensland who were very severely affected by flood in 1974. In Brisbane there has been a great deal of reaction by flood-affected residents to the recent round of valuation notifications. This area of land valuation is unfortunately still imperfect. To my mind it is no less imperfect than the valuation of agricultural land. There are serious anomalies in many of the comparative valuations issued in recent months for flood-affected areas.

Mr. Melloy: You believe that there should be site valuations and use valuations.

Mr. DOUMANY: I believe that a great deal of discretion must be applied.

One of the dangers lies in too much generalisation. If a person happens to be a riparian landholder on the Brisbane River

with absolute river frontage, it is most likely after a couple of years, if he has a nice view with an attractive aspect, even if he was affected by the flood, that he will rapidly return to a high land value. In other words, the compensating factors will very quickly bring the property back into favour. However, a landholder 400 or 500 yards from the river, who cannot see it and who has none of the advantages of the riparian landholder (although he may have had water 12 feet high in his house) has very few of the compensating factors. If all landholders in the vicinity are looked at as a group they may receive the same treatment. I repeat that there is a need to avoid generalisation in land valuation. I hope that the greater scope given by the Bill to appeals will, by a process of evolution, bring about more and more discretionary individual attention in valuation. I know that will mean a lot more work, and I am sure that the Minister would be the first to admit that the Bill will mean a lot more work for his department.

Mr. Miller: I hope so.

Mr. DOUMANY: We certainly hope so.

The whole tenor of the Bill relates to equity. The Minister should be commended on his attempt (which I believe will be very successful) to improve equity in land valuation and give Queensland landholders an increased opportunity to represent their interests. I give the Bill my whole-hearted support.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (7.53 p.m.): As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, we support the amendments introduced by the Minister. It is fairly obvious to all honourable members that the Minister is one who has got straight down to his job and is trying to improve the legislation that comes within his portfolio. It could be said that he is setting an example not only for new Ministers in Cabinet but also for other Ministers who do not seem to act unless a departmental official stirs them on.

Mr. Goleby: Rubbish!

Mr. WRIGHT: I could trace history to show how many Ministers have introduced legislation and how many Ministers never stand at the lectern to speak about their legislation. I think the honourable member should sit back and listen for a while.

This legislation could be one good argument for having specialist Ministers. As Minister for Survey, Valuation, Urban and Regional Affairs, he is the first specialist Minister appointed for a long time. Many of us agree with the idea although there are good arguments for having a balance between the generalist and the specialist.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: Dr. Edwards is a specialist.

Mr. WRIGHT: I accept that he is. I might say that the way that Minister is handling his portfolio backs up my argument, but that, again, is by the way. Returning to the Bill——

Mr. Moore: A bucket of swill now.

Mr. WRIGHT: The honourable member for Windsor might do that, but it is not my cup of tea—not these days, anyway.

Mr. Moore interjected.

Mr. WRIGHT: One can change one's spots.

The Minister stated that he was prepared to consider any reasonable suggestions. It is for that reason that I rise. I ask him to give consideration to the idea of group appeals against assessments of the Valuer-General. Apparently residents already are able to attend as individuals but have their arguments heard, in that sense, in a group. Although they have to lodge their appeals individually, the informality of the court allows them to have their cases heard together. So it seems that in the present arrangement we have something of a precedent for my suggestion.

I suggest that we go further and, instead of having individuals lodge appeals and then attend in a group, allow group appeals. Residents with similar problems in an area could lodge their cases on the same grounds. I accept immediately that they would all rise or fall on the decision. The people joining the group would know that. It is a choice that they would have to make. However, there are many advantages. First, it would streamline the procedures within the hearings, thus cutting down costs. It would certainly allow more appeals to be heard within a given time because of objections being dealt with en masse. The informal atmosphere already present lends itself to group hearings. It is not as though some people would be overawed, not having a chance to say something.

Another important point is that it would assist those citizens who are afraid to front by themselves. Most honourable members would agree that many people in our community simply cop their lot in life because they are not game to defend themselves or take up their own cases. That has been proved with all sorts of consumer organisations that have been set up. It has been proved with the numerous citizen advice bureaus and various other bodies. It has been proved by the number of complaints that each and every one of us handles day by day. We have all had experience of citizens approaching us with a simple problem, but they are not game to front; they ask us to do it. I believe that indicates that the mentality of some in our community is such that they are not game to fight their own issues. The group approach to

appeals would certainly overcome the problem for pensioners and others who are not keen to fight for themselves.

It is already recognised that many residents in an area have to use a like sale on which to argue against an increase. It could be, for instance, that in a group of 30 homes the only sale they can argue for a lower assessment is the one sale in that area. All those people appeal on a similar basis, backing up their argument with the one sale. Very often individuals from a district, when they appeal against an increase, have grounds that are almost uniform. I am not speaking only about the aspect of the sale itself.

I am told that when an assessment is made by the Valuer-General's Department a general or over-all assessment is made first and foremost and that the valuers do not assess every block of land. I may be wrong, but that information was given to me by a person within the department. In fact, I have been told that it would be impossible to value every piece of land. The department itself takes a group approach. An over-all approach is adopted, and then the system of a plus or a minus is used. An amount is added to or subtracted from the figure because of the advantages or disadvantages of an area. Access, outlook, proximity to amenities and other matters are taken into account.

If the department is already using a group approach to assessment, I cannot see any reason why the group approach should not be used in appeals. Time does not allow me to go through the whole argument. It is one that I think can be clearly made. The Minister said that he would give consideration to these points. I ask him at least to investigate the possibility of adopting my suggestion. I reiterate the point I made that people can already go along in groups. Why not extend that and have a group claim instead of individual claims? I ask the Minister to consider this change, minor though it may be.

Mr. McKECHNIE (Carnarvon) (8 p.m.): I commend the Minister on the introduction of this Bill. I am sure that all honourable members realise that my father used to administer the Valuer-General's Department. It will give me great pleasure to go home and inform him that the new Minister is just as keen as he was to improve the department. It will also give me great pleasure to tell him that the new Minister welcomes suggestions and has shown some indication that he may act upon some of them. I commend the Minister for that, too.

I note that the recent Brisbane valuations will probably become effective from 30 June 1976 but will be related back to the date of valuation which, I understand, was 30 June 1972. This is not a very good situation. Again, part of the purpose of this Bill is to ensure that, in future, the dates of valuation will be fairly close to the dates of issue. This is a constructive amendment and will change what used to be a rather strange and outmoded procedure.

When people receive a new valuation, they have 60 days from the date of issue in which to object. If they object, a conference is held with the Valuer-General's Department. This conference is held without prejudice. On the occasion I was involved in one of these conferences at Charters Towers, I found the employees of the Valuer-General's Department to be sympathetic and understanding. The whole idea of this Bill, and also the previous Bill, is to try to make it easy for the layman to find justice with the Valuer-General's Department. In my experience, the Valuer-General's Department has played a fair part in trying to see that this works.

After the conference without prejudice, a decision is reached. When this decision is reached, the landowner has 60 days in which to appeal to the Land Court. Under the Act, this sounded very nice, but sometimes, because of the landowner's failure to comply with a technicality under section 21 (3), the legislation prevented an appeal being ruled valid. The proposed amendment tries to overcome this problem. When it becomes law, if a landowner has not submitted a valid appeal, he will be sent a requisition pointing out the defects and the appellant will have 21 days to comply with the requisition.

I should like to draw the Minister's attention to the fact that originally the appellant has 60 days within which to appeal. But there is a safeguard in the Bill which provides 60 days unless there is an undue delay in the transmission of mail in the ordinary course of post. Once a requisition goes out, there is a period of only 21 days in which to appeal and there is no provision for extending that 21-day period.

I doubt whether if the 21-day period is long enough for the far north-west of Queensland. I do not think it would be any good simply adding the words, "undue delay in the transmission of mail in the ordinary course of post." The Minister would be as aware as I am that the Federal Labor Government is doing everything in the world to destroy postal services in Western Queensland. It is a shocking disgrace. It could be, in the not very distant future, that "undue delay in the ordinary course of post" will mean a month, if the current policies of the Government in Canberra continue.

Mr. Miller: It would be quicker by pony mail.

Mr. McKECHNIE: Yes, it would. I feel that there could be a real need to extend this 21-day period to perhaps 60 days. When the requisition eventually comes before the court, there is a further safeguard built into the amendment. If for some reason the appeal

is still invalid, the court has power to grant a further seven days in which the appellant can make good his requisition. This period seems to me to be quite long enough, because the appellant will then be at the court and he will not have to rely on Her Majesty's mail. Incidentally, I do not know for how much longer it will be called Her Majesty's mail.

Mr. Moore: Not for long. They're republicans.

Mr. McKECHNIE: Not for long, I'm afraid, if they have their way. It is a sorry state of affairs, but we have to learn to live with it until the next election. Then they will go.

I am pleased to see that the approach taken to valuing generally by the Valuer-General is a sincere attempt to take some of the unnecessary emotionalism out of the Valuer-General's valuations. Too often people think that a revaluation is a reason for a general increase in rates, and a revaluation then becomes a very emotional issue. I do not think it can be said too often that there is no excuse for a council to increase the average rate in the shire one cent because the Valuer-General's valuations have increased. Naturally, with revaluation some areas in a shire will be valued higher than others, but, if the average rates increase, that is purely by council decision, and it has nothing to do with the Department of the Valuer-General.

One other matter that I should like the Minister to consider very seriously, perhaps when amendments are being made to the Act in the future, is the problem of tobacco quotas being valued when the Valuer-General makes his valuation of land. Surely a valuation, at least under the present set-up, is meant to be a valuation of land. If an industry has shown the foresight to enter into a stabilisation agreement, I do not see why quotas under that agreement should be taken into consideration when the land is being valued. I ask the Minister to look into this matter quite seriously, and I hope that he will in the future bring down further amendments dealing with this question.

Previous speakers have mentioned the necessity to have one valuing authority. I should like to back them in their approach to the Minister. We have dedicated bodies of public servants in some fields, but if this country is going to prosper again, and if it is ever to be allowed by the Labor Government in Canberra to get up off its knees, all Governments must cut the growth of the Public Service. This is a necessity, and I hope that we in this State will play our part by setting up a single valuing authority. This would prevent some duplication.

Mr. Lindsay: The Bass electors think exactly the same. It's a sad state of affairs.

Mr. McKECHNIE: It certainly is.

An Opposition Member interjected.

Mr. McKECHNIE: I didn't hear that; I'm sorry.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will address the Chair.

Mr. McKECHNIE: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I was provoked by the interjections from the Opposition. I assure you that they do not worry me very much, because the Labor Government in Canberra is on the way out, anyhow.

Another point made by other speakers was that unimproved valuations should perhaps be on the way out. In principle I agree with those speakers and urge the Minister to accept that suggestion; but if he does, I hope that he and his officers will bring before the Parliament a Bill that does not destroy incentive. I would not like to see the day come when, say, somebody like Sir Bruce Small, who likes to build islands on mangrove swamps and play a really worth-while part in the development of Queensland is penalised for——

Mr. Wright: He is not penalised. He pays only $100.

Mr. McKECHNIE: This is what I am saying——

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. McKECHNIE: The honourable member for Rockhampton suggests that Sir Bruce pays very little in rates, but who would pay high rates on a mangrove swamp? We are talking about unimproved value and I wonder whether any rates at all would have been paid on those mangrove swamps if Sir Bruce had not had the foresight to develop not only his own island but all the other lovely islands down at the Gold Coast. Honourable members opposite love penalising development but what they do not realise is that this does away with jobs for the people who support them, people who are becoming fewer in number every day. The reason for this lack of support is that honourable members opposite in attempting to socialise the country have caused an unemployment rate of 5 per cent and I am willing to bet that in two years' time it will be 10 per cent if we still have the same Government in power in Canberra. I appreciate this opportunity to speak to the Bill and I commend the Minister again——

Mr. Jones: Oh! It's a privilege.

Mr. McKECHNIE: I do treat it as a privilege to be able to speak, which is more than some members of the Opposition do.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I advise backbench members of the Government parties that if they want to see the Minister they should see him in the Cabinet room.

Mr. GIBBS (Albert) (8.12 p.m.): Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Minister on the amendments to the Valuation of Land Act which are before us today. As I see it, the best thing the Bill does is to open up the avenues of appeal and make them easier. Recently in the Albert Shire, much of which is within my electorate, there was a revaluation. The dust has hardly settled from the appeals that took place after that revaluation.

The Minister said that certain aspects of the Act often cause problems for the officers who have to carry them out and that the officers are criticised for their actions. They do not deserve all the criticism they receive, although there are times when I believe they have misinterpreted that part of the Act relating to fringe land by valuing on potential rather than merely as land in the developer's hands. I had a case brought to me this morning by a person who owns land in the Woongoolba-Jacob's Well area. He is trying to get a reassessment of the valuation of land he owns within the sugar area. This land appears to have been valued more on potential than anything else. It is unsuitable for housing so in my opinion it must be rural land. The 1974 flood caused a change in opinion about the use of a lot of land for housing. This has meant that land valued as housing land before the flood has had to be revalued.

I believe that we as a Government have a responsibility to make sure that a man who wants to go on farming is not forced off the land. The Government does appear to be doing this. Whether it is set out in the Act or whether the Act is being misinterpreted I am not too sure, but this is something we must have a very close look at. Valuations of farming land in my electorate are extremely high. The recent revaluation in the Albert Shire sent some values up by 5,000 per cent. They certainly were too low in the first place, but I believe that much of this farm land has been valued on potential rather than land usage. This could cause great embarrassment to councillors or aldermen of the day, and I think members of this Assembly have a responsibility to clean the matter up and not allow the officers of the department to cop all the criticism for it if it is our doing. In this Chamber, we have the responsibility of altering that course.

There are many occasions on which farmers say, "I just cannot carry on." I am speaking now not about farmers in the western areas but about farmers in rural areas, say, north and south of Brisbane. Perhaps the Government is making it impossible for farmers, in today's economic climate, to carry on. Because of the attitude of the Federal Government, in particular, to farmers and other primary producers, and also to miners and others, they are all going down the drain. The Government of Queensland must take a very responsible stand and make sure that it does not contribute to their leaving the industry in which they are engaged. As members of the Government, we must do all we can to maintain the land in the fringe areas for rural use. The longer we can do that, the better off Queenslanders generally, and the people living adjacent to Brisbane in particular, will be.

Once again the question of interpretation arises. I have read the Land Act. It is quite complex, and it is difficult to interpret accurately the meaning of the various terms and sections. I am aware that the officers who have the job of undertaking vast revaluations sometimes have great difficulty in getting the correct answer.

The Albert Shire Council had to introduce a rural rate to overcome many of its problems, but even then some of the problems remain. If the provisions of the Bill had been in force, the task of those wishing to appeal would have been much easier. A tremendous amount of the time of the valuing officers, the Albert Shire Council and many other people was taken up, and public meetings were held, yelling went on, and many other things took place. If we can do anything to lessen the burden on the councillors, the officers and the people involved, let us play our part by doing that in this Parliament.

An attempt is being made to preserve the sugar industry in the Woongoolba-Jacob's Well area. In an attempt to maintain the sugar industry there for as long as possible, the Albert Shire Council has provided in its town planning that there shall be no block under 50 acres in that area.

We have to make sure that in areas such as that the valuations are not fixed at such a high level that people can no longer exist there and have to leave the industry. That is one of the main points that I wish to make in this debate.

We must also look very hard at the results of the 1974 flood. In the Albert Shire, lands that were considered ripe for development now cannot be used for that purpose. Because areas that had not been under flood for 70 or 80 years were flooded in 1974, the council had to revoke permits or put aside subdivisions.

I congratulate the Minister for introducing the Bill. I shall be putting a case to him on behalf of the man who raised the matter with me this morning to try to get an assessment. It may not be possible to effect a cure immediately, but it may be possible to alter the Act to prevent something similar happening again. The gentleman concerned went to the Land Court thinking that it would be a nice friendly afternoon chat, but he found that he was up against a solicitor and a barrister. He had prepared his own case. I do not think he brought out all the facts, and his case was dismissed. He does not want to appeal. He does not think he has sufficient money to appeal, and he does not know how much it would cost.

As I said, I will take the case up with the Minister. Perhaps we can follow it through and come up with a practical solution. Honourable members should try to discover whether provisions are bringing about inequality or causing embarrassment to people. This would assist the Minister, who seems to be settling down and doing a very good job in the Ministry. I assure him that I will support whole-heartedly any efforts he makes to have the valuation of land simplified under the Act.

Mr. HARTWIG (Callide) (8.20 p.m.): For as long as I can remember and before that, the Valuer-General's Department has been a very controversial one in its valuing of land. Only yesterday I received three valuations from three shires adjacent to the area I represent in Central Queensland, namely, Mt. Morgan, Kolan and Chinchilla. I know that the Mt. Morgan Shire embraces some rather poor country, or it would not have been included in the electorate of Port Curtis. If it were good country I would have had it in my electorate.

Because of the depressed beef prices and the downturn in cattle prices the valuation of the Mt. Morgan area was increased by only 6.8 per cent. In the Chinchilla Shire the revaluation suffered at the hands of the depressed beef industry and the increase was only in the vicinity of 15 per cent. However, in the Kolan Shire, where it is said that, although meat prices showed a downward trend the sugar industry was booming, the over-all increase in valuation was 123 per cent.

I believe that professional valuers are not competent. When I say that, I mean that they are not competent to judge and assess the value of land. Nobody can tell me that in the Kolan Shire, where a lot of sugar-cane is grown, there is not also a large amount of poor country that is subject to depressed beef prices. Those landowners have suffered an increase of 123 per cent in valuation. Although a person might know his own country within a radius of 10 or 20 miles, if he travels 100 miles I doubt that he can judge and assess the value of an unimproved block in that area.

Over the years there has been quite a deal of variation in valuations. The honourable member for Albert gave his ideas about not penalising the primary producer by creating false values. I have had quite a deal of experience with varying valuations because I spent $250,000 on improving my block. When I went onto it, that block of 10,000 acres was running 140 head of cattle. At that time the Valuer-General downgraded my valuation. Within the next decade I spent $250,000 on the block, and by that time I was rated among the highest in that district. In other words, I was penalised for improving the country—for improving its carrying capacity, for improving water points and putting down 24 dams and 4,000 acres of improved pastures. My neighbour did almost nothing to his property but I was paying almost 300 per cent more in rates than he was.

Mr. Miller: Why?

Mr. HARTWIG: That is a fair question. It was because I tried to do something to improve my country. In other words I was penalised because I showed incentive and effected improvements.

Mr. Casey: Did you sell it for more than $250,000?

Mr. Miller: That is not the point. He improved its value.

Mr. HARTWIG: It is not the point, but I expect questions like that from the honourable member for Mackay.

Unimproved value, supposedly, is determined by what a not over-keen purchaser is prepared to pay for a block of land to a person who is not over keen to sell. Recently, a block submitted by the Queensland Sub-Normal Children's Welfare Association for raffle purposes was valued by an approved valuer at about $53,000. The person who won the block said, "I have won $53,000," and he had every right to think so because the brochure said, "This block of land is valued at $53,000." He tried very hard to sell the property for $53,000 but the best offer he received in the neighbourhood was $28,000. That shows how unrealistic some approved valuers are. People who live in a neighbourhood know what land is worth. It is not fair for any man who has travelled 100 miles or more to say, "Your land can carry this and produce that." It is just not on. When a valuer inspects an improved property, he sees it only in its improved state at the best of its carrying capacity. In many instances he has no knowledge of how much brigalow regrowth, or other pests the country may have carried. It could have carried lantana, groundsel, rubber vine or other pests. These things matter because it costs money to keep the land improved.

We talk about land courts and the 60 days allowed for lodging an appeal. Recently in Biloela I appeared on my own behalf. The basic property used by the Crown advocate and the Crown valuer was a property on which underground water was available with some 400 acres of arable land. They tried to compare that property with mine, which has no underground water and very little arable land. I really gave that valuer and the Crown advocate a hiding, and I was able to get my valuation reduced.

Unfortunately many people, through no fault of their own, are incapable of presenting their cases although they are good, hard toilers. They cannot defend themselves in court or stress the water facilities, carrying capacity, bitumen roads against gravel roads, distance from rail, mail and school bus runs and a host of things such as freight

rates, quality of soil, commercial timber and so on that affect the unimproved value of land.

I believe it is a commendable idea of the Minister's to give notice of 12 months in which an inspection will be made, and to issue a proclamation to that effect. Irrespective of whether there is a drought or a good season, the shire will be valued within that time. That is good thinking. Very often over the years when drought has descended upon the land and a valuation has been due, the Valuer-General has been conspicuous by his absence. He has refrained from making an inspection at that time well knowing that he would never be able to substantiate an increase in the shire's unimproved value.

Mr. Casey: Did you expect him to die from thirst?

Mr. HARTWIG: That is what has happened in the past. I know about this from personal experience.

Mr. Jensen: What about your probate when you die?

Mr. HARTWIG: I don't intend dying. I will live for many years yet. The honourable member from Bundaberg can contemplate that. He looks pretty crook to me.

Once a valuation is made, as short a time as possible should elapse before an appeal is heard. Cases alter with the circumstances. It is not good enough when one block is valued at a much higher rate than the one next door. That invariably happens. One hot day a valuer came to my place. I happened to know that he liked a rum, so I put a bottle of rum into him. I said, "How do you feel? Do you think I should go for the horses?" He said, "It's a bit hot." I said, "Where would you like to go?" He said, "Do you think we could do it off the veranda?" We valued the property from the veranda. Three months later I gave him a lacing in the Land Court. I said, "It serves you right. I was prepared to go, but you weren't."

Mr. Casey: What did you lace him with?

Mr. HARTWIG: I am talking about a 10,000-acre property. It would have taken a couple of days to get around it. It was dry and there wasn't very much surface water. These things do go on. In fairness to valuers, I admit they have a difficult task.

Two or three years ago, prior to the Whitlam Government, the cattle industry was very prosperous. In a valuation done in those years, as Kolan may have been done, the future looked very rosy indeed. I appeal to the Minister to set seven years as the minimum period between valuations. I do not believe that five years is sufficient. I believe that to average it out we need a minimum of seven years and a maximum of 10 years. Very often local authorities are compelled to adjust their rates because the total area valuation has been greatly altered. However, although they do not admit that they have increased the total rate, when the rate notice arrives the total is always higher than it was the year before.

The Minister is very keen to do the right thing in the Valuer-General's Department. I commend the Bill. I believe that any change must be for the better. We have struggled with the Valuer-General's Department for years. I could write a book about the anomalies I have seen. However, I am honest and sincere when I congratulate the Minister, because I feel sure that he is a man who wants to improve the lot of the primary producer and all other landowners in this wonderful State of Queensland.

Mr. MILLER (Ithaca) (8.35 p.m.): Unlike the water-holes in the area represented by the honourable member for Callide, those in Ithaca are very close together; in fact they are only about 60 ft. apart.

I join with the honourable member for Rockhampton in giving a bouquet to the Minister because, like the honourable member for Rockhampton, I think it is very good indeed to have a Minister who is an expert in the field of which he is in charge. I pass on to the Minister an extra bouquet from this side of the House. It is good to see that members of the Opposition are prepared to recognise a Minister for his worth irrespective of his politics. I commend the honourable member for Rockhampton on his attitude.

I thank the Minister for his interest and concern in having an equitable situation in valuation. Every honourable member wishes to see equity in valuation. But I am concerned that we are not getting equity in valuation.

I wish to refer to what the Minister said earlier in his speech. He said that while he is responsible for the Valuer-General's Department he will explore every avenue of improving the Valuation of Land Act. In this he has my whole-hearted support. Like every other honourable member, I am concerned with what is taking place under the Valuation of Land Act.

In replying to one of the queries I raised in my introductory speech dealing with a case in Bardon, the Minister said today—

> "However, I feel I must point out that if a valuation has to be 'split' because of a subdivision the separate parts would be valued on the same level as comparable parcels of land irrespective of the price paid for the parts contained in the split valuations."

I would have no argument with that statement except that it is not what actually happens. The case I referred to the Minister concerns a valuation of $5,000 to $6,000 for the whole of an area of land. I said that half of the land was resumed by the Brisbane City Council, which paid $240 for 24 perches. When the council sells that land it agrees with me that it will sell it

for $12,000 or more. The Minister or the Valuer-General will then place a valuation on the remaining part of the original area not on the basis of its present value, which is between $5,000 and $6,000, but on the basis of sales of comparable land in the area, which is the land that has been resumed from the owners for $240 and will be sold by the council for $12,000 or more. This will raise the original owner's valuation to $12,000 or more. That is contrary to what the Minister said this morning.

If he said that the valuation of the land sold by the Brisbane City Council would remain at the valuation of the land owned by the previous landowner from whom it was resumed, I would have no argument. But the person from whom the land was resumed will find that he has been robbed not only by the Brisbane City Council but also by the State Government because the State Government will value his land not at its present valuation, but at the valuation of the land sold by the Brisbane City Council. I fail to see how that is an honest and serious approach to valuation of land in Brisbane. I would like the Minister to pay more attention to that part of the question. I do not think the Minister has answered it correctly and I would like him to look at it again.

In his opening remarks this afternoon, the Minister also said—

> "As regards the valuation of an area in Milton Road of about 14.1 perches mentioned by the honourable member I would mention that it is believed that is the subject of an objection and that the owner has been notified of a conference in the matter. The owner will be given every opportunity at this conference to submit his reasons for considering the new valuation is too high. Perhaps I should mention that there are many parcels of land in Brisbane of a lesser area than 16 perches and upon which residences are situated."

First of all I point out to the Minister that the Metropolitan Permanent Building Society will not lend one cent on any property with an area of less than 16 perches. The society realises that if the house is burnt down the property is valueless, because the Brisbane City Council will not allow you, Mr. Speaker, me, or anybody else to re-build on an area of land smaller than 16 perches. I cannot accept that even though there are many houses built on 16 perches of land——

Mr. Jensen: They might be fowl houses.

Mr. MILLER: I thought we were having a serious discussion.

If the Metropolitan Permanent Building Society will not lend a cent on land under 16 perches, how can a valuer say that that land is worth in excess of $6,000? That is an impossibility. I am not satisfied with the present system of land valuation in Brisbane.

There is also the matter of high-rise buildings as against flats owned by pensioners or persons on superannuation. This morning I went to the hearing of the first objections that I knew of in my area. A widow asked me to go along because she was frightened to speak to the valuer representing the Valuer-General. Previously the land in question was valued at $3,900, and I understand that the property has been three flats for many years, certainly from a time before the Act came into operation. When the Valuer-General's agent valued this woman's property, he placed on it a new valuation of $19,000. I was told at the conference this morning that it was valued at that figure because it is in a residential B area, and its potential is beyond all dreams.

I point out to the House that if a person lives in a residential A home in a residential B area, he is not put at a disadvantage because he is in such an area. But I want to place before the Minister the situation that has now arisen. A person living on the left-hand side of Milton Road, Auchenflower, is in a residential B area, but one living on the right-hand side is in a residential A area. In both residential B and residential A areas are old homes that have been converted into small flats. Most of them are owned by widows or widowers who are living on pensions or superannuation payments. They are trying to supplement their meagre existence under our present system, with its high inflation rate, by converting their homes into flats. They used to have the privacy of a residential A unit, but they now put up with the inconvenience of having two other families living with them in an ordinary home.

What happens? If they live on the right-hand side of Milton Road, they are in a residential A area and nothing happens. But if they happen to live on the left-hand side of Milton Road in a residential B area (I understand the Brisbane City Council introduced this zoning in 1971 or 1972), they can have their valuation increased from $3,900 to $19,000. On both sides of Milton Road there is comparable land and comparable housing, yet the valuation for a person on the right-hand side can be increased by 100 per cent whilst one on the left-hand side can have a valuation increased by 600 per cent.

We say in the Valuation of Land Act that we are concerned with the individual, and that we do not want to price him out of his home. We say that, whilst he lives in a residential A home in a residential B area, he will not be priced out of his home. We are referring there to a man who is earning a wage which increases with rises in the cost of living, and who is living with his wife and family. I want the Minister to consider tonight widows who have had to sacrifice the privacy of their homes and allow other families to come in so that they can remain living in an area in which their friends and relatives also live. What will happen

to them? They are being priced out of their homes not by the rates imposed by the Brisbane City Council but by the valuations made by the Valuer-General's Department.

I think it is a well-known fact that there is a shortage of accommodation in Brisbane. The cost of accommodation is rising continually. In the Auchenflower area there is a lot of cheap accommodation and that accommodation is cheap for one reason: there are widows such as this woman I met today who are prepared to allow people into their small flats. These cheap rents are possible because the cost of building such flats was very low. If we do away with this type of accommodation—an ordinary home converted into one or two small flats—we will have high-rise accommodation costing $50 or $60 a week and where we now have working families paying $20 a week we will have groups of university students or groups of young working people paying $60 a week.

I am concerned about the family man and I do not see how we as a Government can allow the Valuer-General to price out of existence these low-cost flats in old areas such as Auchenflower. Something has to be done about the Valuation of Land Act. I am not satisfied with it in its present form and, as far as I am concerned, we have to find a new formula for valuation. Surely everyone in this Assembly is concerned about the sections we are looking at tonight. I would like the Minister to show me some way of overcoming the present situation because I am not prepared to see people forced out of their homes, not because of increases in rates imposed by the Brisbane City Council, although they are going up all the time, but because of the valuations of the Valuer-General's Department.

Honourable members can imagine the difference between the rates on a property valued at $3,900 and those on a property valued at $19,000. Can anyone in this Chamber tell me how this woman with two flats can make up the difference in the rates as a result of the increase in valuation from $3,900 to $19,000? If she had a high-rise building, there would be no problem, but she does not have a high-rise building. This woman has an invalid daughter and an elderly mother and because she has to support these two people she has given away the privacy of her home and allowed other people in. I hope that we as a Government are not going to force these three people to sell that property to some developer (who will put up a high-rise building) and move out to Woodridge or some other area miles from anywhere. This woman has lived in this area all her life, all her friends live there and I think she is entitled to spend the rest of her days there. As a Government we consider the family and we should now be prepared to consider the individual, whether it be a widow or a widower. Unless the Minister can show me a way to do this I will, if I can, during the Committee stage move that we withdraw the new valuation until such time as we can find an answer to the situation.

Mr. M. D. HOOPER (Townsville West) (8.49 p.m.): Since the Bill was read a first time honourable members have had a chance to peruse its provisions and assess its aims. My attention was drawn first to a statement by the Minister that the first aim of the Bill is to enable the Valuer-General to assess the unimproved value of land in conformity with the real estate market. To me that means only one thing—that land as an item of value is indestructible and should have the same value for all purposes. I cannot agree with the statements made by my colleague the honourable member for Ithaca, much as I liked his impassioned plea that widows should be rated only on a percentage of valuation, possibly because they are living in a high-density area. I think that possibly some relief might be obtained through the local authority rather than——

Mr. Miller: Why do we give a lower valuation to the family man?

Mr. M. D. HOOPER: I do not think that the value of the land should have anything to do with who lives on it; it should be in conformity with the zoning. If any relief is to be given, I think it should be given through some provision of local government legislation rather than through the Valuer-General's Department. For example, one could talk to the owner of land and ask him what the value of his site is. If it is land with some invisible improvements on it—that is the term used these days—such as retaining walls or reclaimed areas, one might ask him the value of the land for purposes of rating, for purposes of sale, for purposes of compensation on resumption, or for purposes of probate and succession duties, or, if it is a leased block of land, what its value would be if he leased it. He would give five different values. To my mind, that is completely incompatible with the intention of the legislation.

At the moment, different Government departments are in conflict on values and, as I said at the introductory stage, there should be only one valuation for all purposes. Land should be valued for its optimum use. Irrespective of its use, a valuation should be determined for all purposes.

Mr. Jensen interjected.

Mr. M. D. HOOPER: It would depend on the zoning.

The Minister referred also—I think this may have been mentioned by the honourable member for Nudgee—to a property of 59 acres at Daisy Hill Road. The land was originally valued by the Valuer-General at $88,500, but on appeal the valuation was reduced to $20,650. Obviously the owner would receive some reduction in rates on

the valuation; but there was no great joy in that because he even had to pay the costs of the appeal. I do not see any justice in his having to pay the costs of the appeal when a valuation of $88,500 is made and subsequently reduced. To my knowledge, and to the knowledge of other valuers who have attended hearings, Land Court hearings are not always very sympathetic. Some members of the court are former members of the Lands Department, and they are very sympathetic to officers of that department.

Mr. Hanson: One person was appointed a member of the Land Court because of the rort that he worked when making an electoral redistribution a few years ago.

Mr. M. D. HOOPER: I will not come into that one.

The Minister said that the provisions of the Act do not cover cases in which land has been reclaimed by the Crown, a local authority or a harbour board, as they would in the case of a private owner. I recall acting for clients in Townsville who some years ago appealed against valuations made by the Valuer-General's Department of reclaimed land in the inner-city area. It had been filled with mud and sand from the Ross River, and the occupiers of the land felt that, because it was reclaimed land and because the provisions of the Act would apply to a private owner, they could have their valuation reduced to the original value of the land—what the honourable member for Rockhampton referred to some time ago as Captain Cook's valuation. The legislation laid down that that did not apply and that the Valuer-General could rightly impose the real improved value of the site. That was fair enough from all points of view. It was the value of the land that the person occupied and I think it was only right that he was assessed for rental in accordance with the value of the land and paid rates according to the zoning of the land. That applies only in certain cases. If it had been a private owner, obviously he would have received a much lower valuation under the legislation and, accordingly, paid lower rates.

In bringing forward this amendment to the Act, the Minister has gone a long way towards making matters simpler. He has also canvassed the possibility of getting round to site values of property in future. I think there is tremendous merit in that suggestion. The Minister's committee is very much in favour of it, and I think that before long the Minister will be bringing down further amendments to the legislation to provide for site valuations. I repeat that I think there should be only one valuation for all purposes, and I support the Bill.

Mr. HALES (Ipswich West) (8.55 p.m.): I welcome the Bill, because I believe that any legislation that extends the rights of appellants in the Land Court is desirable and necessary. I know of many appellants who have been denied justice because of mail delays. Any Bill that allows the Valuer-General to assess unimproved values at a level closer to market values is to be applauded, but I believe that we should be wary of instances of half a dozen valuers arriving at half a dozen different valuations. Anybody associated with real estate would know that that occurs.

Much has been said about site value or market value. The ordinary landowner, John Citizen, would arrive at the value of his land —the Valuer-General's value—more clearly by comparing his land with Joe Blow's block next door.

We have to temper our thoughts on this matter, however, because market value may not always be close to rateable value. I will cite one instance of this. About 18 months ago a block in the Lowood area was the subject of a contract of sale for $240,000, but the sale was not finalised. Within the last six weeks the property was sold for $70,000. If the sale had gone through at $240,000, and if the Valuer-General had valued properties in that area, imagine what value would have been put on that acreage. Within only 18 months, as the result of the crash in beef prices, the sale price fell to $70,000, which was a drop of 300 per cent. So, perhaps we cannot look at market value as being close to the rateable value for land, unless in certain and specific cases—say, following reduced cattle prices—the Valuer-General could make another valuation within five years.

I would totally disagree with the honourable member for Callide, who says he would like to see the period extended to 10 years. In my opinion, that is too long. If a landholder was to be rated for 10 years at one value it could work either against the council or against the landholder, and if I had to lean either way, I would probably lean towards the landholder.

Another contentious item is the split valuation. In my association with the real estate industry I have seen 24-perch lots valued on a split-valuation basis at a figure very close to that originally placed on the subdivided area, which was perhaps 20 times the size of the 24-perch block. That leads me to the belief that there are many iniquities in the present system.

Perhaps our specialist Minister and some of his committee members who have been totally involved in real estate, such as the honourable members for Townsville West and Wynnum, can come up with some system that will be equitable to everybody, not only the ordinary landholder but also the councils who are desperately in need of money.

Mr. MURRAY (Clayfield) (9.1 p.m.): I have listened with great interest to the contributions made this evening, and I am pleased that many members have seen fit to congratulate the Minister on his attempts to face up to an extremely difficult area of

legislation, namely, valuation of land. I think the Minister will agree with me that in putting forward our formulas and in specialising we must ensure we do not neglect some simple, human elements and produce quite unbearable inequities, some of which have been referred to tonight.

It was interesting to hear the contribution of the honourable member for Callide, who outlined a situation that is quite common. He increased the value of his land to such an extent that, quite incredibly, he was heavily taxed by comparison with his neighbours, who did virtually nothing with their land, which was similar to his.

Mr. Chinchen: He has improved the unimproved value.

Mr. MURRAY: Unfortunately, he has improved the unimproved value. That would appear to be quite impossible, but he seems to have done it.

The honourable member for Ithaca raised relevant issues that are well known to honourable members representing the metropolitan area, provincial cities and elsewhere. The situation outlined by the honourable member has cropped up to an alarming degree. I support his comments. I am deeply concerned at the fact that in some cases we are, in effect, driving people out of their homes. I believe all honourable members would be worried by this. Surely no-one intends to do that, yet we are doing it. The case I cite is a simple one, but I suppose it is typical of many.

A certain migrant couple who, like many people, fled Europe to escape tyranny, came here after the war to start a new life, and by working and saving they finally put money down as a deposit on and gradually paid off an old home in my electorate. It stands on 64 perches of land, which is rather a large block. It was not considered to be large 25 or 30 years ago. This couple worked extremely hard to consolidate their position, and they became naturalised. They are very good people who have succeeded in making for themselves a good life. After 25 years of employment as a Commonwealth public servant the husband looked towards retirement and his superannuation benefits, and realising that his modest superannuation payment would not meet the rate charges and other costs as well as provide for their modest way of living, he and his wife constructed at the back of their old home a small flat to accommodate two people. People who do that should be commended, not penalised.

Mr. Miller: Too right!

Mr. MURRAY: The honourable member for Ithaca referred to housing shortages. At a time of accommodation shortages, people should be commended for doing this.

This couple were able to let this humble accommodation quite easily. In fact, it has never been vacant for any lengthy period. Everything went along quite well until a new valuation was made. They compared their situation with that of their immediate neighbours. The exorbitant value placed on their land made their position quite untenable. These people are now quite desperate. The value of their land increased by nearly 300 per cent, whereas that on the land belonging to their neighbours, which is exactly the same type, rose by 50 per cent. The valuation of this couple's land has risen from $10,000 to approximately $30,000. If it had been valued on a comparable basis with neighbouring blocks the valuation would have been about $14,000. These people are paying very dearly indeed for a very simple little flat adjoining their home. I suppose that now, with a valuation of $30,000 on their 64 perches, the couple have gone up into the land tax bracket. With their savings eroded by inflation, which affects us all, they find themselves in a desperate plight.

Do we intend to put people in this position? Is this what we are to do right across the board? If so, it is just not good enough. I wholeheartedly support the honourable member for Ithaca who urged that some way be found to alleviate the situation. I am sure the Minister can find a way. The Minister mentioned earlier that it was not for the Government to carry the problems of discriminatory actions.

Mr. Lickiss: I said it was not for the Valuer-General's Department. I didn't say anything about Government. Rate relief is already afforded for pensioners under the Local Government Act. I suggest you are directing your attention towards the wrong legislation. On the matter of rate relief, you should be directing your attention towards the Local Government Act, not the Valuation of Land Act.

Mr. MURRAY: I thank the Minister for his attempt to help me. However, under section 11 of the Act that is precisely what happens. There is no escape from it. This is what the rating authority does under section 11. Section 11 needs altering. The local authority cannot alter it, so we must do it. The Act specifies that we do certain things. If we want them done in another way, we have to change the Act.

Mr. Lickiss: One of the great faults in the Act is that we are trying to involve the Valuer-General in valuing at a concessional rate for the purpose of relieving the rate burden. I suggest that, rather than considering amending this legislation, we should look to the Local Government Act to afford that relief.

Mr. MURRAY: In one way or another we must find an answer to this problem, and find it quickly. We are causing very great hardship to people who should not

have it imposed upon them. And it is a very grave hardship indeed. I venture to suggest that many desperate people in Brisbane do not know where to turn. They face the prospect of being driven from their homes after having lived in them for 25 years. Certainly they have watched the progress around them, and they only want to be treated on an equitable basis with their neighbours.

A Government Member: They want to live.

Mr. MURRAY: Certainly they do. They are prepared to face up to a rating based on the general classification of the land around them, but they cannot accept a discriminatory rating based on the fact that they have erected a flat on their land.

I assume—and my question is not so hypothetical—that if the honourable member for Port Curtis, who has a large family, bought that home and the tenants left that little flat, the valuation would go straight back to what it would have been before the tenants moved in. I ask the Minister: would this be right?

Mr. Lickiss: Once it is used as a single-unit residence it would be valued accordingly.

Mr. MURRAY: This is quite extraordinary. There is something very wrong here.

Mr. Lickiss: What would be the difference? Where do you draw the line—one flat, two flats, three flats or 15 flats?

Mr. MURRAY: There is a line to be drawn, and a penalty cannot be imposed upon people in this sort of situation. In our legislation we draw lines all over the place. We make a division, as we must do. In fact we have made one division already. Section 11 makes a division by excluding the single family. What happens if two families want to live there? I do not want to be facetious, but I presume they could not do it. Only one family can live there. Apparently, a resident cannot ask his brother and his family to come and live there also.

Mr. Miller: What about an elderly parent?

Mr. MURRAY: That is a very good point.

Mr. Miller: To come into the flat.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will address the Chair.

Mr. MURRAY: What happens then? There must be a way of resolving this. The honourable member for Ithaca has raised a valid point, and I back him fully. I am sure that other honourable members are extremely worried about this matter. If the cases have not come to their notice yet, they will. Those that have already been outlined should be sufficient to make us take action, and there will be many more. The Minister should find the method of eliminating——

Mr. Hanson: Find the solution.

Mr. MURRAY: Yes, find the solution, and let us know. Maybe the Minister could amend section 11, and I ask him to do that. Perhaps when we are in the Committee stage the Minister could come up with an amendment to section 11 to alleviate this problem. We certainly ask him to do so.

Mr. GREENWOOD (Ashgrove) (9.14 p.m.): It is fashionable this evening to preface remarks with a compliment to the Minister. I should like to join the growing band because it is certainly well deserved. When the Minister took over his portfolio he said he would take the mystery out of valuations. While he might not have altogther succeeded for some of us, he has done more than that for most of us.

Above all else, the Minister is concerned with people who are aggrieved about the valuation that is put on their land by his department. Three-quarters of the Bill he has introduced is designed not merely to protect the rights of such people but to improve them. His intention is to cover those cases where people without legal advice have put in a notice of objection or of appeal themselves and, because of some technical defect, have found that they have failed to put in a proper appeal and therefore fail to get their day in court.

Until this Bill there were three very important provisions governing the technical requirements that a notice of appeal must fulfil if it is to be valid. The first is to be found in section 21 (2), which provides that, unless an appeal is instituted within 60 days of the Valuer-General's decision, the appeal is out of court. If it is a day late, the appellant does not get his right of appeal.

The second provision is to be found in subsection (3), and it provides that the notice shall state the grounds of appeal. If, through oversight, a layman leaves out his best argument, he cannot use it. Unless all his grounds are in the notice of appeal, he cannot rely on them. If an appellant has forgotten to include a ground of appeal, he has to give it up. This is one of the defects in the present law which the Minister is remedying.

The third point that I want to make is that under the law as it stands the notice has to state the amount which, in the objector's opinion, is a true valuation of the land. Once again, if an objector omits that important detail, he has not, it seems, lodged a valid notice of appeal.

The Minister has tackled all of these problems, but unfortunately the Bill introduces a new obstacle. It is found in clause 4, which provides that an appellant shall serve a copy of the notice of appeal on the Valuer-General not later than seven days after the notice is filed. By itself that does not look very dangerous, but over the page (3D) provides—

> "If the appellant . . . does not serve a copy of the notice of appeal on the Valuer-General not later than seven days after

the notice is filed in the Land Court registry, the Land Court shall strike out the appeal."

In addition to dealing with the three problems tackled by the Bill, I should like to deal in this speech with the fourth problem also. Let us see what the Bill does. It approaches in a very simple way the problems of leaving out grounds of appeal and failing to mention the amount in the notice of appeal. It simply gives the appellant who has made a mistake another chance. In fact, it gives him two other chances. It is provided in (3B) that if the registrar notices that grounds have been left out, or that the amount has been omitted, he must write to the appellant pointing out his omissions. That is the appellant's first chance. But even if the registrar does not notice omissions, and in the course of the hearing of the appeal before the Land Court it emerges that the appellant has made a mistake, (3C) comes into operation and the Land Court gives yet another chance to the appellant by allowing him seven days to overcome the problem. In these respects, the Bill does all that we can ask for.

I should now like to turn to the question of notice to the Valuer-General. Frankly, I cannot see why this provision is in the Bill. Why failure to give a copy of the notice of appeal to the Valuer-General within seven days, even though it has been filed and the appeal has begun in a valid way, should cause the appeal to be struck out baffles my comprehension.

As the Minister has asked for suggested amendments, I suggest that (3D) be deleted from the Bill, and that in (3E), in the eighth line, in the phrase "not disadvantaged by the defective nature", there be inserted between the words "the" and "defective" the words, "failure to serve within the time prescribed or the". I suggest also that, in the next line, after the words "copy served on him" there should be inserted the words, "as the case may be". I will not take up the time of the House by dealing with that any further——

Mr. Lickiss: Are you aware that in the existing legislation section 21 states, "The appellant shall forthwith, after filing such notice in the Land Court registry, serve a copy thereof on the Valuer-General."? That is mandatory. Now at least you have another seven days to do it.

Mr. GREENWOOD: I am greatly indebted to the Minister for drawing that to my attention. I have been religiously going through all these bits and pieces of amendments tonight and I had not spotted that particular provision. If I had I would have been inclined to say that, although this is a step in the right direction, it does not go far enough and that there is no more reason for striking out an appeal just because the Valuer-General has not got the notice within seven days than there was to make it an invalid and incompetent appeal if he did not get it forthwith. I would like to see subsection (3E) in the Bill simply read this way:—

> "Where the copy of the notice of appeal served in accordance with subsection (3) on the Valuer-General is defective in that, in respect of the matters required by subsection (3) to be stated, it is not a true copy of the notice filed in the Land Court registry, or where the copy of the notice of appeal is defective in some other material particular, the Land Court may proceed to hear and determine the appeal if it is satisfied that the Valuer-General is not disadvantaged by the failure to serve within the time prescribed or the defective nature of the copy of the notice served on him as the case may be."

So the suggestion I make is that it should always be conditional on the Land Court's being affirmatively satisfied that the Valuer-General is not disadvantaged. If the Land Court is satisfied that the Valuer-General is not disadvantaged, why should not the appellant be allowed to go ahead with his right of appeal? In justice why should not the appeal be allowed to continue? If the Valuer-General is not disadvantaged, why should it be struck out?

That brings me to the last point I wish to cover—the question of time. Until the passage of this Bill, if the appeal is not instituted within 60 days it is incompetent. The Bill before us tonight inserts a provision which allows an appellant who is out of time to prove that the reason he is out of time is that the mails have delayed the filing of his notice of appeal. This is to his good as far as it goes, but there is another and much more important point which is likely to prevent an appellant from filing his notice of appeal in time and that point is ignorance—the very thing that the Minister is directing the Bill at. When an appellant leaves out grounds or leaves out the amount, that is because of ignorance. There is one element of ignorance which is widespread and that is ignorance of the necessity of filing one's appeal within a time limit, ignorance of the fact that time is running against one. This is something which is very easily remedied and my recollection is that it is the practice of the department (it certainly is the practice of other departments) when communicating a refusal to an objector to advise him of his right of appeal and to advise him of the time limit which is imposed upon the exercise of that right. Whether that is the practice of the department or not, this Bill in fact proposes to write into the statute a lot of practices and a lot of precautions. I would like to suggest that section 21 (2) have some provisions added to it. Section 21 (2) as it stands states:—

> "Except as hereinafter provided such an appeal shall not lie unless it is instituted within 60 days after the date of issue to

the owner concerned by the Valuer-General of notice of his decision upon the objection (which date of issue shall be stated in such notice)."

I suggest that we add to that provision the following:—

"The objector shall not be deemed to have received notice of the Valuer-General's decision unless he receives with that statement notice that any appeal to be instituted by him must be instituted by a notice of appeal filed in the registry within 60 days containing both the grounds of appeal and the valuation for which the objector contends."

Mr. Lickiss: Before the honourable member goes any further, I draw his attention to the regulations and forms VG 24 and 25—one dealing with a refusal to alter the valuation and the other with an amendment of the valuation. Both of those forms, which must be sent out, contain that very provision.

Mr. GREENWOOD: I thank the Minister. As I said before, my recollection was that it was the practice of the department. But if we are going to write things into Acts instead of leaving them in regulations where they can be altered and where rights can be taken away from people more readily, perhaps I might simply continue with the suggestion I am making.

Mr. Lickiss: They are prescribed forms.

Mr. GREENWOOD: I see. What I had in mind was that it should go on in this way—

"and further that if he does not serve a notice of the appeal on the Valuer-General within seven days after the notice is filed in the Land Court Registry, his appeal must be struck out."

So that obligation on the Valuer-General would acquaint all objectors and potential appellants with the most important limitation of their rights, that most important limitation being that they have not unlimited time in which to exercise them. I suggest that while the House is concerned with improving the machinery for the protection of people's rights of appeal, the most important thing to protect is their knowledge of their rights. If that can be protected by embodying it in the Bill as well as in the regulations, I submit that it is a matter to which the Minister could well give some attention.

In addition, of course, I would repeat the point I made earlier about the provision making it obligatory to serve on the Valuer-General a copy of the notice of appeal within seven days and ask the Minister to consider whether such a provision is really necessary, or whether it is sufficient to allow the Land Court to protect the Valuer-General—to strike out the appeal if he thinks the Valuer-General is disadvantaged but to allow the appeal to continue if he thinks that the Valuer-General has not suffered any disadvantage.

Hon. W. D. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Survey, Valuation, Urban and Regional Affairs) (9.28 p.m.), in reply: I thank all those honourable members who have made contributions to the debate. I think I should preface my remarks by saying that it has been my endeavour to take the heat and mystery out of the processes of valuation and also to take the politics out of the function of valuation.

Mr. Casey: Was it in it?

Mr. LICKISS: If the honourable member will listen, I will explain. I think he would be politically naive if he did not know that the processes of valuation, and particularly statutory valuation and the office of the Valuer-General, have had a high political content, mainly fostered by members of this Chamber. It is all too easy to get on side with people who are concerned about a valuation matter, and I think that some honourable members believe that there is some political mileage to be obtained from doing that. Although I have been associated with the practice of valuation since 1950, I have yet to see an instance in which valuation has altered the course of history in terms of an election. It is one of the matters that concern people, and it concerns people mainly through ignorance. I suggest that the concern is often aided and abetted by the ignorance of people in politics who try to come through as shining heroes, and I deplore that.

The point I wish to make is that the Valuer-General's Department is a service department providing valuations under the statutes. The Valuer-General not only determines valuations of unimproved land; he is required also to do special valuations for resumption purposes and for the purchase of properties for Government use. All in all, if we look on the Valuer-General and his officers as performing a service to the Government, local authorities and the community, I think we correctly orientate them into a correct role.

Another point I wish to make is that the use to which valuations are put is not the prerogative of the Valuer-General. The purpose of his valuations, made under the Valuation of Land Act, which we are presently amending, is to provide valuations for rating and taxing purposes.

The honourable member for Clayfield said that the new valuations would raise some values to a level which make them eligible for land tax. He should know that almost annually we give relief from land tax as a budgetary measure. That has been the practice since 1963, when I came into Parliament. We continually raise the exemption limit, and I dare say this practice will continue. That is not the function of the Valuer-General.

The statute lays down that he will make a valuation taking into consideration certain matters. Even if he effectively

does that, it must be borne in mind that every time he makes a valuation he is virtually exposing himself to a series of challenges, first at the objection conference, then at Land Court level on appeal and, finally, if necessary, at the Land Appeal Court. If the Act is not clear, and if a matter of interpretation arises, a case could go on appeal to the Full Court of the Supreme Court on a question of law. What other profession exposes on every hand one of its members to a court case because of his findings, bearing in mind that findings are not based on a precise science but on the professional expertise of that member, who has to take all matters into consideration in forming an opinion? I suggest that a valuer is thereby placed in a rather invidious position that is not lessened when people are all too ready to snipe at him at every turn.

The honourable member for Nudgee said that the Act was open to some improvements. Right from the start I indicated that I have an open mind on any legislation I am called upon to administer. I am open to constructive suggestions but I expect them to be based on a knowledge of the principles and practice affecting land valuation—in effect, on a knowledge of what it is all about.

The honourable member said that the fall in beef prices should not affect the unimproved capital value of beef lands. Indeed, one of the methods of valuation is the capitalisation of net returns. If the return from a property falls, and the long-term market prospects of the commodity are such that there is not likely to be a rise in the price, that is reflected in what a prudent purchaser would be prepared to pay for that type of property.

Mr. Melloy: It does not affect the unimproved value.

Mr. LICKISS: The honourable member has a valuable source of valuation information at his disposal in the person of his brother who is a Fellow of the Commonwealth Institute of Valuers. I am sure he would be only too happy to provide expert advice to the honourable member in areas where he falls short in his knowledge of the principles and practice of valuation.

It generally holds true that most rural lands in the State tend to be devoted to predominantly one type of industry in each locality. Reference was made to predominantly cattle-grazing areas when I was talking about the fall in meat prices. The price of beef influences the income to be derived from such activity on these properties. Consequently, as I said, it has a direct effect, particularly if the market fluctuation is not predictable in the short-term—and, of course, at the moment it is not. That must have an effect on the value of such lands.

It is true that the market value of land usually takes some time to follow the fluctuations in the price of the product derived from it. Nevertheless, it can be determined historically that this does happen. The honourable member referred to the frequency of valuations and suggested that they should not be too frequent in the light of the problems of landowners in having to accept new valuations. If I had my way and if it were feasible, I should like to see a revaluation before the striking of a rate each year. The whole purpose of the revaluation is to re-establish the relativity between the respective parcels of land in a given valuation area. Consequently, from this point of view, it is important, particularly in developing areas, to re-establish relativities, because in all too short a time it can get out of kilter, as it were—out of relativity. That is why it is desirable if possible to revalue at frequent intervals.

Contrary to what the honourable member said about reducing the areas of valuations into smaller units, it is important that we should value whole areas of a shire relative to a particular date because only by having a valuation relative to a particular date can we truly establish relativity between the value of one property and any other property.

I refer now to the valuation of the city of Brisbane which relates to a date of valuation at 30 June 1972, and which was deferred for 12 months. Some honourable members have already referred to the impact of flood on valuations. It is reasonable to assume that the flood-prone areas of Brisbane have been known for many years. The failure to take due cognizance of those areas susceptible to flooding is probably attributable to neglect on the part of those influencing the market, but the valuation of the city of Brisbane was deferred for 12 months so that the valuers of the Valuer-General's Department could check flood-prone areas to ensure, to the best of their ability, that they were adjusted in relation to flood disabilities.

Mr. Melloy: That would be a site valuation.

Mr. LICKISS: That would be the valuation in terms of the unimproved capital value.

Mr. Casey: With reference to your annual valuation concept, do you look for some evidence of indexation?

Mr. LICKISS: It is not a matter of indexation. Test valuations would be required in various areas to establish a relationship between any increase that might occur generally and a particular type of property.

Recently I had the opportunity, with the Valuer-General, to attend the Eighth Pan-Pacific Congress in New Zealand, where we looked into the question of using computers for the revision of valuations at shorter periods. At this stage we would need a far greater input than we can afford to bring forward annual valuations. Nevertheless, we are looking at this matter just as we are looking at the practicability of

forming a land-data bank from which we could get immediate access to all the various types of information simply by pressing a button. However, all these modern methods are only tools in the hands of the valuer. They are not the means to the end. In other words we cannot use the computer to replace the valuer. That is a point which some valuers seem to ignore. They become carried away with the idea of the possible use of a computer and feel that ultimately it will replace valuers. That is not so. The value of the information we get out of a computer is equivalent only to the worth of the information put into it. In other words, if garbage is put into it, garbage is what will come out of it.

Mr. Casey: Just as there are those who may gain from it, there are those who may be disadvantaged.

Mr. LICKISS: That point is well taken. Those who will gain by it are paying a disproportionate amount of the rates instead of what they should pay. In other words, someone else is carrying them. If we base the rating system on the unimproved capital value, everyone will be well served so long as the valuations are accurate. I repeat that valuations are put out of kilter by various factors. Often some properties increase by 200 or 300 per cent upon revaluation. Others increase by only 20 or 30 per cent. In cold, hard terms, what this means is that the people whose properties have increased in value by 200 or 300 per cent, while they are very concerned about it now, should realise that for the previous period those whose properties have risen by only 20 per cent or 30 per cent were virtually carrying them because of the rating impact on their properties.

The other matter raised by the honourable member relates to what he termed the unimproved capital value. A number of factors give land its value, and I covered them at the introductory stage. I said then that when we refer to the unimproved capital value of land we refer to it without any improvements to the land. The land I am referring to is the area contained in the subject parcel of land and not those surrounding it. One could say that a 24-perch allotment in Queen Street has no greater unimproved capital value than a 24-perch block in Boulia. Of course, that would be completely unrealistic because the location of the land gives it value as well as the services attendant to the land. Last, but by no means least, the use to which that land can be put gives it value. Consequently, the honourable member for Nudgee did not quite understand the situation when he gave his definition of "unimproved land". It means that the valuer disregards both the visible and the invisible improvements when he assesses the value of that land.

Mr. Melloy: You might as well scrap unimproved value and make the basis site and usage.

Mr. LICKISS: I suggest that the honourable member should not continue the argument. He is getting himself further and further into the mire. I was trying to be kind to him. I said that the location of the land, the services provided to it and the use to which it can be put give the land value. When we refer to the unimproved state of the land, we refer to the land itself—that is, the actual surface of the subject land.

The honourable member for Hinchinbrook mentioned sugar lands. He said that there are inbuilt controls in the sugar industry that may affect the value of land. Section 11 (1) of the Valuation of Land Act, 1944–1974, states that the Valuer-General shall make a valuation of all lands in an area as if such land were granted by the Crown in fee simple. The section further states that in the case of any land the unimproved value whereof is enhanced by a licence, assignment to a sugar mill or other right or privilege—this takes into consideration the matter of tobacco lands, which was raised by the honourable member for Carnarvon—and is subject to any restriction, limitation or other covenant or condition, the unimproved value shall be ascertained without regard to that restriction. limitation or, as the case may be, other covenant or condition.

Section 11 (1) (iii) states—

> "A restriction or limitation imposed under or in pursuance of 'The Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Acts 1915 to 1951,' upon the quantity of sugar cane grown upon the land assigned to a sugar mill which the holder for the time being of the assignment may deliver to that sugar mill shall not be disregarded as aforesaid but in ascertaining the enhancement in the unimproved value of that land by the assignment proper allowance shall be made for that restriction or limitation."

The section thereby gives the power to the Valuer-General to value assigned cane land on the basis of any enhancement in value which the assignment gives to the land, tempered by any restriction or limitation in value that a restrictive farm peak may give to the enhanced value.

The Valuer-General has always proceeded on the basis as outlined above and has invariably taken as his comparable sales those sales which have received the approval of the Central Sugar Cane Prices Board. I think that is important to note. From these approved assigned sales has been deducted the added value of improvements as defined under section 12 of the Act, with the residual value as the unimproved value of the land including therein the value of the assignment.

The Valuer-General has always ascertained from the various sources background information regarding the past production of the individual farm and also the mill area in question. He does not confine this search

for information to the factual statistics available but also later inquiries of the farmer himself as to the fertiliser application, rotational procedures, harvesting procedures, and so on. He also ascertains from the farmer his problems, whether they be allied to the soil, associated with the crop or the result of marauding pests. The purpose of acquiring this information is for the Valuer-General to fully inform himself whether he has taken into account all problems associated with that particular farm.

Furthermore, a record of productivity, when spread over an area or locality, can quickly reveal those farms where the management is either above or below the norm expected of that locality. The restrictive nature of certain individual farm peaks is easily noted when viewed in relationship to surrounding farm peaks when the evidence of the past production of the individual farm is cited. The restriction or limitation must be taken into account by the Valuer-General pursuant to section 11 (1) (iii) of the Act. The Valuer-General has always been aware that in certain circumstances the outstanding management skills of certain farmers has led to a high production history and in most cases high individual farm peak.

He has seen fit in the past to ignore this type of evidence when considering the appropriate value for the farm in question and I have no doubt that he will continue to ignore this factor in the future. However, to enable him to determine whether a farm peak is the result of exceptional management skills, he must have some gauge on which to rely. Past production statistics give him that gauge.

To answer specifically the points raised by the honourable member, it is considered that the Valuer-General's approach is not invalid for the following reasons:—

1. He adopts as his basis those sales approved by the Central Sugar Cane Prices Board.

2. He approaches the assessment of the unimproved value by the time-honoured principles of deducting from the sale price the added value of improvements and those items of plant, machinery and crop which also pass with the sale.

3. He utilises those sources of information available as to the production capabilities of the farm, areas and districts so that he may make a fair and equitable valuation of all lands in the local authority.

Mr. Casey: Where you get the problem there is on the transfer of assignment. You could not take the residual figures there.

Mr. LICKISS: Yes, but nevertheless, the same principles apply. It must be borne in mind that the valuers in cane areas are experts in the work that they are carrying out.

I thank the honourable member for Kurilpa for his approach to the provisions of the Bill and his understanding of those provisions. He also stressed the desirability, particularly in urban lands, of moving towards site value from unimproved capital value. In relation to this there is a difficulty in moving too quickly away from the unimproved capital value in relation to rural lands by disregarding all invisible improvements. Time will not permit me to go into a long discussion of the potential pitfalls, but I do consider that we are relatively safe at this point of time in relation to urban lands in moving away from the unimproved-capital-value concept towards the site-value concept.

The honourable member also expressed concern about floods. Valuations were deferred for 12 months to permit the Valuer-General's valuers to look at the effects of the flood. Of course, I say quite openly that anyone who considers that insufficient allowance has been made because of the effect of the flood would have a ground of objection, and the valuer concerned, or the delegate of the Valuer-General, will discuss this matter, on the property concerned if so desired. I do not think we can be any fairer than that.

The honourable member went on to say, illustrating with examples, that blocks of land with riparian rights on river frontages will probably settle down and recover their desirability for utilisation as residential blocks before others further removed from the river. Of course, the Valuer-General does not make the value of a piece of land. It is those who buy and sell land who, by virtue of their sales and purchases, provide the yardstick of measurement or the basis on which valuers make valuations.

It is also pertinent to say that a valuation has merit when it is related to a specific date, because the very measurement of value, which is money, is in itself a variable yardstick. It is important that this be realised when considering valuations. I give a quick example. If the annual inflation rate is 20 per cent, and the valuation of a piece of land does not increase by 20 per cent in 12 months, it can be said that the value of the property has decreased. In other words, a valuation must always be related to the measurement of value, which is money, and, I repeat, money is a variable yardstick.

The honourable member for Rockhampton said that consideration should be given to group appeals. To a certain extent this is happening now. Graziers, for instance, through the United Graziers' Association, will brief a counsel to appear on their behalf. Usually this action is taken by way of a test case. An example of an appeal of this nature was the A.P.M. case in the Caboolture area. The basis of valuation, which included the treatment of the invisible improvement of timber treatment, was upset by the Land Court. It

would have been appropriate for the Valuer-General, if he so desired, to allow all cases on appeal in that shire to go to the Land Court and be determined on their merits. But when the Land Court handed down its judgment and it was decided that this case would not be taken on further appeal to the Land Appeal Court, the Valuer-General, under section 21A of the Act, settled all the outstanding appeals on the basis of the Land Court's decision. To preserve uniformity, under section 13 (2) (g) he issued new valuation notices for those who did not appeal.

Mr. Wright: Even to those who did not appeal?

Mr. LICKISS: Yes. This action probably could be questioned by a number of people, but I think it was the honourable thing to do. Here was an instance of the Valuer-General indicating that his commission is to preserve relativity between owner and owner, and in going this far I think that he certainly lived up to that reputation.

Mr. Wright: That is part of the way.

Mr. LICKISS: Let us consider the case of everyone in a shire area, which is an area of valuation, appealing on the basis that the valuations are too high. If the Valuer-General decided to divide all the valuations by two, that would be no different from multiplying them by two in terms of rating, because their relativity would be the same. If the honourable member looks at the pamphlet that I prepared, he will see that it explains valuation in terms of relativity, and the application of that valuation as the means of distributing the rate burden by the local authority. I believe that we should not confuse the role of the rating authority with that of the Valuer-General.

Mr. Wright: My suggestion is more related to people in city suburban areas than those in shires.

Mr. LICKISS: Again, if all the valuations in the city of Brisbane were divided by two, it would make no difference at all in terms of the rating burden. The actual quantum to be collected by the Brisbane City Council in this case is predetermined and the valuation is really the basis of distribution of the rating burden.

The honourable member for Carnarvon indicated that he had a firm grip of the intentions of the legislation. He referred to his father, who always had an open mind on matters dealing with the legislation under his control and always had a reasoned approach to the administration of this department. I take great pride in having been associated with him because he and I entered the House on the same day. I had a great deal of respect for him and I certainly hope he is soon restored to his usual good health. As to the matter of tobacco quotas raised by the honourable member, I think I covered that when dealing with sugar lands. As the Act now stands such quotas are a licence affecting the land and have to be valued in terms of the unimproved capital value.

Mr. McKechnie: With reference to the 21 days allowed for lodging objection, the honourable member for Gregory pointed out there is a mail service only once a fortnight. Has that been considered?

Mr. LICKISS: All I can say is that previously people had 60 days and it was mandatory that everything be completed accurately within that time. We are certainly offering greater relief to people wishing to lodge an appeal.

The honourable member for Albert praised the contents of the Bill. He raised the case of certain farm lands that had been valued with an extra amount for potential being added to what he would term the unimproved capital value. In fact, section 11 (1) (vii) of the Act provides that potential cannot be taken into account for land used for the purpose of primary production or for a single-unit dwelling.

As far as the honourable member for Callide is concerned, I take exception to the fact that he says valuers are not competent. He quoted an increase in the valuations in the Kolan area of 123 per cent, but omitted to say that such percentage was the average increase and, of course, the increased valuations of sugar lands, which would have balanced off those of the depressed beef lands, would have been substantially higher than the 123 per cent. I did not agree with some of the statements he made.

Mr. Murray: It was a "rummy" old valuation.

Mr. LICKISS: I think it was rather a "rummy" argument. The fact that he says he has improved the unimproved capital value indicates that he perhaps should peruse some of the principles and practice affecting land valuation.

The honourable member for Ithaca indicated his very sincere concern for the person who lives in a residential B area and lets a small flat and whose property is valued by comparison with the valuation of an area alongside where there are multi-unit flats. The honourable member for Clayfield mentioned the same thing. Again I say that this is an Act covering valuation of land and the Valuer-General is required to fix valuations in accordance with the statute. It is not a piece of social service legislation. Under the Local Government Act and the City of Brisbane Act provision is already made for relief of pensioners and totally and permanently incapacitated people, and if any relief is to be given in the rating burden, it should be contained in that legislation. Honourable members should not expect the Valuer-General to manipulate his valuations to give that relief. I must stress

again that the Valuer-General is a valuing authority. His is a service department and it should remain as such. It is only when he is required to vary valuation principles to afford some sort of relief that he enters the political arena and we want to avoid that at all costs.

The honourable member for Ipswich West indicated that he thought that valuers were wrong. I think he would agree with me that they at least have a far greater expertise in forming an opinion than some of the real estate agents who put valuations on properties. One must look at market values. That is the only way in which anyone can interpret the market.

I think I have covered the matters raised by the honourable member for Clayfield. In giving an example, he referred to the honourable member for Port Curtis. The point is that once land is used for a single-unit residence, under the provisions of section 11 (1) (vii) of the Act it is valued accordingly. Once it is converted into a flat in a residential B area, it assumes the higher use. There are no shades of grey; it is either black or white. If it is used as a single-unit dwelling, it is valued as such; if it is used for multi-unit purposes or other purposes, it assumes the use for which it is zoned and has to be valued accordingly.

I covered the points raised by the honourable member for Ashgrove when he was making his speech. In common with all honourable members, he is interested in trying to formulate the best possible legislation, and in that regard I concur with him. I indicated to him that the matters which concerned him were already covered in the regulations or in the Act itself.

Motion (Mr. Lickiss) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of s. 11; When valuation to be made—

Mr. MURRAY (Clayfield) (10.2 p.m.): I thank the Minister for dealing fairly thoroughly with the matters that were raised by the honourable member for Ithaca and me. If it is not appropriate to change the provisions of the Act to meet this problem, will he consider looking at the Local Government Act in that regard, because the end result is very serious indeed? If it cannot be done under section 11, the Minister may consider trying to overcome the problem in another way.

Hon. W. D. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Survey, Valuation, Urban and Regional Affairs) (10.3 p.m.): Neither the Local Government Act nor the City of Brisbane Act comes under my ministerial responsibility. If the honourable member approached either the Minister concerned or the committee of the Minister concerned and formulated some sort of provision, I am sure that the appropriate action could be considered.

Mr. AKERS (Pine Rivers) (10.4 p.m.): I shall speak only briefly on this clause. There is already quite adequate provision for such action under the Local Government Act. I do not think there is any need for a further provision. I think we have wasted a great deal of time on this subject tonight. I wanted to make a speech on the second reading of the Bill, but because of the time taken up on matters such as this it was not worth while my doing so. In my opinion, we are still wasting time. I believe that the provision should stand as it is.

Clause 2, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—Amendment of s. 21; Appeal against decision upon objection of the Valuer-General—

Mr. GREENWOOD (Ashgrove) (10.5 p.m.): During my remarks on the principles of the Bill I called attention to the new subsection (3D) which provides—

> "If the appellant, pursuant to subsection (3), does not serve a copy of the notice of appeal on the Valuer-General not later than 7 days after the notice is filed in the Land Court registry, the Land Court shall strike out the appeal."

I would like to move that that provision be deleted. In his remarks the Minister pointed out that already in the Act there is provision at the end of section 21 (3) which states—

> "The appellant shall forthwith, after filing such notice in the Land Court registry, serve a copy thereof on the Valuer-General."

The Minister pointed out that under the new Bill that part of the subsection is to be amended so that seven days will be allowed. I have no quarrel with the allowance of seven days in place of the obligation that it be done forthwith. The point I wish to raise is that the Act as it stands at present does not put people at penalty in their appeal by requiring them to forthwith serve a copy. As it stands at present the Act allows a person to institute a valid appeal simply by filing a notice in the registry. Once a notice is filed in the registry, a person has a valid appeal, and he can proceed with that appeal and have his day in court. The fact that he already has an obligation imposed on him to serve a copy on the Valuer-General seems to me to be something which comes after the institution of the appeal. Subsection (2) of section 21, as it stands now, provides—

> "Such an appeal shall not lie unless it is instituted within . . ."

and a certain time is provided. The appeal does not lie unless it is instituted. Subsection (3) then provides—

"An appeal under this section shall be instituted by filing in the Land Court registry a notice of appeal."

It does not say that it shall be instituted by filing it in the Land Court and then doing this, that and the other thing. It simply says, "To institute your appeal you file your notice."

The Bill carries the matter further by adding this new subsection (3D). It makes it quite clear that the Land Court must strike out an appeal if for some reason or other within seven days a person has not served a copy of his notice on the Valuer-General. It is noteworthy that, although in other parts of the Bill the problems of the mails have been taken care of, there is not one word with regard to the seven days. One of the main objects of the Bill is to make sure that if for some reason the appeal itself is not filed in the registry within 60 days a person has an excuse if he can show that the mails have been at fault. As the Bill stands, if a person has not served a copy of his notice of appeal within seven days he is out. Is that the intention of the experienced public servants who drafted this Bill? If it is, it was not an intention that was mentioned in the Minister's speech, and in fact it cuts right across the expressed intention embodied in the Minister's speech. I move the following amendment—

"On page 4, omit all words on lines 25 to 28 inclusive."

This provision adds something to the Bill that is contrary to all its other provisions. It adds an absolute prohibition in mandatory terms which strikes out an appeal, irrespective of the merits, merely because within seven days it has not been served on the Valuer-General.

Hon. W. D. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Survey, Valuation, Urban and Regional Affairs) (10.11 p.m.): The proposition put by the honourable member for Ashgrove is very interesting. No doubt he has brought his legal mind to bear on this provision. I do not want to indicate that my legal knowledge is other than that of a layman, but I have been involved in the process of valuation for a long time. The honourable member has already indicated tonight a number of alleged deficiencies in the legislation which I was able to point out were, in fact, covered in the legislation or in the regulations, which serve the same purpose. When he was putting forward this suggestion I pointed out by interjection that prior to the advent of this legislation, the section which he quoted, that is, section 21, dealing with service of notice on the Valuer-General provided that the appellant shall forthwith after filing such notice in the Land Court Registry serve a copy thereof on the Valuer-General. I make the point that not only that provision but all the other provisions of the Act relating to these matters of appeal in subsection 3 of section 21 have been held by the courts to be mandatory and no relief has been given.

I also understand that in all courts notice of appeal must be served on the other party in order to give him notice of the action. The Valuer-General in this case is the other party. The Valuer-General must be notified of appeals in order to determine the number of undetermined objections or appeals, which is relevant to whether or not a revaluation of an area can be put into effect. The amendment proposed by the honourable member is unacceptable.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The question is that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the clause. As many of that opinion say "aye" and to the contrary "no". I think the "ayes" have it.

Amendment (Mr. Greenwood) negatived.

Honourable Members: Divide.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The call was made too late. The call for a division must be made forthwith.

Mr. MURRAY (Clayfield) (10.14 p.m.): The honourable member for Ashgrove, very seriously and after great consideration, drew the Minister's attention to a part of the Bill which the honourable member believes is at fault. I think very few of us in this Chamber would understand fully the implications raised by the honourable member. He has considerable training in this field and feels quite sure that he is correct in what he has pointed out to the Minister. I suggest very seriously that the Minister should heed his submission. I do not think it is good enough for him to proceed to brush off the honourable member for Ashgrove.

It is open to the Minister to adjourn this debate so that consideration can be given, with the benefit of legal advice and the co-operation of the honourable member for Ashgrove, to whether or not the situation is as he pointed out. The matter certainly should not be treated in this way. If the honourable member for Ashgrove is right, this is a very serious matter indeed. He believes he is right. His professional training cannot be ignored. I therefore suggest that the Minister should do this without any of us pressing the point any further.

Mr. MELLOY (Nudgee) (10.15 p.m.): The honourable member for Ashgrove has raised a very interesting point. In effect, he is saying that a technical omission could carry more weight than anything else, despite the substance of the appeal and the arguments that could be advanced in support of it or even those that could be mounted by the Valuer-General himself. Regardless of any forceful

arguments, a technical omission could destroy the appellant's right of appeal. From the court's point of view, the appellant's right would be wiped out. That is very important, because once it has gone it is lost for ever. I feel that the honourable member for Ashgrove has a very valid point. As has often been said, justice must not only be done but must appear to be done. If a valid appeal were wiped out because of a technical omission, it would appear to have been done.

Hon. W. D. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Survey, Valuation, Urban and Regional Affairs) (10.17 p.m.): It was very interesting indeed that when I answered the honourable member for Ashgrove he did not, as provided for in Standing Orders, proceed to discuss the matter further. It seems to me that it was left to the honourable member for Clayfield to carry the bat for him. I assure the honourable member for Clayfield that I did not dismiss the suggested amendment lightly.

This matter has been mentioned by the honourable member for Ashgrove. With due respect to his vast legal knowledge, I think in fairness he will admit that, until I pointed it out to him, he was not aware that it was a mandatory provision in the Act. Secondly, he pointed out that it should be mandatory for the Valuer-General to indicate that an appeal must be lodged within 60 days. I pointed out to him that this provision is already contained in the regulations. It is clearly spelt out.

The legislation has been before honourable members. The intention of the Bill is to make it easier so that, if an error is made in the notice of an appeal, it can be rectified. I believe that the legislation does just that. As I pointed out—and I have not been corrected by the honourable member for Ashgrove, who is a barrister-at-law—in all courts notice of appeal must be served on the other party to give him notice of the action.

The other matter is that, in determining whether or not a local authority area valuation will come into force, the Valuer-General, in accordance with the Act, must know whether at a given time the number of undetermined objections or outstanding appeals represents 15 per cent of the total area valuation.

I rather regret the terminology used by the honourable member for Clayfield when he said that I rejected the amendment lightly. I did it after due consideration. I repeat, as the Minister responsible for the legislation, that the amendment is not acceptable.

Hon. A. M. HODGES (Gympie—Leader of the House) (10.20 p.m.): I move—

"That the question be now put."

Question put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 29

Akers	Lickiss
Alison	Neal
Campbell	Newbery
Chinchen	Powell
Deeral	Row
Elliott	Simpson
Gibbs	Small
Goleby	Sullivan
Hales	Tomkins
Hinze	Turner
Hodges	Wharton
Hooper, K. W.	
Kyburz	*Tellers:*
Lamond	Ahern
Lee	Muller
Lester	

NOES, 23

Bertoni	Melloy
Burns	Miller
Byrne	Murray
Doumany	Porter
Glasson	Tenni
Greenwood	Warner
Hanson	Yewdale
Hooper, M. D.	Young
Jones	
Lindsay	*Tellers:*
Lockwood	Casey
Lowes	Wright
McKechnie	

The CHAIRMAN: Order! In accordance with Standing Order 142, which provides that in the event of a closure motion being put at least 30 members must vote in favour thereof, the motion is resolved in the negative, and the debate will continue.

Mr. GREENWOOD (Ashgrove) (10.28 p.m.): The Bill contains an important principle which endeavours to overcome the problems associated with living a long way from the metropolitan area. Where the 60-day time limit for instituting an appeal would work hardship on people wishing to lodge an appeal against valuation, the Minister has brought in a very useful and carefully drafted measure for their protection. If those people can show that, because of some undue delay in the transmission of mail, they did not get their notice of appeal filed within 60 days they are allowed a second chance.

I am the first to acknowledge that I am not an expert on the Valuation of Land Act or, in particular, the Valuation of Land Act Amendment Bill. However, it seems to me on a reading of the Bill that it introduces a new obstacle in the way of appellants, in that, besides requiring an appellant to institute his appeal within time, it provides that his appeal can be dismissed if he does not take the additional step of serving a copy of the notice of appeal on the Valuer-General within seven days. The trouble with that requirement is not only that it is mandatory but also that non-compliance with it automatically removes the right of appeal. The relevant provision in the Bill reads—

"If the appellant, pursuant to subsection (3), does not serve a copy of the notice of appeal on the Valuer-General not later than 7 days after the notice is filed in the Land Court registry, the Land Court shall strike out the appeal."

So what does it mean? It means that the fellow out in one of the western towns, if for some reason there is a delay and the copy of the notice of appeal is not received by the Valuer-General within seven days, has had it.

Mr. Warner: Floods, for example.

Mr. GREENWOOD: Floods, for example. There could be a hundred and one reasons. Seven days it is and if the copy of the notice is not there, the appellant is not protected by the provisions we find in other parts of the Act that require proof of undue delay in the transmission of the post. If the notice is not served within seven days the appellant is out and the Land Court shall strike out his appeal.

It seems to me that this provision needs more thought. Do we need to protect the Valuer-General to this extent? It is a provision that not only could cause hardship but also seems to me, again on a quick reading of the Bill tonight, to be a change in the law.

As the Minister has pointed out, the law as it stands states that an appellant must give the Valuer-General forthwith a copy of his appeal, whereas under this Bill the appellant has seven days in which to do that. But under the existing law there is not the terrible penalty that is provided in the Bill. Under the existing law if an appellant fails to give the Valuer-General a copy of his notice of appeal forthwith, it is an irregularity. But it does not nullify the whole procedure, because in the Act it provides quite clearly, "An appeal under this section shall be instituted by filing in the Land Court registry a notice of appeal." That is all.

When a notice is filed an appeal is instituted, and from then on there is an appeal. But in addition to that there is this obligation to serve a copy on the Valuer-General. The Act does not stipulate that if an appellant fails in his obligation he is thrown out of Court. If he fails to comply with the provisions of the Act he might have an adjournment awarded against him or it might be necessary for him to apply for some indulgence from the court. Under the Bill, however, if this notice is not served within seven days the appellant is out. It seems to me that this is contrary to the whole generous spirit that the Minister is trying to inject into the law, and all I ask is that he have another look at it.

Mr. LOWES (Brisbane) (10.34 p.m.): I have spoken previously in this Chamber on mandatory penalties, such as those under the Traffic Act—in future I would like to speak about the Supreme Court Rules—those under the Motor Vehicles Insurance Act and others that go against the individual. I would expect all honourable members to be on the side of the individual and to support my contention that where a penalty works against the individual and is in favour of either the Government or monopolistic enterprises, such as insurance companies and other organisations that are opposed or are likely to be opposed to the individual, the individual must be given every possible opportunity to pursue whatever claim he might have.

Subclause (3D) is the one that I think has the least merit. It relates to the striking out of an appeal. It does not mention delay through deliberate frustration; it simply says that an appeal shall be struck out if a copy of the notice of appeal, which has already been lodged, is not served on the Valuer-General within seven days.

Other provisions are embodied in the Bill quite properly, and at long last, for the benefit of the landowner and the taxpayer. But the proposed section (3D) cuts right across the principles which the Minister, in his wisdom, has brought before the Committee in the Bill. I cannot think of any reason why an appeal should be invalidated simply because the appellant has failed to give notice of his appeal to the Valuer-General. He has already given notice of appeal to the court. The fact that he has failed to give notice of appeal to the Valuer-General should be the very last reason why that appeal, which otherwise has been launched properly, should be invalidated.

For that reason I oppose that clause in the Bill. Except for that the Bill has much to commend it.

Mr. GLASSON (Gregory) (10.37 p.m.): I support the submission made by the honourable member for Ashgrove relative to the proposed new section (3D). The seven days referred to would be mandatory on my constituents in Gregory, but the provision would not be acceptable to them. As I explained previously, some of them receive mail only once a fortnight. If a person catches the mail, he has 28 days in which to get a reply. Even when the mail services were run in a fairly orderly fashion, one sittings of the Land Court almost had to be cancelled because notices of appeal against valuations were not received in time. I request the Minister to adopt a more sympathetic attitude towards the problems that will arise under the proposed section (3D).

Hon. W. D. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Survey, Valuation, Urban and Regional Affairs) (10.38 p.m.): I find the argument rather difficult to follow, because it is not a question of looking at the matter of lodging a copy with the Valuer-General. If an owner can serve a notice on the Land Court, he can without any added difficulty serve a copy of the notice on the Valuer-General. If the court accepts service within 65 days, allowing for a delay of, say five days in the post, the owner has in fact 72 days in which to serve the copy on the Valuer-General. Where is the hardship? If the hardship is in serving a copy of the notice on the Valuer-General, there must be a far greater hardship in serving a notice on the registrar of the court. Quite frankly, I cannot follow the arguments of honourable members. On the one hand, they praise the provisions of the Bill that provide an extra

period to rectify an error in the notice of appeal—and they have not complained about the 65 days for serving a notice of appeal on the registrar—and on the other hand they complain about the unfairness of the 72 days in which to serve a copy of the notice on the Valuer-General.

Progress reported.

ABORIGINES ACT AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. C. A. WHARTON (Burnett—Minister for Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement and Fisheries) (10.41 p.m.): I move—

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

As I indicated in my opening remarks when introducing this Bill, it is a simple one and provides the means by which three Acts, namely the Aborigines Act, the Torres Strait Islanders Act and the Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act, will be amended in accordance with the recent change in name of my department, in effect, from "Affairs" to "Advancement".

I was rather disturbed, however, at the lack of appreciation and indeed understanding as indicated by the spokesman for the Opposition, the honourable member for Nudgee, in his remarks. I should point out that the Bill under consideration opened avenues for all members of the House to discuss any and all aspects of the legislation of the department within the broad ambit of the three Acts of Parliament. Members of the Government did this but, from the remarks of the honourable member for Nudgee, in the only contribution made to the debate, obviously the Opposition is as bereft of policies as he is of an understanding of the procedures of this House.

As I said, the Bill is a simple one, and I leave it to the House to consider. I commend the Bill to honourable members.

Mr. JONES (Cairns) (10.42 p.m.): The Minister said that the Bill is the means by which three Acts will be amended in accordance with the recent change in the name of the department. Not only is he changing the name but he is making it more meaningful and giving it greater impetus. The intention of the minor amendment implies that principle. The change in name from "Affairs" to "Advancement" is only a minor change in verbiage, but I agree that the name should be more meaningful and have more impact.

I hope that the change putting the accent on advancement will herald more advancement in the true sense of that word for the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. I hope the new Minister who has just introduced the second reading of his first Bill in his well-meaning way will set in train broad programmes for the advancement and benefit of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands people. The principle of advancement he espouses is excellent.

Honourable members should be mindful of the fact that when Christopher Columbus discovered America the Indians had been there long before him. Similarly, when Captain Cook discovered Australia the Aborigines had been here for about 40,000 years. After the 200 years of civilisation that we have perpetrated on them we should have the type of advancement the Minister is implying by the introduction of the Bill. Indeed, we should put in reverse the civilisation we have perpetrated on them. We should be concentrating not so much on the neglect over the 200 years but on compensation by the provision of health care, housing, education, employment opportunities and, in particular, equality before the law. Another avenue of compensation and advancement relates to the traditional right of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands people to title to their own land, which is very near and dear to their hearts.

The Minister has a difficult portfolio to administer and as legislators we are surrounded by problems but I believe that the Minister's aim should be to allow the Aboriginal people more self-determination and encourage them to become more and more attuned to self-administration.

My experience in this field is limited but probably it is as good as that of most members, or better, except perhaps for one or two. It appears to me that the average Aborigine or Islander is prepared to accept the challenge of determining his own priorities and providing for his own needs. It is indeed relevant from a practical point of view that the traditional approach of these people is based on looking after each other, which could well be emulated by Caucasians or other members of the white races. I remember vividly things I saw on the Torres Strait Islands and in communities. When children are orphaned or a family breaks up, the elders or the relatives stand by to look after them. If one of their number falls on bad times, the elders are the first to stand by to look after their own; it is not always the relatives. I have never seen people who are more community minded, or people with such a high regard for each other's welfare. This is probably one of the best assets that the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders have to further their advancement. It should stand them in good stead.

I have found most office bearers in administrative community councils dedicated in their approach to their job of leadership. They approach their position in a responsible way and, in the main, are men and women of dignity and wisdom, elected by their own people, who have great faith in their responsibility and ability to look after the community. Their dedication and efforts to do

better should be well noted. They are trying to do better and intent on leading their people to full participation in conducting affairs of their communities fairly.

Of course, at times the leadership is bad. Too many people trying to lead them believe, probably with the best of good will, that what they are doing is best for the advancement of the Aborigines. However, some lead them in the wrong direction. Quite a few in the community are lackeys who are appointed to positions of authority. I suppose that is part and parcel of our society. It could be said that quite a few in this Assembly are lackeys, too.

Frustrations are encountered in Aboriginal advancement in the community. None are more sincerely felt than by the people themselves. Representatives on their councils have stated to me over a period that their main concern is that the authority of the councils is not recognised. Members of the councils complain that they are not consulted in all matters and that they do not enjoy autonomy. Their supervisory capacity is practically non-existent. Councillors have told me they believe they should be consulted in all matters relative to community affairs.

One aspect of this is the appointment of officers on the reserve or within the community. I speak about such positions of authority as police officers, health and hygiene officers and people who administer general welfare and discipline within the community. Councillors believe that they should have a say in who takes office and how appointments are made. I believe that, if authority such as that devolved upon the councillors, their prestige and that of the council would be enhanced. I suggest that the powers should be granted without prior consultation with officers of the department. After all, the councillors are elected representatives of their own people. They feel that they are competent to handle that level of authority in their capacity as councillors. I believe we should underwrite that authority through the department.

As a body, the council feels that its authority is sometimes bypassed in general planning on the reserve in the short-term and long-term organisation within the community. The complaint is that members are councillors in name only and lack autonomy, that their recommendations are sometimes bypassed, set aside or not implemented at all and that the decisions made at the council table and recorded in the minutes are not given any weight. As a consequence, their authority as councillors and their prestige in the community are questioned by the very people who elected them to their position of authority.

It is also suggested that we give them the added responsibiilty of an allocation so that they can budget within their own field of responsibility. A suggested sum for the commencement of a pilot scheme in some of the more advanced communities—I cite Yarrabah as one—would be $10,000. Council members point out to me that, if that were designed as a pilot scheme within the community, they would feel the added responsibility because they would be heralding a new era within the Aboriginal communities and their Aboriginal administrative councils, and they would be personally responsible for the advancement of their community and the administration of the fund. Members of the council believe that, if they were allowed to estimate a Budget, it would enable them to formulate positive policies by which they could undertake developmental projects as the need arose within their community. That is not to say that they will spend the whole $10,000 in the first 12 months.

Certainly they will make mistakes. There is no local authority council throughout the length and breadth of Queensland that has not made mistakes in its estimating and budgeting of funds. I cannot see why the Aboriginal councillors, elected by their own people, should not administer some portion of their funds. Whether they are made available by grant or allocated in some other way by the Government, I believe the councillors would respond to the gesture and give direction and make responsible decisions and so not only give added incentive to their own council to look after the interests of the community and take pride in its own initiatives but also give a lead to other communities of a like nature right throughout Queensland.

The real problem that concerns council members is that they are not able to finance their own decisions. Therefore those decisions cannot be tested, as they are in all other similar communities in the budgeting and allocation of funds, the debiting and crediting, and the discovery of whether or not they are really competent to do the job. They believe they are and I think they should be given the opportunity to prove it.

I know that the departmental administration has to fund its own budget. Sometimes the council and the administration are at cross-purposes. Apparently the council is not aware of the administration decisions and the administration is not aware of the council's decisions. The councillors should be given an opportunity to estimate their forward planning not in consultation with the State department but certainly with local consultation on the community reserves so that they can be given the responsibility and can carry out the wishes of the council.

While I am on finance and responsibility, I think that the councillors are still paid a fee of only $3. I think it has remained at that level since the inauguration of the idea of having administrative councils throughout the communities. I do not see why the fee should not be parallel with that paid to local government members.

I reiterate that many Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders are of high calibre. I am left in no doubt that they can successfully manage their own affairs. No doubt some individual

councillors will not be able to make the grade, but that applies in all elected and responsible groups within communities in the State and Federal spheres. It is not confined to the 120,000 Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. This is a frailty of all human beings, including representatives one and all.

I look to their record in responsibility, and to crystallise the thoughts in the minds of politicians, let me cite the instance of Aboriginal responsibility in representation concerning their own affairs and their own advancement. I am advised that on the communities there is a turn-out of about 80 per cent of eligible voters. They turn out voluntarily to vote their own members into responsible positions. We all know that voting in local authority elections in some other States, for instance New South Wales and Victoria, is not compulsory, and the turn-out there is sometimes as low as 10 per cent. We know very well that the percentage is nowhere near the 80 per cent obtained in countries such as Great Britain and the United States, where voting is voluntary. The voting percentage among Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders shows their desire to elect representatives of the very best calibre on the reserves. They want to do better, and I think they should be given the opportunity to do so. I think the figures that I have quoted demonstrate a real enthusiasm for advancement by Aborigines and Islanders. They want to lift themselves up, as it were, by their own boot-straps.

I trust that the change in name from "Affairs" to "Advancement" will mean real advancement for these people in this State. In the past there seems to have been a dedication to preserving a paternalistic approach to Aboriginal welfare generally. However, I think considerable advances have been made in the last few years. These people have expressed to me their ardent desire to have more independence in deciding their life style and where they wish to live both within the community and, more generally, within the State.

Housing still remains one of the most crucial areas in Aboriginal advancement and welfare. I was interested to hear the Minister say that 10,000 people have been housed in 1,400 homes in metropolitan areas and country towns. I think that is commendable. However, I feel that there are some areas of Aboriginal advancement in which we are not doing all that should be done. We are perhaps not looking after Aboriginal pensioners off the reserves as well as we are looking after those in communities. Aboriginal pensioners, particularly those who have lost their partners and are living in small homes, often find themselves, for instance, with their dwellings condemned because the local authority does not consider them fit to be connected to the sewerage system that serves the area. The council therefore places building orders on the dwellings.

These Aboriginal or Island pensioners are invariably caring for a couple of children. They are either grandchildren or other children who have come down from a station property to be educated in the city. Invariably grandmothers or aunties have one or two children with them in their dedication to looking after their own. These people battle along, and very often find themselves in need of housing. Although housing for Aborigines and Islanders has improved, this is one aspect at which we should look a little more closely. These people do not want to return to communities or reserves. They want to remain in the city or the country town in which probably they have lived for quite a considerable time. What has happened is that the community has grown around them and grown past them. This is one thing we should be looking at.

Family stability depends largely on advancement in housing, health, regular employment and better education. We are certainly not advancing fast enough to satisfy quite a number of people in the community, but we have made great strides and if we can get the Federal and State co-operation that we should get in the interests of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, we can do a lot more for them.

Another disturbing problem which I emphasised was the lack of suitable accommodation. Others I referred to were the transport of children to and from school and the difficulties experienced by teenagers in finding jobs. In the area of Aboriginal advancement it has been suggested to me that after children leave school they should be encouraged, if not compelled, to leave the missions, reserves and communities for a period because invariably remaining unemployed in the community leaves dormant any incentive they might have to improve. I know this proposition would present some problems but interested members within the communities have said that it is worrying them their teenage children are not seeing the outside world and that no incentive for advancement is being presented to them. I sometimes think they get too much of a closed-in dormitory point of view from remaining on the reserves too long. It is up to the Minister and the department to weigh the disadvantages against the advantages. It may be something the people will have to look at in their own best interests but it has been canvassed to me by those who have made the grade in our white society. It has also been mentioned to me by parents whose teenage children on the communities cannot get a job.

Life on the community is inclined to stifle any incentive for advancement and any desire to stand up and battle it out. These teenagers seem to form the opinion that it is easier to retreat into the protection of the community and unless they get away from the community for a while and battle it out

on their own, we cannot hope to instil in them any desire to do better. At 18 years of age a youth should be sent out to productive employment and if we can fill in the period from the time he leaves school until he turns 18 with some constructive training, we should do so. I know we are doing better now than we have done for the past 20 years, even the past five years, but I feel we should perhaps accelerate our efforts towards Aboriginal advancement.

We should not allow the school-leavers to remain out of work and drift into difficulties caused by examples given to them by unsavoury elements on the reserve and resort to "goomie" drinking and so on. I think if they are to be given an example it should be the best possible example and not the example of lost and forlorn people from broken homes with drinking problems—the future that confronts them now. In the name of advancement, these matters should receive the consideration of the Minister. This is the Minister's first Bill and when we place the word "Advancement" in the title we should not just pay lip-service to it but use it to provide an incentive for these people. Perhaps instead of the name of the Act or the name of the department being changed, a referendum of the people concerned could be organised and they could be asked whether or not they want the Act to remain in force.

Mr. DEERAL (Cook) (11.11 p.m.): In making my contribution to the debate on the Bill, I wish first to thank the honourable member for Cairns for some of the things that he said which I believe are true.

The policy of the Queensland department is directed towards the assimilation of the majority of Aboriginal and Islander people, and that policy has remained in force since the Aboriginals Protection Act was introduced. Today we are discussing the changing of the word in the name from "Affairs" to "Advancement". I have seen improvement come about, and I do not want the new Minister and his department to stop now simply because some advance has already been made. The need for advancement is greater today than it was two years ago.

The honourable member for Cairns has spoken about the communities, which are in the 16 reserves in Queensland and on the islands, and I agree with him wholeheartedly that the Aboriginal and Islander people have come a long way. They would have come even further if the Commonwealth Government had listened to the requests made to it by the community councillors and the Islander representatives and to the advice it received from them as to what they wanted. I know I am right in saying that people have to visit the communities and the towns themselves to see the confusion that members of this Assembly must now try to straighten out.

As honourable members know, there are three groups of Aboriginal people in Queensland—those who live in reserves, those who are just in between, and those who have already made it and are living like any other Australians. We do not hear about these people. The policy of the Queensland Government and the policy of its department was to try to have the Aboriginal and Islander people assimilated and to have all of us living in one community. That has been achieved and, as I said earlier, in the last few years things have come to a stop. People are now trying to feel their way, and they are asking themselves, "Which way will we go?" As a Government, we must try to get the Aboriginal and Islander people to realise that we still want to help them achieve what they are aiming for.

As I have made trips with other honourable members, we have seen progress and we have seen disappointment. My advice to the Minister and his department would be to call another meeting of the advisory council. The sooner it is called the sooner valuable advice will be obtained. In that way we can really say that advancement will occur.

I commend the Bill and thank the Minister for what he is doing.

Mr. TURNER (Warrego) (11.16 p.m.): In supporting the Bill I commend the Minister and congratulate him on presenting it and also on his attitude towards his portfolio. Just recently the newly appointed Minister visited my electorate, where we have an Aboriginal community in the town of Cunnamulla. He brought with him his departmental head, Mr. Killoran, and meetings were held in that town. After that visit, I most certainly believe that we have a Minister who is interested in his portfolio and in the advancement of Aborigines in general.

Basically the Bill could be termed a small Bill of no great consequence in that it merely amounts to a change in name from "Affairs" to "Advancement". However, I believe that the name change will usher in an era of completely changed mental attitude with special emphasis on advancement. I congratulate the Minister on this.

A full-time departmental officer is stationed in Cunnamulla, Mr. Gary Booth, who does a remarkable job throughout the district looking after the affairs of the department.

The honourable member for Cairns referred to Aboriginal housing and the need for pensioner units. In Cunnamulla 23 houses and five pensioner units have been provided for Aborigines. The units are beautifully built. They are well kept and a credit to the occupants. Of the 55 Housing Commission homes in Cunnamulla three have been purchased by Aborigines and four are tenanted by Aborigines, making a ratio of 1 in 8. The problem of housing has been virtually overcome in Cunnamulla. If there is a problem it has been basically created by

Aborigines shifting from New South Wales to look for houses in Queensland. They are what might be termed refugees from the Federal Government's control of Aborigines in New South Wales. That is creating a bit of a problem in my area.

I do not wish to speak at any great length on the Bill as there are other speakers and the hour is late. I congratulate the Minister on the introduction of the Bill and the job he is doing for Aborigines in Queensland. I think the name change signifies exactly what it says—advancement for Aborigines and Islanders in Queensland.

Mr. BYRNE (Belmont) (11.20 p.m.): I support the Bill. I realise that it is basically simple in that it merely changes the word "Affairs" to "Advancement" in the three Acts being amended. I preface my remarks by saying that advancement of Aborigines in Queensland is most assuredly looked at in the long term. In carrying out the Government's objectives for the advancement of Aborigines and Islander people the department is confronted with immense difficulties. To that end we require a Minister of generosity and understanding and not one who is simply paternalistic. We are fortunate in having just such a Minister.

Mr. Hanson: You are not criticising his predecessors.

Mr. BYRNE: I pass no criticism on his predecessors.

In changing the word "Affairs" to "Advancement", we give voice to a principle that this Government supports, but it must not simply end with the principle; there must be a follow-on. The paternalism which appears to be inherent in the word "Affairs" must be turned into co-operative development, which is implicit in the word "Advancement". Advancement comes through establishing equality of life and increasing the personal capacity and initiative of these people. It is important that family growth and community consciousness be encouraged. In other countries racism has created enormous difficulties, violence and hatred. If we do not take careful note of the situation we find ourselves in today, Australia might not be spared similar experiences in the future.

There are two forms of discrimination. White people discriminate against black people and, when there is extreme racism black people discriminate against white people. There is no advancement in such discrimination. We move only backwards. There is no achievement of assimilation and we can move only towards future conflict. Responsibility for assimilation and a properly co-ordinated society rests on both sides. There are difficulties that must be overcome when there are two cultures or two civilisations with their origins so markedly different as those which presently exist in Australia. Most conflicts of an historical nature have developed from a conflict of race or creed and the difficulties of assimilation posed by different cultures and civilisations. In the past, unfortunately, rationality has not predominated. Because men resort to their prejudices, powers and violence, only violence, conflict and division can follow.

It is important that we should realise that "Advancement" carries with it far more than the word "Affairs". Advancement must express the concern of the Government, and it must be active concern aimed at the ends and goals desired by the people themselves. There must be individual choice with total community development. It must be the advancement of a people, a culture, a civilisation and the general community of Queensland. With these words I commend the Minister on presenting this Bill and commend it to the House.

Mr. LINDSAY (Everton) (11.23 p.m.): It is not my intention to delay the House. This Bill deals with advancement. In recent weeks it has been my pleasure to travel with the Minister and his very able Director, Mr. Pat Killoran, around both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reserves. What I saw there, including the reaction of the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to these men who are mainly responsible for their future, certainly gave me a great deal of encouragement. If any honourable member had spent most of his working life, as I have, with the indigenous people of other countries, particularly those of Malaya, Papua New Guinea, Borneo and Vietnam, he would know what inter-reaction is taking place between those in authority and those with whom they are dealing.

From what I saw on the reserves and in the towns that we visited, I can say that we have in the Minister a man who has that human touch so very necessary and vitally important if we are to stress the word "advancement" in our dealings with Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. The whole concept of progress, advancement and everything else that has been mentioned in this discussion is useless if we are unable to protect these people and provide for their good order and security.

I have risen to speak in this debate to bring home to Queenslanders that I am vitally concerned for the future of the Torres Strait Islanders in particular. It may be because of the emphasis I place on the sense of history, but I believe that somebody should stress the fact that on 16 September Papua New Guinea will no longer be part of Australia. Papua New Guinea will become another country. However, something may happen before then. Next Monday Bougainville, with its huge copper mine and the associated income on which Papua New Guinea is heavily dependent, is about to secede. I repeat that it intends doing so on Monday next.

An article in today's "Telegraph" speaks of a plan that Papua New Guinea has to counter riots that are expected in Bougainville. In addition—and perhaps at the same time—there will be the problem of the

Papuan Besena movement, whose leader is Miss Josephine Abaijah. If there is to be a time for them to act, it will be in the very near future.

Some years ago—I think it was in about 1962—I led a patrol with small boats along the south coast of Papua. At that time, rightly or wrongly, I was totally unaware that a border existed. During the course of that patrol I went ashore on Saibai. I was very quickly put into the picture as to exactly where I was, and the fact that they were very sincere Queenslanders and did not want anything to do with Papua. I had a similar experience the other day, in 1975.

There is no question that they are loyal Queenslanders and want to remain as such. I support them totally in that. What concerns me is that the distance between Saibai and the Papuan mainland is just slightly more than the length of the Hornibrook Highway. There was no border in 1962, and I believe that there is no border now. Further, if I may I will quote the words of a friend of mine, Julius Chan, the present Finance Minister for Papua New Guinea and an old school-mate of mine—he played a particularly good game at half-back, and obviously he is doing even better in his adult life. He said—

> "Not so long ago many of the world's problems would have scarcely touched your borders. The fact of the matter is that we live in a constantly changing world which demands regular adjustment. Any country which chooses not to do so becomes vulnerable. North of Australia there is an imaginary line which marks the border between Australia and Papua New Guinea."

That is exactly what it is—an imaginary line. Of interest is that the people on Saibai depend in the main on social security pension cheques, money sent from those working down south or money from those who have been working down south but who are back on Saibai for holidays. They are working on the cash economy, which is to some extent provided by the Australian taxpayer.

On the other hand, immediately on the other side of the Hornibrook Highway, so to speak, there is another group which depends entirely on trade and subsistence agriculture. Those Papuans regularly come across and trade in pigs, vegetables and so on. There cannot be any control because they are too close.

As honourable members would know, the State-owned "Melbidir" is not very large, but it cannot negotiate the waters between Saibai and the mainland. They are too shallow. Only a very shallow-draft boat can negotiate those waters. As at 16 September any Papua New Guinea shipping of any size wishing to travel along the south coast, either from east to west or from west to east, will have to use Queensland territorial waters.

Saibai basically runs east to west. It is a huge, swampy island. It has a piece of dry land some 600 yards by 100 yards on the northern side, which is nearest Papua. Nothing except some wild game lives on the rest of the island. The liveable area runs roughly east to west. The island has an air strip, which is vital for resupplying Saibai. It runs north to south. That means that aircraft taking off from Saibai or landing on Saibai, depending on the weather and the winds, at some stage will end up in Papua New Guinea air space. So we have a problem there. At this historic point of time, I believe it would be remiss of me if I did not bring these matters to the attention of the House and hopefully of all Queenslanders.

Because I have discussed the case with the Minister at length, he knows I am one of those people who advocate that it would be best if the 750 Torres Strait Islanders who live on Saibai, Boigu and Dauan were in fact withdrawn.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is really making an introductory speech. I have given him fair latitude, and I now ask him to return to the principles of the Bill.

Mr. LINDSAY: With respect, Mr. Speaker, the whole concept is the advancement of the Torres Strait Islanders and I am arguing that there can be no advancement if there is no security. And that involves not only military security, but also health security.

Daru is the island at the northern end of the Torres Strait while Thursday Island is the island at the southern end. Ten years ago, the hospital at Daru like that on Thursday Island had three doctors and four nursing sisters, and there were white sheets for the beds. When I was on Daru the other day I found that the sheets were grey, that there is one doctor—a young Filipino whose husband is still in the Philippines and she wants to leave—and one nursing sister, a 23 year old girl from Bougainville. And we know where she will be going on Monday if the Bougainvillians have anything to do with it. So that at the northern end of the Torres Strait the health, welfare and good order of the Torres Strait Islanders is at risk once we pull our administration out of Papua.

Since 1879 we have had the Torres Strait islands. Since 1884 we have been involved in Papua and we have been north of it. We have been to the Singapore base and have been in Vietnam and Malaya. The closest the Japanese got was Ioribaiwa which is just north of Imita Ridge. We always had that protection and it is about to go. What I am suggesting is that the future of the Torres Strait Islanders now becomes a problem. We do not have a viable defence force.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I think the honourable member has been given more than fair latitude in a second-reading speech, and I ask him now to return to the Bill.

Mr. LINDSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In conclusion, I say that we have in the Minister and his director two men who, from what I have seen, are ideally suited to further the advancement of the Aboriginal and Islander people. To really bring home the point of advancement, one has only to look at the honourable member for Cook. It was my pleasure to accompany him and live with him day after day as we moved through the areas to which I have referred. It is a tremendous personal achievement for the honourable member for Cook to become a member of this House, and equally it is a marvellous step forward for the State of Queensland. I am sick and tired of hearing people knock what we in Queensland are doing for our Aboriginal and Islander people. In addition to having the honourable member for Cook as an elected representative in this House, we can also point to Senator Neville Bonner.

Look for a moment at the problems of indigenous people throughout the world. Take China, for example. Where do the Chinese put theirs? They put them in the wilds in the south-west of China. In Malaya, they put them in confines in the centre of the Cameron Highlands. If there is an Australian State in which men such as Eric Deeral and Neville Bonner can become democratically elected representatives, that State has something to be very proud of.

I am sorry to have helped keep members up so late.

Dr. LOCKWOOD (Toowoomba North) (11.37 p.m.): The problems in the advancement of the Aboriginal and Islander people date back to before the white man ever saw this country. The Aborigines sparsely populated the country and were nomadic hunters. They fiercely defended their tribal hunting grounds, and for this reason there was an almost complete lack of communication except between the forward scouts of neighbouring tribes. The Aborigines could then never develop into a nation, as other coloured races had.

Their advancement was prevented by the introduction of disease to this country. If the white man had been able to come and bring only his ideas, culture and civilisation, full advancement of the Aborigines would have been achieved long before this and there would have been no need for the Minister's department. However, the people had no previous exposure to diseases from the outside world. They had little contact with other people. There were a few incursions by coastal traders. They were, of course, susceptible, but well conditioned to the rigours of a very spartan life, with full exposure to the climate. Their main problems were diseases confined to particular tribes and those diseases that they caught from birds, animals and insects.

Into these land-locked communities came the white man, and diseases that we now laugh and scoff at (such as measles, mumps and chicken-pox, which have an extremely low death rate among white men) caused virtual decimation of tribes. They had no immunity to these diseases, and not only infants but a great many people in their prime were struck down. Indeed, in primitive races in the world today strong working men can be struck down by seemingly trivial diseases. Tuberculosis, which was a serious problem among white people, went through Aboriginal tribes with the speed of a bush-fire. Whereas in a white man it might take one, two or 10 years to cause invalidism or death, in an Aborigine it could achieve total destruction of organs in less than six weeks.

White people had a natural immunity to these diseases. On exposure, we have beaten these diseases naturally without any medicines or medical aid. These diseases severely affected the tribal structure and took from the Aborigines not only their work-force, their hunters and their mothers but also their tribal leaders and it is here that the Aboriginal people suffered their most serious setback to advancement.

As if this were not enough, it was nothing to what befell them when influenza came to this country in 1918-19. Some honourable members might not be aware that we would have far more Aborigines in this country today were it not for that influenza epidemic. It knocked out whole tribes. Some Aborigines died for want of a drink in that there were no active people left to fetch them one from a billabong. Some tribes that had numbered hundreds were reduced to only five or 10 people. This was the awesome price that the Aborigines paid for their contact with the white man and it has set them back severely.

Ever since those days this administration has tried to make amends to the Aboriginal people for their lack of leaders.

It is worth mentioning that quarantine measures instituted back in 1919 are still applied to protect the people of Papua New Guinea from these seemingly trivial white man's diseases. They, too, have been unable to withstand the full and rapid change-over from tribal or island culture to the white man's culture. They have been unable, for example, to change from the traditional means of hunting where men expended a great deal of energy and remained thin, lissome, lithe, slim of ankle and slim of waist. These men are now finding as they move into the white man's culture that the cheap carbohydrates so readily available—what we would probably call mushy foods—are causing a great deal of obesity in these men who were formerly athletes. When alcohol is

added, they cease to advance and start to go backwards quickly. They will suffer more severely than white people have done.

We have learnt to a large extent to cope with these diseases and we will now be faced with the problem of these people suffering from rising coronary rates while we are inflicting upon them diabetes to an extent they have never known before. These things will have to be overcome and overcome rapidly.

I might add that Queensland leads Australia in the matter of Aboriginal and Island health because of improved nutrition. In some surveys in other States it has been found that 58 per cent of Aboriginal children are below the tenth percentile, which means that 58 per cent of the children are smaller than we would expect only 10 per cent of them to be. In other words, six times as many Aboriginal children as white children are stunted. Sixty-nine per cent of them are below this tenth percentile in weight. In one State 86 per cent of Aboriginal children had an inadequate calorie intake, which meant that whatever was done for these children after they turned three they could not advance into full citizenship because they would always be physically and mentally stunted. Such people cannot be adequately trained for a trade; they will never reach an I.Q. level of 100.

It is in the matter of the advancement of coloured people that this State has in fact led the way. Much has been said about the lack of vitamin C in Aboriginal diets and a great deal has been done in recent years to make sure that vitamin C and other vitamins are added to their diet. I have already mentioned the better quality diet which can so readily be made available to these people in prepared foods, particularly the high carbohydrate foods.

It is not advancement to encourage these people to leave their traditional grounds and move to a city where they will be unemployable because they are unskilled and where they will live in a humpy or a shanty because there is no housing prepared for them. It is not advancement for these people to be urged into places where they will suffer malnutrition or other set-backs as they leave their traditional life seeking what is perhaps the worst of a white man's life and being exposed to more and more diseases.

The Government has sought to have the Aboriginal and Islander people merge, in perhaps another 20 or 30 years, into full integration with the rest of the country. This will be done, and the pace will have to be stepped up because, whether we like it or not, Mr. Speaker, culture is advancing on them very rapidly. Shortly they are to have power stations; soon after that they will have television and the race will be really on. The Government can use television to great advantage by transmitting health and educational programmes to the Aboriginal and Islander people, thus hastening their socialisation by western standards.

The Islanders in particular enjoy a very good reception throughout this State and other Australian States as workers, and it is indeed a tribute to the department that they can go so far and seek work honourably and with credit to themselves and their race. But it will be necessary to extend their education into the trades—the motor trades and the electrical trades—so that they will not be able to serve only under white master tradesmen but in fact be able to train themselves and their fellows.

Full integration will come when there are trained nurses, trained sisters, and trained teachers teaching in whatever language the Islanders or the Aboriginal tribes use, when they can preserve and pass on the culture and traditions of their people and when they can reach the professions themselves. When they can serve their own population, they might start serving some of ours, and full integration will then be achieved.

I look forward to the day—and I hope that a great many of us in this Chamber will see it—when the department can be disbanded with a job well done. I congratulate the Minister for his sincerity and dedication to the Aboriginal and Islander people and his department for the service it renders them. They appreciate it very much and look forward to it. Everywhere we went in the Torres Strait area, Mr. Speaker, we were greeted as friends and advisers—never as overlords but always as humble servants—and the people were truly grateful, loyal citizens of Queensland.

Hon. C. A. WHARTON (Burnett—Minister for Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement and Fisheries) (11.48 p.m.), in reply: I think that honourable members will now see the advantage of having a very simple Bill. Although it is very difficult at times to find an appropriate word, it is easy to put a lot of simple words together, and there has been a worth-while discussion on the Bill.

I express my appreciation to my committee and others who have joined me on visits to Aboriginal and Islander settlements and become more familiar with the problems relating to Aboriginal and Islander advancement. On one of these trips I included a member of the Opposition in the party, and I did that so that this Assembly would be better able to understand the problems that confront us in this field.

I am encouraged by the words of honourable members relative to the work done by myself and by my director and his staff, and I thank them for their contributions to the debate. It may be a simple Bill, but I think it has brought out the best in honourable members. In this way we are better able to understand each other's point of view. If we can communicate with each other, we will achieve better public relations with the people whom we all represent in this State.

The honourable member for Cairns made quite a good contribution to the debate and showed that he has a sound appreciation of the problems of the department in dealing with Aboriginal and Islander people. However, I should like to put him right in regard to a couple of points that he made.

He mentioned the title to land. In Queensland, the Government is encouraging every Aborigine, in common with every other person, to acquire his own piece of land. There are 7,000,000 acres of land in Queensland reserved for the Aboriginal people of today and tomorrow.

Mr. Jones: What about titles on reserves?

Mr. WHARTON: If an Aborigine pays for a house he is entitled to a land title. It is given to Aborigines to some degree where it is appropriate. I make the point clear that, while a great fuss is made about land title, land is reserved for the Aboriginal people for today and tomorrow, and Queensland leads the rest of Australia in this field.

I appreciate the remarks of the honourable member for Cairns about the councils. They are elected and have the respect of those who elect them. They communicate with each other and their people. They conduct the canteens and use their funds to advantage. They have keenness and a desire for their people to have better homes. They like to see gardens well kept. They encourage that sort of thing of their own volition. We encourage it, too. It is the job of the department to encourage and foster understanding and involvement in community matters.

Aboriginal communities are like any other communities in the State. They have their own elected councils. They try to do their own things in their own way. Certainly at times they need some guidance, and they receive it. It is given in a kindly way. We are guided by their attitudes. We guide them in the conduct of their own affairs. We appreciate that what they want to do is also what we want to do for them.

There is a great deal of exchange of ideas today, and school-children, particularly from the Torres Strait islands, travel about quite often. They are encouraged to make trips to Brisbane and other parts of the State. Recently two planeloads came down from Bamaga to visit Brisbane and the Darling Downs. That type of activity is progressing and advancing all the time. We endeavour to get communication.

We are keen on education for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait island people. Education is being well handled in the communities. Just as everyone else is gaining an education so, too, is that section of the Queensland people.

I compliment the honourable member for Cook on his leadership. To have come here to this House is something of an achievement by way of leadership. A vital fact to be remembered is that no-one comes into this House unless he has demonstrated leadership in his own community. The honourable member for Cook has shown that. He is a leader among his own people. We are glad to have him here for that reason, because he will show us what he wants done in his community. Everybody in the House appreciates the leadership he is showing in his own area as well as in the Chamber for the good of the people of Queensland.

The honourable member referred to the desirability of having more meetings of the advisory council. I commend him for that, because that is important. Just as with other councils, there is a need for communication and understanding in that field too. Probably next month Mr. Les Stewart will be calling another meeting of the advisory council. I am sure that will make the honourable member much happier.

I thank the honourable member for Warrego for his comments and the great interest he takes in the people in his electorate. I commend the housing programme in his area, particularly the provision of pensioner housing. That matter was also raised by the honourable member for Cairns. The pensioner units at Cunnamulla are of excellent standard. People there are happy and are enjoying life in the kind of environment we all want to strive for. I commend the honourable member for Warrego on his attitude towards his work in seeing that all the people in his electorate are well housed and catered for in the way they should be.

Queensland must be advancing in this field, because Aborigines from other States are moving to Queensland. I hope that this is the best State in Australia for all people to live.

I commend the honourable member for Belmont on his contribution to the debate. He certainly wants to encourage responsibility. It is not much good doing anything without a high sense of responsibility, and his contribution to the debate sponsored and fostered the responsibility that we wish to see displayed by all people in Queensland without regard to colour of skin. In this way we would be advancing.

The honourable member for Everton made a good contribution on this area in which he has worked for many years. His contribution was useful to the House because few of us understand the situation as well as he does. He was there several years ago and was able to go back to see how things had changed. He appreciates the problems confronting the Islanders. The people of the Torres Strait islands wish to remain in Queensland. They do not want their border changed. They are dedicated and loyal to Queensland and we welcome them. We should encourage them to remain Queenslanders. It is up to us as Queenslanders to offer them the security they are seeking. I feel it will become readily available to

them because of the understanding that this Government and Parliament have of their affairs.

The honourable member for Toowoomba North, in his clean, healthy way, made a good speech on the right attitude to good health, which is very important. Irrespective of how able we are, or how much money we have, without good health we will not get very far. I thank him for his contribution.

I thank honourable members for their contributions and their patience at this hour of the night.

Motion (Mr. Wharton) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 to 8, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

The House adjourned at 11.59 p.m.