

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 1975

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

CIRCULATION AND COST OF HANSARD

Mr. SPEAKER announced the receipt from the Chief Reporter, Parliamentary Reporting Staff, of his reports on the circulation and cost of "Hansard" for the sessions of 1974 and 1975.

ERROR IN DEPARTMENTAL REPORT

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that my attention has been drawn to an error in the report of the Department of Forestry which was tabled in the House on 28 October, and that I have authorised an erratum slip to be issued by the Government Printing Office to all recipients of the report.

PAPERS

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

Report of the Senate of the University of Queensland for the year 1974.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Order in Council under the State and Regional Planning and Development, Public Works Organization and Environmental Control Act 1971–1974 and the Local Bodies' Loans Guarantee Act 1923–1973.

Regulation under the Forestry Act 1959–1975.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

1. DIVIDEND FUND INCORPORATED; GOVERNMENT AID TO SHAREHOLDERS

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

(1) Has he seen a report in "The Australian" of 17 October, that the Victorian Government has agreed to meet the legal and other costs estimated at \$60,000 of shareholders in Dividend Fund Incorporated, an unlimited liability company?

(2) Has the Queensland Government refused to assist shareholders in companies which are unable to meet their payments because of criminal activity by directors or other officers?

(3) Will he review the Queensland policy in this regard so that in future the Government may give assistance to shareholders in such a situation?

Answers:—

(1) Yes.

(2) I am not aware of any situation similar to the case referred to in Victoria by the honourable member having occurred in Queensland.

(3) An application to the Legal Assistance Committee of Queensland for legal aid would receive consideration in the light of all the circumstances.

2. SAFETY OF HELMETS FOR POLICE MOTOR-CYCLISTS

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

(1) What is the result of the inquiry ordered by the Police Commissioner into the authenticity of the stamp of approval on helmets worn by police motor-cyclists?

(2) As the Police Union general secretary has said that the union is not satisfied with the helmets now worn by police motor-cyclists and as he is reported to have said that we have a cheaper class of helmet issued to our motor-cyclists, what action is planned to ensure that the police have top-quality safety equipment issued to them?

Answers:—

(1) No such inquiry has been ordered, nor is one considered necessary.

(2) Helmets issued to Queensland Police motor-cyclists comply with the Standards Association of Australia specification for protective helmets for racing motor-cyclists. No problems of deficiency of protection within the design limits of the helmets on issue have arisen. The Police Department is very conscious of the need to protect its motor-cycle riders. New-style helmets are constantly being assessed for added safety features, comfort and utility.

3. CHARGE AGAINST SERGEANT McDONNELL OVER WATCH-HOUSE KING-HIT INCIDENT

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

As there is widespread revulsion throughout the community at the charge laid against the Hamilton chief of police, Sergeant McDonnell, over the watch-house king-hit case because it is clear that it was never suggested that Sergeant McDonnell was a party to the assault and that he is now seriously ill in hospital after suffering a heart attack as a result of the Government's actions in this case, will he, as a matter of urgency, remove this charge against an officer who is obviously not guilty?

Answer:—

No. The charge was preferred against Sergeant 1/C McDonnell under the Police Act and rules by direction of the Commissioner of Police. It is not my policy to intercede on matters of internal discipline within the Police Force.

4. MR. C. PERKINS'S POINTING THE BONE AT THE PREMIER

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

With reference to the act of Mr. Charles Perkins in pointing the bone at the Premier with the intention of bringing about his early demise, if Mr. Perkins fully believes that this action would have the result he desired, would it constitute attempted murder and could action be taken against Mr. Perkins in the Northern Territory similar to that taken in a similar case some time ago, or is this just another case of Mr. Perkins's attempting to degrade tribal customs for cheap personal political gain?

Answer:—

As I understand the position, Mr. Perkins, a highly paid Federal public servant, claims that the Honourable the Premier has been sung to death. Mr. Perkins's curious form of witchcraft appears to have been remarkably unsuccessful. As far as I am aware, the only political death in Australia in recent days has been that of Whitlam. I have no doubt that the people of the

Northern Territory, regardless of their colour, will bring about the political death of Mr. Perkins and his A.L.P. fellow travellers at the Northern Territory Senate poll on 13 December. I am assured by the medical practitioners on this side of the House that the Honourable the Premier looks in excellent health. I am told that the same cannot be said for Mr. Whitlam. As for the practice of sorcery and witchcraft, the Honourable the Premier and any other Queenslanders who might be victims of such practices enjoy the protection of the criminal law of Queensland under section 432 of the Criminal Code. For the benefit of members who may be worried about it, it is an offence to exercise or use any kind of witchcraft or sorcery, and that offence carries a maximum penalty of imprisonment with hard labour for one year. So our good laws also protect the Premier. However, if any member suffers from this problem in future, I have been reliably informed that two tins of tobacco can take the hex off.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

REDUCTION OF SPEED LIMITS

Mr. JONES: I ask the Minister for Transport: As he has suggested that Queensland should consider reducing the maximum speed limit in an effort to reduce the road toll, what proposals has he put forward on the matter? What does he believe should be the speed limits? Is his proposal supported by road safety officers in this State and at a national level?

Mr. K. W. HOOPER: Again the honourable member is relying on Press reports. I suggest that he should have directed his question to me in another way. The Press asked me whether I would investigate the possibility of lowering speed limits. I said, "Yes", and I will do that.

Mr. Aikens: He gets that from "The Cairns Post", which would be the worst newspaper in Queensland.

Mr. JONES: That's only your opinion.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. JONES: I regard "The Cairns Post" as a reliable source of information.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I warn the honourable member for Cairns that, unless he obeys the ruling of the Chair, I shall deal with him under Standing Order 123A.

RE-EMPLOYMENT OF DR. COLSTON

Mr. PORTER: I ask the Premier: As Dr. Colston has acted in such a way as to suggest that he is a man with political diarrhoea and wants to use a safe Government job like some form of public convenience—

An Opposition Member interjected.

Mr. PORTER: Well, he is in and out of it every five minutes. As the 1974 Federal and State A.L.P. vote shows a distinct possibility that he may not make it as fourth man on the Labor ticket, would the Premier not consider that in that event there is no obligation on this Government to again rescue Dr. Colston by putting him back into a safe job when obviously he will quit at the first opportunity?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: The Government has been very kind and very generous to Dr. Colston. It has rescued him again and again.

Mr. Houston interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Bulimba and other members will desist from making persistent interjections or I shall have to deal with them. I warn all honourable members that I intend to stop cross-firing whilst any honourable member is on his feet. I ask for the co-operation of the House.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I reiterate that the Government has been very generous to Dr. Colston. We have looked after him.

Mr. Marginson interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The statement by the honourable member for Wolston that the gag has been applied is a reflection on the Chair. Such is not the case. I warn the honourable member under Standing Order 123A and I hope he will abide by the decision of the Chair.

Mr. Marginson: Yes.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: Mr. Speaker, I appeal to you to be lenient with Opposition members because there are not many of them.

We have been generous to Dr. Colston. He has been well looked after and well cared for by this Government over a period of years. We have ignored his every attempt from time to time to undermine the Queensland Government and have returned him to a very highly paid position in the Government service. How long that will continue remains to be seen.

I would also say that it is Dr. Colston's right and prerogative to stand for election to the Senate. On the other hand, many of us are deeply disturbed when we recall some of the things that have been said about this man and his history. The full extent of that history is not known, but it has been mentioned in this House by various speakers. A statement attributed to him was to the effect that, like the Prime Minister and Mr. Hartley in Victoria, his main objective if elected would be to destroy the Senate. Naturally the Government would have to view very carefully its general association with a man of this character and outlook.

ASSOCIATION OF OPPOSITION LEADER WITH HUGH HAMILTON IN POLITICAL AGITATION

Mr. PORTER: I ask the Premier: Is the Hugh Hamilton who yesterday in the City Square was exhorting a mob of Left-wing unionists to violence, in accordance with Communist plans outlined in the "Tribune" of 22 October to use anarchy in the streets for a take-over of democratic Government, the same Hugh Hamilton who is the Queensland president of the Communist Party? What is the significance of the Leader of the Opposition being part and parcel of that same mob operation furthering Communist action to destroy the very parliamentary system that his oath of office here requires that he uphold?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: Obviously the Leader of the Opposition was again with Mr. Hamilton and other Communists who demonstrated here yesterday. It is interesting to note that Hugh Hamilton is a very prominent Communist in this State and he has a close and prominent association with the A.L.P.

Mr. Knox: Tom Burns was on the same platform.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: Yes, Tom Burns was on the same platform as Communists, just as the former Prime Minister has been from time to time. Indeed, honourable members opposite will also be closely associated with the Communists of this and other States.

Mr. Houston interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Bulimba has also the right to ask questions, and he will be given the same protection by the Chair. I again appeal to all honourable members. There will be no debate on questions. The honourable member knows that as well as I do; he has been here for a long time.

Mr. HOUSTON: I rise to a point of order. It is true that there is no debate on questions, but it is not right—

Honourable Members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. What is the honourable member's point of order?

Mr. HOUSTON: I accept your ruling on interjections, Mr. Speaker, but it has also been ruled by the Chair on many occasions that Ministers are not allowed simply to give opinions. My point is that the whereabouts of Mr. Burns yesterday is only an opinion of the Premier. There is no evidence where Mr. Burns was yesterday, except that he was in the House.

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

Mr. MELLOY: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member for Toowong is misleading the House when he says that Mr. Burns was at that meeting. He was not there, so the Premier is replying to a false presumption.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: Yesterday the Communist demonstrators brought in their thugs and heavies, and they dealt very roughly with people with a different opinion from theirs.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I take it that the Premier will accept the honourable member's denial that Mr. Burns was at that gathering?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I appreciate what the honourable member said. However, I do know that Mr. Burns addressed a group of people at the Trades Hall—

Mr. AIKENS: I rise to a point of order. I should like to draw the attention of the House to an old western saying that if anyone lies down with dogs, he cannot blame the people if they think he has fleas. If he is knocking around with Commos, the people cannot be blamed for thinking that he is a Commo.

Honourable Members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Townsville South has been here long enough to know the rules of the House. I ask him, too, to abide by the instructions of the Chair.

Mr. PORTER: I rise to a point of order. I did not say in my question that Mr. Burns had been at that meeting. I said that he had been part and parcel of the same mob operation, and to that I hold.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: In conclusion—I do know on very reliable information that Mr. Burns addressed a group at the Trades Hall, and there, contrary to what he says here about non-violence and peacefulness, he suggested that if there is any trouble, hit them on the head. That is what he said at the Trades Hall. We know that that is correct.

NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPHS OF CITY DEMONSTRATIONS

Mr. TURNER: I ask the Premier: As many Red flags and flags bearing the hammer and sickle were displayed in the demonstration outside Parliament House yesterday, 12 November, does he find it unusual that in all this morning's newspapers not one photograph was published showing these flags?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: The honourable member refers to flags showing the hammer and sickle. They are becoming very prominent in this city. Wherever there is an A.L.P. rally or gathering, we

find the hammer and sickle. The newspapers, of course, are free to publish whatever they wish. But members of the Government parties will always draw the people's attention to the close association between the hammer and sickle and the A.L.P.

SALE OF PORNOGRAPHIC LITERATURE BY
STUDENTS UNION

Mr. AIKENS: If the Commos will keep quiet, I would like to ask the Minister for Justice a question.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. AIKENS: As pornographic and filthy publications issued by the Students Union and other bodies associated with our universities are readily available to members of the general public both on and off campus, will the Literature Board of Review be instructed to initiate action against anyone responsible for the distribution and/or sale of such literature and so end the anachronistic system based on social snobbery that protects the filth pedlars at the university against the laws that apply to every other citizen?

Mr. KNOX: This, of course, has been a vexed question for many years because a number of students—not very many, I might say, but enough—take advantage of the academic freedom of the university (which we support) to peddle the sort of rubbish to which the honourable member refers. As was reported in the annual report of the Literature Board of Review, one of the difficulties which the board has to overcome is determining whether or not this material is generally available to the public. As the honourable member knows, the Queensland Institute of Technology also faced a similar problem a year or so ago. There is no easy answer to the problem. I would say that if indeed some of this material is blatantly peddled in the streets of Brisbane, those responsible could be dealt with quite effectively under the Vagrants, Gaming and Other Offences Act and possibly under other legislation, but the Literature Board of Review could not deal with them as easily as could a policeman who happened to be there at the time of sale.

Mr. Aikens: It is a public disgrace.

Mr. KNOX: It is not satisfactory, but as the honourable member knows, and members generally know, it has been a matter of concern for some time. Fortunately, the great majority of students at the university treat that sort of literature with the contempt it deserves, and for that we can be grateful.

STATEMENT BY GOVERNOR-GENERAL ON
DISMISSAL OF MR. WHITLAM

Mr. JENSEN: I ask the Premier: In view of the reported statement in both the "Telegraph" yesterday and today's "Courier-Mail" by the Governor-General's official secretary that "he had been authorised to deny that Sir John had had any conversations with Mr. Fraser on Tuesday before the 1 p.m. dismissal of Mr. Whitlam", will he explain how some of his Ministers knew of this decision just after 10 minutes to 1? Is it not a fact that Mr. Anthony rang him at approximately 12.50 p.m. and informed him that Mr. Whitlam had been sacked and that there would be a double dissolution? Do some of his Ministers tell lies, or is the Governor-General a liar and a conniver?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: Mr. Doug Anthony did ring me, but I would not know at what time. All I am prepared to do is accept the statement made by Mr. Fraser and the assurance given by Mr. Anthony. I trust and believe those men more than I believe anybody on the honourable member's side of politics.

Mr. JENSEN: I ask the Premier this supplementary question: How does he account for the fact that casket ticket bets were made on the double dissolution, in my presence, between two members of the Government and one member of the A.L.P. at 12.55 p.m.? I switched the television on at one minute before 1 p.m. to see the A.B.C. 1 o'clock news and came back into the library and said, "This is wrong; it's completely wrong. All that's been said is that there is to be a half-Senate election."

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! What is the honourable member's question?

Mr. JENSEN: I have asked how the Premier accounts for that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Bundaberg will ask the question. There is no debate on questions. If the honourable member asks the question, the Premier can answer it.

Mr. JENSEN: I am asking the Premier how he accounts for that. How does he account for the fact that one member of the Government parties said to me—

Government Members: Name him.

Mr. JENSEN: I won't name him. I don't do people in.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will ask the question or resume his seat.

Mr. JENSEN: All right. I ask the Premier: How does he account for that fact, and how does he account for the fact that a Government member told me, "It can't be wrong—"

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. JENSEN: It is a question.

Mr. SPEAKER: It is not a question; it is a debate. The honourable member will ask the question. If he does not do so, he will resume his seat.

Mr. JENSEN: How does he account for the fact that he told me Mr. Anthony phoned him? That is the question.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I disallow the question.

COMMUNIST MARCH ON PARLIAMENT HOUSE;
CONDUCT OF MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Mr. FRAWLEY: I ask the Premier: In view of the disgraceful tactics adopted yesterday in Brisbane by the A.L.P. in organising a march of Communists and fellow-travellers to the gates of Parliament House, does he not agree that the A.L.P. is contributing to anarchy and lawlessness by these actions? Is he also aware that the honourable member for Rockhampton addressed these Communists outside Parliament House and urged them to continue their disruptive tactics?

Mr. WRIGHT: I rise to a point of order. That is a blatant lie.

Mr. FRAWLEY: It is not a lie; it is true. I saw him there.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I draw the attention of the honourable member and other honourable members of the House to the fact that I witnessed the procession, or whatever one might call it, and the flying of a red flag with a hammer and sickle design on it outside Parliament House yesterday. I did see the honourable member for Rockhampton there. I did not see him issue any instructions or hear any words from him. I ask the honourable member for Murrumba to accept the denial of the honourable member for Rockhampton.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I accept that denial, but I still direct the remainder of the question to the Premier. In view of the disgraceful tactics adopted yesterday in Brisbane by the A.L.P. in organising a march by Communists—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Do I understand that the honourable member for Murrumba accepts the denial of the honourable member for Rockhampton?

Mr. FRAWLEY: Only the last part. He was out there. The rest of it is correct.

Mr. Houston: It is still wrong.

Mr. FRAWLEY: It is not. Mr. Speaker, will you allow me to read the question again, minus the last part?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I take it that the honourable member accepts the denial of the honourable member for Rockhampton?

Mr. FRAWLEY: I accept it.

Mr. SPEAKER: The honourable member will ask his question.

Mr. FRAWLEY: My question to the Premier is: In view of the disgraceful tactics adopted yesterday in Brisbane by the A.L.P. in organising a march of Communists and fellow-travellers to the gates of Parliament House, does not the Premier agree that the A.L.P. is contributing to anarchy and lawlessness by these actions?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I certainly do agree. The A.L.P. cannot deny its association with the Communists, nor can it deny that their tactics and methods tend towards anarchy and the incitement of lawlessness. Members of the Opposition cannot deny that, and from time to time they find themselves with the Communists.

Mr. MELLOY: I rise to a point of order. On behalf of the A.L.P., I deny that our party played any part whatever in yesterday's demonstrations.

Government Members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has made a statement, and it is entirely up to the House either to accept it or to reject it.

POLITICAL RALLY AND MARCH WITHOUT
PERMIT

Mr. DOUMANY: I ask the Minister for Police: Can he confirm that yesterday's unruly mob led by known Communists and prominent leaders of the A.L.P. held no permit whatever to conduct a rally or to proceed through city streets intimidating citizens and threatening any who dissented from their views? Will he also inform the House whether such illegal activities will continue to be tolerated?

Mr. HODGES: I do not know whether a permit was granted to hold the rally yesterday. Citizens of the State are permitted to walk on footpaths without a permit, and whether the people who took part in yesterday's rally restricted themselves to the footpaths I do not know. As I say, I am not aware whether a permit was issued. I assure the House that on all occasions the police will give the decent citizens of Queensland the protection that they are entitled to receive from these lawless louts. I must commend the police for the restraint they have shown in recent times in handling these very delicate situations. I appeal now to all political parties to show a little bit of decency and decorum in conducting their political rallies during these tense times. Again, I assure the House and also the people of Queensland that the police will take whatever action is necessary to protect the good citizens of the State against these lawless louts.

EFFECTS ON QUEENSLAND OF SENATE'S DEFERMENT OF SUPPLY

Mr. MOORE: I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: In view of the wild claims in recent weeks by former Federal Ministers about economic damage and individual financial hardship resulting from temporary deferment of Supply in the Senate, can the Treasurer say whether economic damage and financial hardship has been caused to the State of Queensland or its citizens, and whether these claims were just or merely exaggerated pre-election propaganda by the A.L.P.?

Sir GORDON CHALK: Quite a lot was said by former Labor Ministers and members of the A.L.P. in Canberra about the effect of Supply not being granted by the Senate. Firstly, Queensland continued to receive the Financial Assistance Agreement Grant; it was not affected by the refusal of Supply. The Senate also passed one Bill that gave the State its extra entitlement, which was agreed on at the last Prime Minister and Premiers' Conference. There were no serious effects on Queensland as a State, or the State Treasury, from the refusal of Supply. Certain moneys promised by the former Labor Government in Canberra referring to the R.E.D. scheme and other funds that were being provided directly by the Federal Government could have dried up and Commonwealth public servants could have been without pay. The finances of the State of Queensland associated with the Federal Government were sound. We were in a position to carry on for some considerable time. While the crisis was at its height, I indicated to my Cabinet colleagues that there would be no serious effect on the administration of the State or its finances until about the first quarter of 1976. The statements made were sheer political propaganda designed to frighten the people of Queensland.

PERMITS FOR STREET MEETINGS

Mr. WRIGHT: I ask the Minister for Police: Have any orders been given by him, the Government or his office to police districts throughout Queensland, and to the Rockhampton Police District in particular, that permits for street meetings are not to be issued?

Mr. HODGES: No.

Mr. WRIGHT: I direct a supplementary question to the Minister for Police: In view of his negative answer, as the inspector in charge of the Rockhampton district has advised people who applied yesterday for street permits that they cannot be given at this stage and, in fact, may not be able to be given, will he explain this situation and also explain the right of a local inspector to refuse permits?

Mr. HODGES: I shall ascertain the details from the inspector concerned.

REALLOCATION OF ROAD FUNDS

Mr. TENNI: I ask the Minister for Local Government and Main Roads: As the former Federal Minister for Transport has now been sacked from his portfolio and as that Minister could not have cared less about rural road maintenance and construction, could our Minister take some action to obtain some of the national finance and transfer it to the rural arterial, rural local and beef roads in this State now that we have a Government in Canberra that considers the people of the country as well as those in the city?

Mr. HINZE: I am sure that the honourable member will appreciate that the action that he wishes to be taken—and the action that we propose to take—will have to wait for another few weeks. Obviously after 13 December we will be able to speak to somebody in Canberra with some common sense who will be able to understand the submissions on behalf of Queensland and our vast road works system. It will be in distinct contrast to what we in Queensland have had to put up with over the last 12 months. I ask the member for Barron River to wait a little longer and the requirements of the area he represents will be satisfied for sure.

POLITICAL RALLY AND MARCH WITHOUT PERMIT

Mr. LANE: I ask the Minister for Police: Following his answer to a question asked by my colleague the honourable member for Kurilpa this morning, in which he said that he was not aware if permits had been issued or not for what was obviously an illegal procession down Queen Street yesterday—not on the footpath, but down the centre of the carriageway (and I invite the Minister to study the photograph in this morning's "Courier-Mail")—will he undertake to ensure that any future unlawful processions in Brisbane streets which interfere with the decent citizens' right to free passage will be stopped by the police and, if necessary, that the offenders will be prosecuted under the relevant provisions of the Traffic Act?

Mr. HODGES: I think I have given that assurance already. The people of Queensland will be protected and no illegal action will be allowed in the State. As I said before, if people are determined to march on the footpath, they are quite at liberty to do so, but if they are on the carriageway and have no permit, they will have to bear the consequences.

POLICE ACTION AT DEMONSTRATIONS

Mr. MELLOY: I ask the Minister for Police: In the last fortnight, at any of the demonstrations and protest meetings held in the city, have the police found it necessary to take any action against anyone involved?

Mr. HODGES: That is a hard question to answer. I do not know what action has been taken. However, I commend the police for the restraint and tolerance that they have shown in handling an inflammatory situation. There is no way in the world that they will put a match to this inflammatory situation just to satisfy the whim of some who wish to see it get out of hand.

SUPPLY

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES— EIGHTH AND NINTH ALLOTTED DAYS

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

ESTIMATES-IN-CHIEF, 1975-76

WORKS AND HOUSING

CHIEF OFFICE

Debate resumed from 11 November (see p. 1786) on Mr. Lee's motion—

“That \$7,216,149 be granted for ‘Works and Housing—Chief Office’.”

Mr. JONES (Cairns) (11.53 a.m.): I wish to draw attention to the need for prompt action to be taken in the development of the court-house building and complex in Cairns. There is a need for early forward planning and steps should be taken by the Works Department to provide additional accommodation to meet the pressing needs of the courts in Cairns. During October four courts—two District Courts, one Circuit Court and one Magistrates Court—sat simultaneously in Cairns and the available accommodation was very crowded. There is a temporary courtroom in the State Government Insurance Office building, but it is situated a fair distance from the other courts. To get to it, one has to go down Abbott Street and then up and across Shields Street, and it is rather inconvenient to conduct proceedings there.

I should like to make some comments on the new police station project facing Shields Street. I do not blame officers of the Works Department for what seem to me to be deficiencies in the building; they may, however, heed my comments. I do not think that the new police station is suitable for a growing city such as Cairns. I think that the planning was done for today's conditions and I feel that we will be running out of accommodation in the new police building complex within a very short period. However, when the building facing Shields Street is complete, there will be some room to expand down past the site of the old police station. As well, the old inspector's residence is now in the process of being demolished and the magistrate's house facing the Esplanade is due for demolition.

I urge the forward planners to look to a hollow-centred complex and continue the new court-house on the side alignment as the Mulgrave Shire Council chambers down towards Abbott Street so that it will join the

existing court-house complex. The present court-house building is a very pleasant one in a garden setting on the main street of Cairns and has great aesthetic value. If extensions are made to the court-house, I would hope that the original building will be retained and that the new court rooms and offices which are necessary within the court-house complex will be planned with the old building as a frontage. Perhaps these could be contained in a tower block behind the old building on the same alignment as the new police station and the proposed extensions to the new police station along the Esplanade. If an additional administration building is to be erected where the landscape gardens are to be situated, I emphasise that this building should be constructed on the same aesthetic lines as the old court-house and at least one, and perhaps two additional court rooms, should be constructed adjacent to the existing court on the side alignment of the Mulgrave Shire Council chambers.

With the extension of police districts and the establishment of regional offices, perhaps the Cairns Police Station could be upgraded to a regional office immediately. A very good site for such an office would be on the Esplanade, adjoining the new building.

By way of a question to the Minister some time ago I raised an issue on which I wish to elaborate, that is, dwellings provided for public servants under the Crown employees' housing scheme, particularly as it applies to Far North Queensland. Because of the torrential rains during the prolonged wet season, I have repeated requests from public servants and school-teachers that an allocation be made for concreting underneath their residences. This may appear extravagant to people in other areas of the State but in North Queensland it is essential for normal living.

Mr. Moore: It is essential anywhere.

Mr. JONES: I accept the honourable member's comment. If it is essential everywhere, it certainly is very necessary in Far North Queensland.

Mr. Moore: Why?

Mr. JONES: To improve living conditions. Cement flooring at ground level provides what is virtually an outdoor living area under the house. In the hot, humid summer months, it also provides shelter and a play area for children. In North Queensland, areas under the house are used as garages, laundries, storage space and for hobbies.

Mr. Moore: And for hanging out the washing.

Mr. JONES: Yes. That is a very practical use, and in Far North Queensland such areas are certainly used for that purpose.

I put to the Minister a suggestion by members of the Queensland State Service Union that he might adopt a system under which part of the cost of concrete flooring would be met by the department and part by the

occupier. Alternatively, public servants would be prepared to pay a rental levy if they could have concrete flooring put down under houses. I do not think it would be a difficult task, and I believe that the suggestion is worthy of consideration. Although the Minister said on 9 October that funds were not available for work of that type, I suggest to him that some provision might be made for such work when future Estimates are being drawn up. I suggest, too, that Far North Queensland, particularly my electorate and other coastal areas, should be given priority.

The Minister is aware, of course, of other problems confronting the Department of Works in my electorate, but I shall bring them to his attention once again. At the Trinity Bay High School, for example, the parents and citizens' association is still concerned about the security of the library. They believe that it would be a simple matter to have a plan drawn up—perhaps it could be an over-all plan for the State—

Mr. Lee: Which school is the honourable member referring to?

Mr. JONES: The Trinity Bay High School. It has a temporary library at ground level, and there are security problems. The western aspect of the building is hidden from the street and from the view of passing motorists, and it is also hidden from the school. The windows are accessible and, unfortunately, on several occasions vandals have entered the library and done a great deal of damage to stocks in the library.

The problem could be overcome by the erection of a concrete-block wall and a veranda-like awning on the western side of the building. When buildings in North Queensland are not air-conditioned, good use is made of open-air space. If an awning were built, it would provide an open-air weather-proof reading room or study room for students at the high school. The cost of providing that additional amenity for the students would be minimal; it would also provide additional security for the building. As I said earlier, there are similar buildings in other schools throughout the State, so perhaps an over-all plan could be drawn up to meet the situation.

West Cairns is an area of high population growth. The Trinity Bay State High School is in the centre of it, and its enrolment is sky-rocketing. Unfortunately, however, the toilet facilities at the school have not kept pace with its growth. There are now six classroom blocks at the school, lettered from "A" to "F", and accommodation shortages have been overcome by the erection of Stramit buildings. The toilet facilities are, however, inadequate to meet present needs. I know that this matter is receiving the attention of the Works Department, and I hope that something will be done to alleviate the problem in the near future.

The tuckshop facilities at the school are a matter of concern to the women's auxiliary, and I would urge the Minister to have an improvement made in this area, too.

A nearby school, the West Cairns State Primary School, also has some problems. I am sure that the Minister has received a request from the p. and c. association to meet its members personally so that they can acquaint him with the accommodation problems arising at the school. The school has far too many temporary classrooms, and the erection of permanent classrooms should be carried out as a matter of urgency. At least two additional classrooms should be provided to cater for the school's present enrolment.

The provision of a free-standing library has been raised by me with the Minister for Education and Cultural Activities, as has the erection of an administration block, as part of the school's planning programme. This school, too, is located in the centre of a fast-growing area, and its toilet facilities should be upgraded to cater for all pupils and teachers. It is necessary, too, that covered walk-ways be provided between the buildings of the school.

I am sure the Minister is well aware of the need for adequate staff-room facilities for teachers. The present accommodation for staff is very limited. In fact, no change has been made to it since the opening of the school in 1965, the first year of my parliamentary career.

The drainage problems to which I have referred in relation to school residences and public servants' homes in Far North Queensland are also encountered in schoolgrounds. I am sure the honourable member for Mulgrave would back my claim that it would be an experience for Ministers to visit the schools in North Queensland at the height of the oncoming wet season. They would see the tremendous difficulties that confront the children in making their way from the front gate of the schoolgrounds to the school buildings and play areas. During heavy downpours the drainage systems are totally inadequate, particularly in the Balaclava, West Cairns and Trinity Bay areas, where, quite often, children are forced to play knee-deep in water.

The areas under the buildings have been built in to a large extent, thereby depriving the children of sufficient sheltered play areas. When the children get wet they have to sit in wet clothes in classrooms. Teachers do their best and send them home to get dry clothes; but with kids, being kids, there is almost a contest among them to see who can get the wettest and be sent home, and getting wet is certainly not very difficult in the schoolgrounds. Priority should be given to the drainage of schoolgrounds in Far North Queensland to overcome the threat of stagnant water lying in the grounds over a long time and minimise the number of children who have to sit in wet clothes in classrooms for hours on end.

Land should be substituted for areas that are used to establish pre-schools in schoolgrounds. This matter will have to be looked into over a period, particularly with the

older, established schools with small grounds. In future, alternative land must be found where this is possible. I should hate to see the resumption of nearby residences, and I have already entered into correspondence with the Minister on this matter. I do not believe that established residents in an area should be upset in a hurry-scurry by the department to resume land near schoolgrounds. There is no real need for a pre-school to be on land adjoining a school. It is only necessary that it be nearby. I am sure that, with a little trouble in looking for reasonably priced land on sale nearby, pre-schools could be sited within the vicinity of schools. The Central State School is a case in point.

At the Parramatta school it was proposed—much to the discomfort, concern and anxiety of pensioner residents—to resume an old family home that was next door to the school. As 12 months earlier Koppen's and Walker's land at Balfe Street—which is in the same area—was available at a reasonable price, I should not like resumptions to take place. The department could have snapped it up at the time and thus avoided resumptions in the area. With the closure of Minnie Street, and with the vacant area fronting Waterloo Park, where we used to romp as kids, plenty of land is available near the Cairns Junior Rugby League football ground for the Parramatta school. That could have been used for a pre-school within the vicinity of the Parramatta State School.

(Time expired.)

Mr. GIBBS (Albert) (12.13 p.m.): In speaking to the Estimates on Works and Housing, I wish to refer to housing, as it affects young home owners in the community, and the problems associated with the Government housing estates. One of the most tragic things to befall a young family is sheer inability to afford a home or a deposit on one. Irrespective of which generation we belong to, there is a three-fold basis for security in this world—food, a dollar in the pocket and a roof over the head. The tragedy is that these three basics, which were once considered to be the average goal of all young families, are being slowly but surely eroded by a federally controlled economic system bent on destroying home life and the will to work and prosper.

Home-building has become the province of the well-to-do as a result of high interest rates and massive inflation caused by the ineptitude of the former Federal A.L.P. Government and the lack of security in insurance and superannuation. Property values are escalating quickly, while the value of insurance is being eroded. That cuts away the great security that has always been looked for in the Australian economy. It affects young people and people in business.

For a start, let us look at the figures relating to building activity. During the last June quarter, Queensland's home-building activity was 30 per cent lower than for the

June quarter of 1974. The commencement rate of private houses was 22 per cent lower than a year ago and the number of dwellings under construction at the end of June was 40 per cent lower. In the long term, that reduction will affect Queensland and, indeed, Australia.

It can be imagined what frustration is being experienced today by young people who have the will to work and a desire to establish a home. They know that, in the long term, ownership is still the cheapest form of housing. It is far cheaper than renting, even in the medium term. A study recently completed by the C.S.I.R.O. proved that. As well, it declared that housing payments are regarded as an investment. Owning a home has an outstanding cost advantage. The study found that, for the maximum benefit, ownership should be attained as soon as possible. The researchers declared that one should not rent for a substantial period before deciding to purchase. In other words, the best thing for a young person to do is to buy his own block of land as soon as possible. No matter what stage of life the person has reached, he should do that with the greatest speed possible.

Mr. Hanson: They wouldn't be able to do that with the interest charges in your company though.

Mr. GIBBS: The honourable member for Port Curtis has mentioned interest charges. Interest rates have been set at the highest figure ever in the history of this country. That is one of the reasons why the Labor Government is where it is today—past.

High interest rates and the inflationary spiral are completely ruining the long-term prospects of a family by making it so difficult for people to acquire a home that they have to pay rent, which is just throwing money out of the window. That is the effect of renting for too long.

In July the Federal Labor Government announced that it was considering proposals to help young people buy their first home. What a joke! Any plan it came up with would only be a fob-off to the real problem facing home owners today. However, on the same day that the Housing Minister announced that some schemes were being looked at, one newspaper reported that the chief of the Master Builders' Federation predicted that within six months home-building would be out of the reach of the average person. In fact, the federation pointed to another serious problem facing our community—again as a problem stemming from the former Federal Government's mismanagement of the economy—that is, that more and more people are buying established homes, not new ones. About 70 per cent of the loans from banks and building societies are for the purchase of established houses, whereas only two years ago the situation was the reverse. We all know that has taken place.

The effect on the community is great. Is it realised what this will do to our way of life? Young people, who previously were

responsible for pioneering hundreds of our new and attractive suburbs throughout the State, are reverting to something little better than ghetto life by either renting or buying old buildings in the hearts of the cities and towns. What sort of incentive is there for young people? In the long term, this will have a very serious effect on the environment, quite apart from the effect it will have on future family units.

I turn now to home finance. A member of the C.S.I.R.O. division of building research also announced in July last that only one wage-earner in six could afford to finance land and a home, compared with 90 per cent of wage-earners in 1964. How is that for an indication of the former Federal Government's financial wizardry! The experts say that that was largely due to the increase in interest rates in the past 10 years from 5 per cent to 10 per cent. That is something, as I mentioned earlier, that has had a devastating effect on young people who want to establish a home.

In September last year it was announced that only couples with a total income of more than \$13,000 a year stood a chance of gaining a building society loan on an average-size house. That is proven by the fact that, when one approaches a building society, one is first asked, "Is your wife working?" If the wife is not working and the couple do not have a combined income, it is not on; they do not have the finance to pay back the loan with the high interest charges operating today. I hope that, following the change in Government on 13 December, interest rates will be reduced to give incentive and assistance to not only our young people but also the people in the middle-age group who are trying to obtain a home of their own for the first time.

In only 18 months the average wage-earner has been priced out of the market for building society finance. Home prices have increased so much that a loan of \$25,000 is now considered necessary to buy an average house. One newspaper estimated that to pay this amount back over 25 years, together with interest, a man would need to earn more than \$261 a week, but the national average wage at that time was \$125 a week.

Even the Federal Minister for Housing could see the writing on the wall. In August this year he was reported as having said that young people who were neither rich nor poor might soon represent a new socially deprived group of people because of inflation. If housing trends associated with inflation continued unchallenged, the country could face a social crisis. He said that and then promptly forgot to do anything about it.

Another area of housing that directly affects the Queensland Housing Estimates and interests me a great deal is that, since becoming a member of Parliament, I have had a lot of my time taken up trying to do something about Housing Commission

homes. Happily, with the assistance of the Minister and his officers, we have made some headway, particularly in improving Housing Commission designs. I will not go into all the details again during this debate but I set out to prove that a Housing Commission plan for a home in Cunnamulla was not necessarily suitable for a home in suburban Brisbane, on the Gold Coast, in the Albert Shire or perhaps in Townsville. I think I have made my point. The Minister has promised to continue the improvement of designs of Housing Commission homes so that they will not still look like Housing Commission homes.

Whilst I appreciate the thinking which formed the basis of Housing Commission homes, I am beginning to question the means of finance and the general terms associated with these estates. I preface my remarks by quoting from a statement published recently in which the research officer of the Commonwealth Committee of Inquiry into Poverty told a science forum that public housing was not an effective mechanism for assisting low-income people to obtain adequate housing. Its main objections to the present system were that housing produced solely for people on lower incomes bore an inevitable stigma and that many families continued to be Government assisted and subsidised long after they ceased to need assistance. I recommend to the Minister that he have a close look at this matter.

I am beginning to question the problem of integration of Housing Commission homes into the community. We should stop buying large chunks of land on which to establish Housing Commission estates which look like Housing Commission estates. Housing Commission homes of more pleasing design should be established within communities and those people who occupy Housing Commission homes should be given some incentive to look after them and perhaps some day own them themselves.

Under the present set-up, we can sell only roughly 30 per cent of our Housing Commission homes. This is just not good enough. We have to try to get the Government of the day to agree to an almost unlimited sale of homes to people who want to buy them. Certainly many people in these homes do not really want to buy them and have no incentive to do so, but any person who does should not be denied home-ownership and the feeling of security it gives. This system would enable more houses to be built for the people who are really in need.

Surely the Government should be setting an example in helping to create an incentive for lower-income families to own homes. It could work by following the system adopted by the Department of Commercial and Industrial Development in its industrial estates. All houses should be under a free-holding lease. The occupier should be obligated to carry out certain routine

improvements, such as making a reasonable garden. This would help people integrate into the community much more quickly. There should be a responsibility on the Queensland Housing Commission to help integrate people into the community rather than build mass housing estates that create many common problems. I feel that the time has arrived for a new deal, not only for the people who should have, and deserve, Housing Commission homes but for the community of which they should be an important part.

At present the family with the best chance of obtaining a Housing Commission home is one with two or three children, a husband out of work and an eviction order. I appreciate the thinking behind the requirement to produce an eviction order. It is, after all, easy for a person to say that he has been evicted or has a notice to quit, and perhaps many who are not genuine fake eviction notices. I know the problems that have to be faced by the Housing Commission. But some people feel that service of an eviction order is, at law, something that could be held against them. I know many decent people who urgently require accommodation but who would not under any circumstances go to the extent of having an eviction order made against them to enable them to obtain a Housing Commission home. The requirement to produce such an order is therefore in some ways working directly against the original intention.

I should now like to quote from "The Sunday-Mail" of 12 October 1975. An article in that edition is headed, "Tax plan on homes 'end in ghettos'." It refers to a report to the previous Government on a rental-potential tax, and it begins—

"A rental potential tax would lead to anti-social ghettos in the suburbs if the Federal Government brought it in, it was claimed yesterday."

It is a report of a plan to tax people on an amount equivalent to the rent that they would have to pay for their own homes. I hope that such a plan is never implemented by any Government. The fact that such a report even came forward is a reflection on the former Government. Any Government, irrespective of its political colour, that produces or tables reports of this type should be ashamed of itself.

The annual report of the Queensland Housing Commission reveals that there were 2,283 houses built in 1974-75. There was a waiting list of 7,666, which has now increased to 8,193. I think that this is a significant indication of the lack of encouragement of home-ownership, which was also reflected in the figures that I previously quoted showing the reduction in the number of houses started.

I think that the greatest thing that we as a Government can do is encourage young people to buy land and build their own homes, and to this end the maximum amount of cheap finance should be made available.

It is obvious that much more incentive has to be given to young people to obtain homes. With a change in Federal Government, at least some degree of incentive might automatically return.

It is unfortunate that there is to be a reduction in the amount of money that the Government will be able to spend on housing this year. The figure is said to be approximately 30 per cent but, with inflation, in actual fact the reduction will be considerably higher. Contractors who work for the Housing Commission are running out of work, and they are having to dismiss workers. Some of these men have come to me to ask me what can be done about the situation. But if there is not enough money to go around, what can we do? We are strictly limited by the amount of money that we have to spend on housing, and it is rather tragic that there is a reduction when there are 8,193 people registered and waiting for homes.

More pensioner units are also urgently needed. Many single pensioners cannot afford to pay the high rents demanded for small flats. Some pensioners in my area are paying \$20; some are paying more, and some less. Inflation is eroding the funds of everybody, including pensioners, and those who are living by themselves are not able to cope with the present housing situation. The Government would be doing a great service if it considerably increased the number of pensioner units.

I should now like to comment on some police stations. The Works Department has the job of building police stations and all other public buildings throughout this great State of ours. The police station at Southport certainly needs some attention, and perhaps rebuilding. The serious overcrowding there is eroding the incentive of the police to carry out their job as they would like to do it.

My electorate has 18 schools, including two high schools, and they all have problems of one sort or another. Some of them even have problems with furniture. New schools seem to be getting all the modern things that are going but we are not really assisting some of the older schools in which some of the furniture is antiquated, worn out and, in many cases, not usable. Some of the new schools are lacking in ground improvements. Replacement schools, of which Loganholme is a typical example, also face difficulties. Loganholme is one of the oldest schools in Queensland. The grounds have not been filled adequately, so ground improvements cannot be carried out by the parents and citizens' association. The Pimpana school has no septic system, only e.c. toilets; but opposite that school we have an environmental area that is being used by approximately 10,000 students from outside the area and they have to use the e.c. toilets. We are looking forward to the establishment of an institute of advanced education at

Southport and I hope that the building will proceed as quickly as possible so that we can have the institute working within the time period for which the money was set aside.

Mr. Jensen: What next?

Mr. GIBBS: I would like to talk about the Beenleigh High School next because it has a considerable number of problems, some of them quite minor but some major. One of the major problems was that the proposed building of a science block has been put off on many occasions. It is good to see that tenders have now been called for the building so that it appears that the problem will be overcome by the next school year, when the expected enrolment will be a record 1,050 students. In a question to the Minister this morning, I mentioned that the Southport High School was not connected to sewerage. I hope that consideration will be given to overcoming this major problem very quickly, because if it is left much longer it could create a health problem.

The children of the Mabel Park School have to cross a concrete drain which runs through the middle of the playground and I hope something can be done to fence it and put a bridge across it. If it cannot be covered entirely, that would be adequate for the time being and would enable them to get to the play area on the other side of the school grounds.

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) (12.34 p.m.): I want to mention just one or two matters. One that I hope is not forgotten during the coming election campaign is the terrific effect that the Whitlam-inspired inflation is having on the Queensland Housing Commission and the Works Department. When one considers that in places like Townsville—I suppose this is common all over the State—houses were bought or built very readily for \$6,000 only a few years ago and are now selling for \$20,000 and \$25,000, is it any wonder that young married couples who are eager to set up their homes find it almost impossible to even contemplate buying or building a home of their own. This is caused not only by the increased cost of wages of those people who build the homes—the carpenters, plumbers, electricians and everybody else—but by the increased cost of all materials used in building a home. I do not know where the problem will end.

Frankly, I would not like to change places with the Minister for Works, but every time someone comes snivelling to me—and when I say they come snivelling they are usually A.L.P. supporters who want to know what this Government is going to do about building more homes for needy people in Townsville—I tell them what the problem really is. I find the Housing Commission in Townsville a very fine body, run by very fine men. At present, the manager of the Housing Commission in Townsville is Mr. Adcock, and his task reminds me of the story in

the Bible about Christ feeding the multitude with five loaves and two fishes, because almost every day of the week he is trying to find 40 or 50 homes for people when he has not even one home to spare.

The story that I am about to tell the Committee could well be used in the coming election campaign, and it concerns Housing Commission homes. Although it is not generally known—it should be made known—the Housing Commission will grant reduced or concessional rentals to people who are not earning enough money to enable them to pay the full rental as assessed. That applies particularly to pensioners. Today, of course, pensioners are being caught up in the Whitlam inflationary web, and last week a very dear old lady came to see me in my office under my home, to bid me good-bye and to thank me for the many little jobs that I had done for her. She is a very fine type of woman. She lives very frugally, and she is well educated and speaks very well indeed. She said, "I am sorry to go, Mr. Aikens—very sorry indeed—because, as you know, I have been very happy in my home in Sheriff Street for over 30 years. The last seven years, of course, have been made a lot lighter by the rent concession that you got for me from the Housing Commission. But I cannot even afford to pay that now; I cannot even afford to pay the rent at the concessional rate. Not only do I have to meet increased charges for everything I buy, but recently we had a staggering increase in the cost of electricity and various other things. Even my concessional rent has had to be increased because of increased rates and various other charges imposed on the Housing Commission. I just can't live in my house any longer; I must leave it. I am going to Brisbane to live with my son. He is making a room for me on his back veranda, and I know that he will make me as happy and as comfortable as he possibly can." But what a shocking, monstrous, brutal state of affairs it is that that should happen under the Whitlam A.L.P. Government, which is always crying to high heaven about its tender concern for the pensioners! Incidentally, I am sure that this old lady is only one pensioner in thousands who are being hit by the Whitlam Government's inflationary spiral. There was an old lady in tears leaving Townsville, a town she does not want to leave, where she lived with her husband, where she reared her family and where she was content to live until the good Lord touched her on the shoulder and said, "Eva, it's time." She had to go, thanks to Whitlam. He had the time to get into Parliament in 1972, and till now he has had time by economic stress to drive pensioners out of homes that they do not want to leave.

Today, of course, Townsville is a boom town. The population is increasing rapidly and substantially every week. Naturally, there is a big call for housing accommodation. As I told honourable members recently—I do not intend to digress on it now—quite a number of builders are being

allowed by the Townsville City Council to build rows and rows of concrete boxes, for which they are charging up to \$45 or \$50 a week rent. So much so, Mr. Hewitt, that at the corner of my street are 11 of these concrete boxes on two allotments on which there were formerly two homes. Despite the fact that these concrete boxes are being put up all over the place—rows and rows of them—and despite the fact that the unfortunate tenants are being charged an exorbitant rental for them, there is still a grievous housing shortage in Townsville.

The Housing Commission is erecting quite a lot of homes in Townsville on behalf of the Army and Air Force as well as for itself. One of the grouches that we hear continually from the ordinary people of Townsville—those who are not associated with the Armed Services—is that these homes are erected at the rate of a dozen or more at one time while no homes are being made available for the ordinary citizens. I point out to those who complain, of course, that these homes are not being erected for R.A.A.F., C.M.F. or other military personnel who are coming into the city. I tell them that the service personnel will be transferred from private accommodation, which is now rented for them, into the houses that are being constructed by the Housing Commission. I explain that in the housing situation, virtually no-one is worse off than anyone else.

The person who does suffer greatly, of course, is the tenant who moves into a house vacated by a serviceman. The tenant is required to pay to the private landlord the shockingly high rents that are being demanded in Townsville by private landlords, whereas the serviceman is transferred into a home owned by one of the Armed Services, for which he pays a rental that is much less than that paid to the private landlord.

Mr. Lindsay: I think the serviceman pays 15 per cent of his salary for a rented Army home.

Mr. AIKENS: That could be so. I do not claim that servicemen should not be allowed to rent these homes at a reasonable rental or at as low a rental as possible. All I am saying is that the rental paid by them is lower than that paid by the ordinary citizen to a private landlord. A tenant who moves into a privately owned house vacated by a serviceman is required to pay as high as \$40 to \$50 a week by way of rent. This is one of the unfortunate results of the three or four years of office of the A.L.P. Government in Canberra. However, I do not intend to digress onto that point.

A big problem in Townsville—on a proportional basis I do not think the problem is nearly as great in other cities—is that enormous numbers of homes are built for service personnel. In fact, whole suburbs have been created to house military and Air Force personnel. Vincent and other suburbs consist almost exclusively of service

homes. Nobody complains about that, of course; in fact, Townsville is very proud and very happy to have so many servicemen in the city. However, the problem is that on many of those service homes the Townsville City Council collects no ordinary rates whatever. Of course, it collects charges. Quite a lot of people confuse rates and charges. A local authority imposes certain charges for services rendered—for example, for the provision of water and sewerage facilities and the collection of garbage. Such charges are paid by every home owner, whether it be the Commonwealth Government, the State Government, a Government instrumentality or an ordinary citizen. The rates, however, which are levied on the value of the land, are either not paid or only partly paid by the various organisations that own houses and lease them to tenants.

It might surprise honourable members to know that the total land valuation of service homes in Townsville, most of which were erected by the Housing Commission as the agent for the various Commonwealth departments, amounts to \$1,200,000 and that the council rates assessed on the value of the land on which they stand amount to \$57,376. The Commonwealth Government is not paying rates on those houses, with the result that that sum of \$57,376 has to be made up by the private home owners in Townsville, because it is necessary for the Townsville City Council to obtain revenue in order to function. It is losing \$57,376 a year on the service homes built in Townsville.

I could not take out the exact figures but the best part of \$1,000,000 would be in short supply to the Townsville City Council from other Government institutions that have buildings constructed by the Housing Commission and the Works Department. I again make it clear that they pay council charges for water, sewerage and so on. The university pays no rates to the Townsville City Council on the Douglas or Pimlico campus. The Institute of Advanced Education at Douglas and the C.S.I.R.O. do not pay rates. No rates are paid to the council on the Commonwealth or State buildings in Townsville. I should say that at least \$1,000,000 in rates is not being paid to the Townsville City Council on buildings owned by Government instrumentalities. That \$1,000,000, in addition to the \$57,376 which I referred to, has to be made up by the other home owners and owners of business premises in Townsville.

When I was on the council I found that the Commonwealth Bank was the only exception to this rule. I suppose its policy is common to other cities: it does not pay rates to the Townsville City Council but makes an ex-gratia payment to the council equal to the rates that should be paid.

Mr. Hanson: It does that in every town.

Mr. AIKENS: That is to its credit.

People who own homes in cities like Townsville have to pay rates to the council to provide services for them and, in addition, they have to find about \$1,000,000 extra to pay the rates on service homes and on commercial and other buildings owned by the State and Commonwealth Governments. That is a monstrous state of affairs.

Unlike some honourable members, I shall not recapitulate what I have said. I shall not say, "I am allowed to speak for 20 minutes and I shall speak for 20 minutes, come hell or high water." That is not my attitude. I say what I want to say, and finish.

I congratulate the Minister for Works and Housing on the job he is doing. I commiserate sincerely with him in having to do his job in the shocking economic conditions that the Whitlam Government has got this country into. I commiserate with him particularly in his task of grappling with the inflationary spiral that none of us anticipated or prognosticated. We now know what we are in for. If we get another three years of Whitlam government, I doubt whether anything will be built.

Mr. Lee: You won't get another Whitlam Government.

Mr. AIKENS: If we do we may as well close up shop. With another three years of the Whitlam Government prices, wages and costs of material will rise so high that nothing will be built. No young married couples will be able to afford homes. Unless pensioners have a son who can add a room onto the back veranda—I referred to this matter earlier—they will be put out on the street or have to sleep out under the mango trees.

Mr. Turner: Homes will not be our only problem if they get back.

Mr. AIKENS: There will be more troubles than that. We were given a recent indication of the problems. We saw the yahoos and louts—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. AIKENS: Once Whitlam and his team put the mobs in the street, they give us an indication of how they would run the country. Mobs in the street will not build homes and erect buildings. They tear them down and smash the windows. And they will do what a bright spark—a very prominent union official—did in front of the Liberal Party building the other day—they will urinate on the front door! Putting mobs in the street will not build homes.

I congratulate the Minister on the job he has done so far. I also congratulate him on his officers in Townsville and their sympathetic approach to the housing problems of the people.

Mr. Hanson: Years ago you were in demonstrations yourself; what are you talking about?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member for Port Curtis should not cause the honourable member for Townsville South to digress; he is being very relevant.

Mr. AIKENS: The honourable member for Port Curtis will not tell you, Mr. Hewitt, about the time that he and I were thrown into a paddy-wagon for being in a demonstration. He likes to forget that. I won't forget it, because when I was in the paddy-wagon he tried to fan me. He tried to roll me on the way.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. Hanson: He had nothing on him, either.

Mr. AIKENS: That is so. I had nothing. I had been fanned before I got in.

In all seriousness, Mr. Hewitt, I think we should all take a very close look at the position and realise the problems that confront us. We want homes; we want buildings; we want everything that money can buy. Even if we start the printing presses again, I do not know that we will have the money to buy what we need, because, frankly, the way labour conditions are going, we won't have the materials we need. We won't have anything to build homes with.

Mr. MILLER (Ithaca) (12.51 p.m.): I shall use this debate to refer to the report on housing published by the Priorities Review Staff of the Australian Government. Perhaps I had better say "the previous Australian Government", because there would be no way in the world that any Liberal Australian Government—

Mr. Chinchen: You mean "Federal Government"?

Mr. MILLER: Yes.

Mr. Chinchen: You said "Australian Government".

Mr. MILLER: I am falling into that trap continually. It is a trap that has been set by the A.L.P. No Liberal Commonwealth Government would ever be associated with such a report.

Mr. Powell: You can't call them Australian. There's nothing Australian about them.

Mr. MILLER: They are very un-Australian.

Although certain facts are printed in this report, it was denied by the former Minister for Housing that it was ever the intention of the A.L.P. Government in Canberra to introduce the recommendations contained in it. Although Labor spokesmen denied that they intended to introduce the aspect of the report which refers to imputed rents, at no time have they denied that they were going to implement the rest of the report.

I find it strange that the Commonwealth Government would spend so much money employing this staff of review to study the housing situation in Australia, accept the rest of their report and then claim that it had no intention of implementing a recommendation on one aspect. That is strange. The report was placed before the Federal Government. It has never been withdrawn or rejected. In fact, I have it on very good authority that Mr. Hayden actually considered introducing this aspect of the report in the Financial Statement which he recently brought down. Of course, knowing what the reaction would be prior to an election—and the Australian Labor Party knew of the likelihood of an election—the A.L.P. Government came out and strongly denied that the report would ever be considered.

I wonder why it did not withdraw it. I wonder why it did not reject it. I remind those members who were in the Chamber in 1973 that I warned the House, and particularly the Opposition, about the implications of the new housing agreement between the Commonwealth Government and all the States. The then honourable member for Belmont strongly denied that my predictions would ever happen. You yourself would recall, Mr. Hewitt, that to be eligible to purchase or rent a dwelling under this new agreement a person shall be required to satisfy a needs test, which is as follows:—

“For a family, the gross weekly income of the main breadwinner (excluding any overtime and child endowment payments) during the six months prior to applying for assistance and prior to being allocated a home shall not exceed 80 per cent of the average weekly earnings.”

When I brought that up in the Chamber in 1973, it was strongly denied by the Australian Labor Party. Today it is a matter of fact. It had to be accepted by every State in Australia because the Australian Labor Party Government said, “If you are not prepared to accept this agreement we will give you no agreement.” So in Queensland and in every other State of Australia, only 30 per cent of the housing money is being allocated to the purchase of homes.

The original agreement, which I have with me, stressed that no Commonwealth money would be allowed to be invested in the building of homes to be purchased by the individual. In 1973 the A.L.P. Commonwealth Government was opposed to people owning their own homes. In 1975 another report has been put out and I shall refer to it shortly. I want to quote exactly what it says because it is the most damning report ever put out by any Government in Australia. In fact, any Government that put it out would have to hide its head in shame because Australians have always believed in home-ownership. Ever since the A.L.P. got into control in Canberra, it has done everything possible to ensure that people would not be able to buy their homes but rather would have to rent them.

I should like to quote what the South Australian Premier (Mr. Dunstan) said when referring to the 1973 Housing Agreement prior to its acceptance by the States. Mr. Dunstan was just as concerned as our then Housing Minister (Hon. A. M. Hodges), who put up a remarkable case for Queensland. So did every other Minister in charge of Housing, including Mr. Dunstan. He certainly was not in agreement with it. As I said previously, the States had to go along with the agreement or get no money at all.

I want to record what Mr. Dunstan said in 1973 because it has a bearing on what is contained in the 1975 housing report. It is the very principle that the Australian Labor Party endeavoured to introduce in 1973. I would have thought that, after getting a rebuke from people such as Mr. Dunstan, it would have abandoned that housing policy. We all know that A.L.P. members are socialist; we know that they do not want people to own their homes; but surely, after the rebuke they got from Mr. Dunstan in 1973, they should at least have waited for some time to pass before having the Priority Review Staff look at housing and the problems associated with it.

In part, Mr. Dunstan said—

“If we go back to South Australia and say that they will not be housed through the Housing Trust the barricades would be manned. It would be as literal as that. I put this to you with feeling; I am not funning here. We have to continue in South Australia a housing position in which we are able to cope with the needs of the average tradesman. I am not talking about the top category of tradesman and not about the top category plus overtime. I am talking about the average bloke who is working in our Engineering and Water Supply Department, Department of Works, General Motors, Chryslers, Tube Makers or elsewhere—the people I go to the factory floor with every week. For me to go to those people and say: ‘We are not able to house you any longer’ would be murder.”

The Housing Trust is the authority in South Australia that lends money to the individual to buy his own home.

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

Mr. MILLER: Prior to the luncheon recess I was referring to the housing agreement between the Commonwealth Government and all State Governments. Honourable members will recall that I referred to the hardship caused by this agreement. I now wish to point out that, under the terms of that housing agreement in 1973, anybody receiving more than \$98 a week was not eligible to rent or buy a Housing Commission home. If a person earns more than \$131 a week today, he is not eligible to rent or buy such a home. That figure, in today's wage structure, excludes many people. Most people today—policemen, building tradesmen, truckdrivers, and many other workers—earn

in excess of \$131 a week, and the former Commonwealth Government said to them, "You are ineligible to either rent or buy a Housing Commission home." To my mind, that policy discourages home-ownership. In 1973, through that very agreement signed by the Commonwealth and State Governments, home-ownership was discouraged.

I now want to refer to the Priorities Review Staff Report on Housing. Again I make the same observation—it discourages home-ownership. I propose to quote from this report, because it was tabled in the Federal Parliament and it has been neither rejected nor withdrawn. So far as I am concerned, the report is before the Federal Parliament, and until it is withdrawn or rejected we must expect it to be accepted if the A.L.P. wins the next election. I have heard no Federal Ministers refer to this report except to say that they do not agree with the part of it which implies that there could be an imputed rent applied to people who own their own homes.

Honourable Members interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Kaus): Order! I call the Chamber to order.

Mr. MILLER: It is a pity that the "Minister for Rockhampton" did not read this report or was not prepared to listen to what it contains, because I think that it is the most damnable report that has ever been put before the people of Australia. The big problem is that the average person does not know of its existence. I want to quote to the Committee exactly what is said in the report, because, so far as I am concerned those who prepared it are trying to bring the housing policy of the Commonwealth into line with that of the Australian Labor Party. It says as much on page 5.

Mr. Jensen: Who says it?

Mr. MILLER: I shall quote for the honourable member what is contained in the report.

Mr. Jensen: Is this the State Government?

Mr. MILLER: This is the Australian Labor Party's Federal policy.

Mr. Jones: That is not so.

Mr. BURNS: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is not quoting from the Australian Labor Party housing policy. He is quoting from a commissioned report that was presented to the Federal Parliament.

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

Mr. BURNS: I ask that his remark be withdrawn.

Mr. MILLER: The report has never been rejected or withdrawn by the Government.

Mr. BURNS: I rise to a point of order. The item to which the honourable member is referring has been rejected and withdrawn by prominent members of the Labor Federal Government in the past three months. What he is saying is not the truth.

Mr. MILLER: I will say this to the Leader of the Opposition: the Minister for Housing, Mr. Morrison, rejected the idea of an—

Mr. BURNS: Again I rise to a point of order. Mr. Morrison is not, and never has been, the Minister for Housing. The Minister for Housing was Mr. Johnson, and he was followed by Mr. Riordan. I say that the honourable member is not telling the truth.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the honourable member for Ithaca to withdraw his remark.

Mr. MILLER: When the Opposition allows me, I will quote from this policy because, so far as I am concerned, it has never been rejected. If the next Opposition speaker can show me where it has been rejected by the Australian Labor Party in the Federal House, I will withdraw my words. Page 4 of the report reads—

"As far as can be determined, the overall consequences of these policies on Australian housing arrangements are distinctly perverse; with the partial exception of public housing advances, the policies now tend:

- * to increase inequalities in access to housing;
- * to increase inequalities in the distribution of income and wealth."

I also want to quote the last paragraph on that page because to me it is the important paragraph. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to listen, if he so desires. It reads—

"This report seeks to substantiate these claims, show why current policies are inadequate and indicate how policy might be reformulated and redirected to achieve results more in keeping with Government intentions."

The members of the Opposition are rather quiet now because that is the intention. As I said prior to the luncheon adjournment, in 1973 it was the Government's intention to make sure that people could not buy houses. A lot of people in my area are battlers and I am concerned that the A.L.P. would even consider introducing an imputed rent system—

Mr. BURNS: I rise to a point of order. Again I say that the honourable member for Ithaca is not telling the truth. He is misleading the Committee. That is not Labor Party policy and has never been the policy. It was rejected by that committee and rejected by the Cabinet.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Kaus): Order! What is the point of order?

Mr. BURNS: My point of order is that it is offensive to me to have the honourable member telling lies in the Chamber.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! That is offensive to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. MILLER: What is offensive?

Mr. BURNS: He is imputing improper motives to me.

Mr. MILLER: He has not made a statement. I was under the impression—

Mr. BURNS: I rise to a point of order. I asked for a withdrawal. By his statement the honourable member is imputing improper motives to me as a member of the Labor Party and I ask that it be withdrawn.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the honourable member to withdraw.

Mr. MILLER: All right; I bow to your ruling, Mr. Kaus. But as far as I am concerned I have the right—

Mr. Burns: Didn't the honourable member have to withdraw?

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! He did.

Mr. Burns: I can't hear because of the noisy rabble that occupy the Government benches.

Mr. MILLER: I believe the Leader of the Opposition does not want me to quote from this report. I believe it is an embarrassment to the Australian Labor Party. As far as I am concerned the Australian Labor Party is considering introducing imputed rents on top of incomes. The report even goes to the extent of quoting an income of \$6,000 and an imputed rent of 5 per cent on a home valued at \$25,000. I point out that an average home today costs \$25,000. Any young couple wanting to buy a home in any suburb of Brisbane today will pay \$25,000.

Mr. Moore: They are just trying to stymie you.

Mr. MILLER: Of course they are just trying to stymie me. I am being accused of quoting misleading facts.

Opposition Members interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! Honourable members on my left will allow the honourable member to continue.

Mr. MILLER: This report is sold by the Australian Government shop in Brunswick Street, the Valley, for anybody to read. I

should have thought that the Australian Labor Party would have withdrawn it from sale if it was not to be considered. It is still on sale today, and under the heading "Taxation" it is made quite clear that owners of homes, whether they are still purchasing those homes or not—

Mr. Moore: They are trying to hide the truth.

Mr. BURNS: Now we have the two clowns operating. I think we ought to ask for the facts to be laid on the table. The report is not a copy of the Labor Party policy; it is not attributable to the Labor Party. It is a part of open government which your Government does not believe in.

Mr. Moore: You're not taking a point of order.

Mr. Burns: I'm doing all right.

Mr. MILLER: Yes, you are doing all right; you are wasting my time.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. Burns: If you keep telling untruths I'll keep wasting your time.

Mr. MILLER: I am being accused of telling untruths.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. Moore: If you are going to call "Order!", stand up.

Mr. Burns: An instruction from the back benches.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! There is no point of order. Opposition members will be able to refute this point through their next speaker.

Mr. MILLER: I hope they endeavour to, Mr. Kaus. I am simply quoting from a report to Federal Parliament by a committee set up by the Australian Labor Party, and I am saying—

Mr. BURNS: I rise to a point of order. That committee was not set up by the Australian Labor Party.

Mr. Moore: It is not a point of order.

Mr. BURNS: It is a point of order. The honourable member for Ithaca has said that the committee was set up by the Australian Labor Party. I make the point that it was not set up by the Australian Labor Party. That is untrue.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Kaus): Order! There is no valid point of order. The honourable member for Ithaca is allowed to quote from that document.

Mr. BURNS: I again challenge your ruling, Mr. Kaus. It was not set up by the Australian Labor Party. It was set up by a Government—not by the Australian Labor Party, but by a Government.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. MILLER: This is unreasonable, Mr. Kaus. I shall quote from page 2 of the report, because the former Federal Government—the A.L.P. Government—wanted to make it so difficult for people to own a home that it was considering introducing this provision.

It is pointed out in the report that the cost of land and the cost of servicing a home under that Government's conditions had increased out of all proportion. On page 2 the report says—

“in terms of pre-tax average earnings, the cost of land for an average new house in Sydney rose between 1970-71 and 1973-74 from 1.9 to 2.9 years' earnings . . .”

(Time expired.)

Mr. LESTER (Belyando) (2.26 p.m.): I wish first to thank the Minister for Works and Housing for the efforts he has made to assist the people of my area. He has visited the Belyando electorate on more than one occasion, and we are now seeing some tangible results of those visits. I am, of course, hoping that we will see more in the future.

I also take this opportunity to thank the Honourable Max Hodges, who preceded him in office, for the considerable assistance he gave me last year in trying to get things done in my electorate. The officers of the Department of Works and the Housing Commission have been of great assistance and the employees of both departments have done their best to expedite the construction of buildings in Belyando.

I am very concerned about the fact that the means test of \$131 a week applies in the Belyando electorate. As all honourable members are aware, the Queensland Government is not responsible for that, but I stress to the Committee that many people in my electorate are receiving wages in excess of that amount. Quite a number of people come to the area to establish businesses of a type that will be helpful to the people of Belyando, and housing is an acute problem. It is completely unfair that such a means test should apply in western areas, because a wage higher than \$131 a week is required to induce people to go there, and I hope that something can be done to increase the limit now provided. I am particularly concerned because it seems to me that, once again, country people are being victimised. Although I realise why the figure of \$131 has been laid down, I am convinced that many people in Belyando are being penalised, and I hope that the problem can be overcome in some way.

Mr. Casey: The cost of living in the area is high.

Mr. LESTER: Yes, the cost of living in the area is high; therefore, people need more money.

Mr. Casey: How does the Minister get up there when he visits Belyando?

Mr. LESTER: For goodness' sake, Mr. Casey! I thought the honourable member for Mackay was an intelligent person. I will not bother any further with that interjection, Mr. Kaus, because, on the surface, the honourable member for Mackay is a reasonable neighbour to me and I would hate to embarrass him by telling the Committee what I think of him for making it. Might I say to Opposition members that the more they interject and try to disrupt my speech, the more they show they have no concern for the people of my electorate. I take it that they are writing off Belyando as a loss and showing no interest whatever in it. Apparently they are giving me a ticket to go to the people unopposed at the next election.

I want to deal briefly with the Duaringa Shire, which has an area of 17,150 square miles and a population of approximately 8,000. Firstly, I commend the Minister on the work undertaken by his department on the Duaringa pre-school. I would also commend him for having buildings erected at the Duaringa State School. His efforts are very much appreciated by the people, so much so that only last week some of my constituents asked me to commend him on the work that he has done.

If the Housing Commission were to undertake a construction programme in Duaringa, it would certainly be of great benefit to the local people. I am pleased to see the Minister making notes of my comments and talking to his departmental officers about the housing situation in the shire.

Like Duaringa, the Dingo area is short of housing. In fact, the whole of the Belyando electorate could do with more Housing Commission homes. They are desperately needed. Of course, the \$131 means test poses a problem.

Another area in my electorate is Woorabinda, which contains an Aboriginal settlement. This Government is concerned for the welfare of Aborigines, and I am pleased to note that the Minister for Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement is in the Chamber to hear my speech. What better way is there for a Minister to show his concern for the matters under his control than to listen to comments made by members on these matters? He is a very keen and hard-working Minister as well as a very sincere person.

A new school at Woorabinda is nearing completion. Although the Works Department employees engaged on the project are few in number, they are getting the job done and the school will be ready for next year's intake of pupils. The Works Department has been forced to curtail its staff. I shall

not go into the reason for that other than to mention the huge increases in costs, inflation and the reduction in finance from another source.

I understand that the Housing Commission intends to construct 25 homes in the township of Bluff to provide accommodation for railwaymen. The Government deserves praise for the installation of new septic systems at the Bluff State School. The pupils will benefit tremendously from the provision of these amenities. In the near future the town of Bluff, which is a cross-over point for railway employees engaged in the transport of coal from Blackwater and other mines, will increase in size, so the erection of additional school buildings in the town is called for. Whatever can be done to help in this direction will be greatly appreciated by the local people.

In Blackwater a tremendous problem arises in the provision of adequate housing for persons other than those employed in the coal-mines. We must not forget that there are ambulancemen, fire brigade officers and many other employees who provide an essential service to the town. With a population of more than 6,000, Blackwater is now the biggest town in the Belyando electorate.

We must give more consideration to the private person who is trying to get a home in these areas. It is all very well to help the mining companies—and they must be helped—but we must have an arrangement whereby private people will be helped. They are being kicked in the teeth in many ways because they cannot get housing. Some go to these towns to set up a little shop to give a service to the community but are expected to live in a caravan park, if they can get into one. Anybody who is making a worth-while contribution in such towns needs housing. Many small businesses have gone ahead but there is great difficulty in getting homes for the people working in them. I would certainly appreciate it if the Minister looked closely at what can be done about providing housing at Blackwater and Moranbah for everybody other than people engaged in mining, who are doing reasonably well. I compliment the Minister on his efforts to help make the Blackwater High School a really going concern. I have led more than one deputation to him this year on the problems of this school. The other day I was really pleased to find that the school now has water, an oval—that was our part of the deal with the unions which built it—new cement paths and bitumen-surfacing around the school. It was really good to hear the headmaster say, "Well, Vince, I think our problems are over. Congratulate the Minister on the work that has been done."

The sooner a new court-house can be built at Emerald the better. We appreciate that it has been approved, but its construction will be a lengthy process. In the meantime a temporary court-house will have to be built.

I ask the Minister to urge the people building it to get a move on and do what they can. Emerald is another town with huge housing problems. At present more than 30 people are on the waiting list for houses. If the new police district is to go ahead—and I certainly hope it will—we should be sensible and realise that it cannot do so until housing is provided for the policemen. We are faced with all of these problems, particularly as they relate to our Queensland public servants. Those who are being hit worst work for others in these country towns. To help the country towns grow we have to encourage people to live in them. If they have no place to live, they will not go out there to work. Let us have a jolly good look at our country housing problems.

We have been waiting for a new police station at Alpha for a long time. It has been approved for a long time; in fact it was approved when I started on the hustings trying to convert people to vote for me. I am very distressed in that I cannot tell the police sergeant at Alpha when he is to get his new house and police station. It is an experience to go into that old police station and hear the floor creaking, see the lumps in it and the odd boards missing, and note stumps that are not quite right. The police station is an utter disgrace. I hope that something can be done to provide money quickly for the new police station at Alpha, and I would appreciate it if something could be done to build a pre-school centre at Alpha as quickly as possible.

Mr. Casey: The hardest job for the police at Alpha is to arrest the white ants in the police station.

Mr. LESTER: That is a good, sensible interjection. The honourable member has made up for what he said earlier. We are back to square 1.

The police station at Jericho is little better than the police station at Alpha. These are important towns in my area although they are not quite as large as some of the other towns in my electorate. I am delighted that another Housing Commission home is to be built at Jericho. When it is built, it will probably be the best house in the town. I shall certainly appreciate anything that the Government does to help the people of Jericho.

I welcome the approval of the construction of three houses at Capella. The Capella Police Station is in poor condition. The police stations are really copping a hiding today, but many of these important places from which the law is administered are not in good condition.

I move on to Clermont. The construction of the manual arts block there has been held up for some time. I would like the Minister to talk to the various authorities and get the project moving. Before the last election I was promised that a manual arts block would be built. As yet I have not been able to get any definite action on it.

Clermont deserves such a centre. The fact that no action has yet been taken leaves me open for criticism. After advice from the Minister before the last election, I said that Clermont could get it. As it has not been built, who will the electors blame? No-one else but me—for opening my big mouth when I thought things were right. Whatever the Minister can do to start work on the manual arts block, I would certainly be very appreciative.

Next is the science room. The Minister wrote to me about it the other day, indicating that he would talk to the authorities in an attempt to see what could be done about it. I appreciate that. I am sure the Minister for Education will listen to the Minister. I am hoping it will not be too long before we have a science block built.

I stress that the Clermont Court House could do with a thorough cleaning up.

Turning to the police station—we have in Clermont an excellent sergeant. I must depart for a moment from the subject of the debate to congratulate him and his staff on their wonderful exhibition in apprehending the people who robbed the jewellery store of some \$18,000. The officer is Sergeant Van Vegchel, who is married to the sister of the honourable member for Bulimba; nevertheless, he is a decent man in the community and has been a real asset to it. I might also point out that his wife, too, has been a great asset to the community, and I certainly hope that they are not transferred in the near future. They are good people and I hope they stay in Clermont. The sergeant and his staff have cleaned up the town no end. I thank you, Mr. Miller, for allowing me that latitude.

I know that the Minister is having trouble finding sufficient men in the Works Department to cope with all the jobs. However, I point out that, if any men are taken off the Kilcummin school, with the wet season coming on, the extensions might not be ready before the commencement of the new school year. If any pressure is put on the Minister to take men away from the school job before it is completed, I would ask him to resist it. I would not like it. He would be doing me a good favour by leaving the men there. However, I do thank the Minister for what has been done at the Kilcummin School, as well as at Pasha School, where tenders have been let for a new residence for the teacher. That, too, is appreciated, because the old residence will be able to be used as a library and for self-help groups in the community.

Moving on to Moranbah—again there is a problem with private housing. I will not traverse the ground again, but I ask the Minister to do all he can to help. He has been a little kinder to Moranbah by approving the building of some 10 homes there in the not too distant future to ease the housing problem. I was delighted to be informed by the Minister, in answer to a question I

asked the other day, that tenders close on the 2nd of next month for a pre-school centre at Moranbah. That will alleviate a huge problem in that town, where there is a greater proportion of young children than in any other town in Australia. The Works Department men have their problems at Moranbah. They have to build a new high school and finish off the school that they have started. I ask the Minister not to take too many men away from the town, but to keep them there as long as possible to make sure that all the facilities are provided.

Moving on to Collinsville—in the few moments I have left, I point out that the court-house could do with a little bit of straightening up. I ask the Minister not to forget about painting the houses there a sensible colour.

An Honourable Member interjected.

Mr. LESTER: It is a serious business. They have been painted a dirty old filthy green, which looks absolutely awful.

Mr. Casey: What's wrong with green?

Mr. LESTER: I didn't say an ordinary green. I said a filthy green.

I appreciate that the Minister has said that the roofs will be painted silver. I am sure that will help the people of Collinsville considerably. The manual arts building and the library are nearly completed. Now the Minister can get cracking and convince the Minister for Education and Cultural Activities that the provision of a pre-school centre there would be ideal.

I will then have just about everything I set out to get—not in three years, but in 12 months. I am sure that no other honourable member will be able to boast to his electors of achieving as much. I am certain that if a Labor man had been elected to represent Belyando, he would not even have thought of making the representations. I have made them.

One member of the Opposition—he has left the Chamber, so I will not be too hard on him—made an irresponsible statement that because I asked for something 12 months ago—before I was elected to this Parliament—I was doing the wrong thing. I was not doing the wrong thing. I have been trying for five years to get things for my electorate and that is why I am having some success now. We do not just come into this place and let all hell loose and get everything, because we are simply not going to get everything that way. If other members had been trying for five years, as I have, putting up cases, taking a few knockbacks and then coming again, they would have something. This is why we are starting to get things in Belyando and why we are getting a good deal. The people in Belyando have never had such a good deal in all their lives.

Mr. AKERS (Pine Rivers) (2.46 p.m.): That is an extremely hard act to follow.

In rising to support the motion moved by the Minister to grant Supply for Works and Housing for the forthcoming year, I should like to comment on some of the departments coming under his control. For many years the Housing Commission has built up a reputation—and it is a very poor reputation—for housing design, not construction, and for using extremely unimaginative town-planning principles.

The commission employs architects of high standard. One I know who is in charge of a whole section was one of the best students in his year at university. He was at university the same year that I was and he won prizes for being the most capable student in that year, yet he has to produce the very poor designs that we are getting now.

I know that the Minister is trying to overcome the problem of poor house design. I believe that we need to adopt a whole new attitude towards welfare housing in Queensland. Individual houses must be designed with some real imagination. We should be carrying out much more research into construction. The commission has the facilities and the expertise to do research, but none is being done.

In the outer suburbs of cities such as Brisbane, and in provincial cities we should be making use of higher-density accommodation. I do not mean the great Fascist slabs of Housing Commission flats that can be seen in the southern and eastern suburbs of Sydney; I mean medium-density cluster housing where all of the site external to the dwelling units as well as private courts and car spaces are unsubdivided and functional. They are common areas usable by all of the residents.

Mr. Houston: You do not want fences around them?

Mr. AKERS: No. Each unit is detached. It has its own front and rear entrances. Each dwelling unit has its own private enclosed courtyard and its own car space. Each functions separately from the others for the housing of a single family.

All of the area remaining on the site is combined into one usable space for the whole of the area. There are no useless 7 ft. strips of land between houses, a wasted 20 ft. frontage or a bog in the back yard. The whole of the area that at present is wasted or is used by one or two children in six families is there for the use of the whole community. There will be a serious shortage of housing in Queensland very soon. From his own waiting lists, the Minister can see that this is building up now. This is a follow-on from the position in the United States in the 1960s when the rhetoric was based on one-sixth of the nation being inadequately housed.

The reaction of the former Federal Government in reducing the amount of money available for housing, and therefore the amount that the Government has been able to spend on housing in Queensland, will make this situation worse. We do not have to reach the standard of the United States where in 1968 it was decided that 2,600,000 housing units a year were needed. The authorities there have not been able to reach that figure, and we in Australia have not been able to reach the proportionate number for this country.

I believe that we have been approaching the problem in a very diverse way. The building industry would be one of the most disjointed of all industries. In 1968 the President of the United States formed a committee on urban housing. I quote one passage from the report of that committee—

“The solution to the nation’s urban housing problems in providing a decent home for every American family calls for major efforts by the Federal Government, private enterprise, organised labour and state and local governments in creative and affirmative partnership.”

That observation applies completely to Australia. We have separate sections working independently, and there is no combining of their efforts.

I believe that part of the reason why we have not been developing as we should have been is that local authorities have not taken any steps to provide an alternative form of housing to flats and single-unit buildings. The Cement and Concrete Association of Australia produced a housing bulletin recently in which this passage appeared—

“One of the factors which has long inhibited the construction of town houses, other than as an alternative to flats on land appropriately zoned, is the large minimum allotment sizes adopted by many controlling authorities. These were fixed on the assumption that the quality of residential development is commensurate with the allotment sizes, and that people seek either a large garden or none at all. Increasing acceptance, by both planners and the public, of houses occupying smaller plots has made it necessary to consider changes to this aspect of legislation.”

The report then went on to give examples, and clearly set out that local government is preventing any sort of medium-density housing.

I believe that the Housing Commission can take a lead in this matter. It could produce its own medium-density housing. I hope that the Minister will lead the Housing Commission into medium-density, or cluster-house, development. I think it has tremendous advantages.

Mr. Houston: That is no good for people with young families.

Mr. AKERS: I am afraid the honourable member did not listen to what I said before.

Mr. Lindsay: He listened but he did not understand.

Mr. AKERS: Probably he cannot. The whole principle of cluster housing is the provision of more facilities for people with young families. It provides more facilities that can be used by the whole of the community rather than individual allotments.

Mr. Houston: What about the kids who want their own pets?

Mr. AKERS: They can have their small pets in their own courtyards. A horse cannot be run on an ordinary 24 perch allotment, anyway.

I believe that the commission can take the lead in this type of development now. It has a certain amount of land, and it is trying to produce the maximum number of units on it. With the type of development now being carried out by the commission and private developers, between 4 and 4.5 lots are obtained from an acre. Good-standard cluster housing can produce between 8 and 12 units an acre. With normal development, 5 per cent of the land is park or common area. With cluster housing, 33 per cent is for community use. That means that, on an area of 100 acres, under the commission's present method of development there would be 425 lots and about 5 acres of park. With a good-standard low-density cluster-house development, a very conservative figure would be 800 units for that same 100 acres with about 30 acres of parkland or common land available. If that does not suit family use, I do not know what will.

In construction cost, there is very little difference between producing a brick town house and a high-set chamfer-board house of roughly the same size. Figures I have been given show that a brick town house can be produced in a cluster setting for \$18,000, and that is about the same price the commission is paying for high-set chamfer-board dwellings. The difference in maintenance between the two is enormous. On the one hand we have a good standard brick building and on the other we have a chamfer-board dwelling, but also we have a saving in the use of the site. I showed honourable members the number of units we could get on the site, but then the development costs for each of those units will be lower. Excluding the cost of the land, in the outer suburbs it costs about \$6,000 to produce a 24-perch block of land. In Brisbane it costs about \$8,500. In a cluster development it costs about \$5,000 per unit. So we are producing more housing units of a better standard. The housing units cost the same and we are getting more out of the land we are buying so our land per unit is much cheaper—in fact, almost half the normal cost.

I strongly suggest that the Minister should try to initiate this sort of development on land the commission owns at Lawnton and Albany Creek. Both these areas are of good-quality, gently sloping land and are well worth trying. High-density town housing or terrace housing also has its function but I do not believe this should be tried in the outer suburbs. It is more suited for redevelopment areas such as certain areas of Red Hill, Spring Hill and Paddington. As examples of the type of thing I am talking about, I recommend that honourable members inspect the Swinger's Hill development in Canberra, the Australian National University housing project that was designed by Harry Seidler, and I understand that the Currie & Mooney project in the Albert Shire is of good standard. One overseas example that comes to mind is the UDC-Ithaca Scattered Site Housing Project in New York.

Of the other matters the Minister has under his control, I believe the Builders' Registration Board is doing an excellent job and is serving a tremendous purpose. But I believe its teeth are not strong enough. In one case someone—I cannot use the right word for him—tried to take down one of my constituents. He sold him the pieces for a knock-down house; then he sent him round the corner to another room, where one of his partners said he would build it for him, and in that way they got around the fact that they were supposed to be registered builders and therefore the Builders' Registration Board had virtually no control over them. The final product is shocking. I believe we should have more control over this sort of thing.

I think the Architects' Board is doing as good a job as can be expected, but I do decry the introduction of an entrance examination by the Architects' Board some time ago. There is nothing that can be done about it now, except possibly to remove this requirement, but I believe if a person passes an examination to get a degree that is recognised sufficiently to make him an architect, he should be qualified to be an architect and should not after a couple of years be required to pass another examination on subjects he has already been examined on and passed.

I promised to try to finish five minutes early in order to allow another member to speak. Briefly, I thank the Minister for the work that has been done in the Pine Rivers electorate over the year year. On a rough tally, about \$1,250,000 worth of work either has been approved or is under construction in the electorate. My feelings are very much the same as those of the honourable member for Belyando; I am very happy with the work that is being done in my electorate.

I am worried that the new wing being built at the Brackenridge State School will not be finished for the opening of the school year in 1976. I understand that arrangements have been made to take a

whole grade of children from this school to another by bus, and I do not think that children should be required to do that.

As I promised to shorten my speech, I shall conclude by again congratulating the Minister on the job he is doing. He is one of the specialist Ministers in the Cabinet who have the training and ability that enable them to administer their portfolios well and get on top of the work of their departments. I hope he continues to do his job well.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (3.1 p.m.): A previous speaker in this debate went to great pains to try to paint a picture that the Australian Labor Government intended to introduce a scheme in this country for a type of tax on houses. I was amazed that he would do such a thing; for some time I have held him in the highest esteem. I thought that, of all the Liberal members in this Chamber, he was one man who tried to play the game fairly. I must say that I am personally put out at his rising in this Chamber this afternoon and doing that. I would have thought that a man who in the past has considered very carefully what he intended to say would have checked his facts and would not have uttered such blatant untruths in the Chamber. He said that no person in the Australian Government—

Mr. MILLER: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is accusing me of uttering blatant untruths. I quoted all the cases from this report, which is a report put together by people employed by the A.L.P. Government in Canberra and printed by the Australian Government printing service. It is quite clear from the report that I was not telling untruths, and I should like to again quote from it.

Mr. WRIGHT: Mr. Kaus—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Kaus): Order! What is the honourable member's point of order?

Mr. MILLER: My point of order is that I wish to quote from the report to prove that I am not telling untruths. It says, "The crucial issue for housing policy"—

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

Mr. WRIGHT: My comment about untruths being told was not that the honourable member was not reading from the report. The untruth that he told was that it has never been refuted by any Minister or member of the Australian Labor Government; that is the untruth.

I would have expected the honourable member to take pains to read the speech on 30 September 1975 by the Federal Minister for Housing (Mr. Riordan) in which he took McLeay to task; he is the man who caused all this with his untruths.

Mr. Miller: Who said it?

Mr. WRIGHT: Mr. Riordan's speech is recorded at page 1403 of Federal "Hansard" of 30 September 1975. He said—

"Again we see an example of desperate people clutching at straws, hunting around, seeking here, seeking there, seeking everywhere to try to find some stick with which to belt this Government. What do we find here? We find a complete misconstruction by the honourable member for Boothby (Mr. McLeay) of an item in the report of the Priorities Review Staff being built up as something being considered by the Government. I have never heard such a load of hogwash as I heard in the honourable member's speech this afternoon. It was built on a misconstruction. In fact, it was utterly false."

At the bottom of the same page he said, "I say two things in reply to that—"

Mr. MILLER: I rise to a point of order. All that the honourable member has said is that he is claiming that it was false. I said that the Australian Labor Party at no time withdrew or rejected this report—

Mr. WRIGHT: He has had his go, Mr. Kaus. Let me finish my speech.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. MILLER: The report says—

"This report seeks to substantiate these claims, show why current policies are inadequate and indicate how policy might be reformulated and redirected to achieve results more in keeping with Government intentions."

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

Mr. WRIGHT: Thank you, Mr. Kaus. I have never seen such disgusting behaviour from a senior member of the Liberal Party.

On the same page Mr. Riordan went on to say—

"I say two things in reply to that: Imputed tax is not recommended by the PRS, to start with, and the Government certainly is not considering such a tax."

There is the Australian Minister for Housing completely refuting what has been said. And he is not the only one. On Saturday, 4 October the Rockhampton "Morning Bulletin"—

Mr. MILLER: I rise to a point of order.

Mr. WRIGHT: You're not going to allow this, are you, Mr. Kaus?

Mr. MILLER: The Opposition did exactly the same thing to me.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! What is the point of order?

Mr. MILLER: The Federal Labor Government is only refuting it at this point of time. It did not at any time say it would not introduce it.

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

Mr. WRIGHT: Thank you, Mr. Kaus. Fancy allowing the honourable member to get up like that. It's disgusting. I have never seen such ridiculous behaviour.

As I was saying, on Saturday, 4 October the Rockhampton "Morning Bulletin" contained the headlines, "No homes tax idea, Uren says". He refuted the suggestion when he was asked a question by a Liberal member from South Australia, Mr. Wilson.

Let us come back to what the Australian Government has been doing in relation to housing. On 21 July 1975 "The Courier-Mail", under the headline "Government plans aid for young home buyers", published an article about this matter, as did "The Australian" on 11 April 1975, under the headline "New housing body will make low-interest loans". On 22 March 1975 "The Courier-Mail" stated—

"Federal plan for defence houses

The Federal Government is planning the development of 996 defence service housing allotments in Brisbane and expenditure of \$2,200,000—"

Mr. MILLER: I rise to a point of order.

Mr. WRIGHT: I am not going to listen to him; I've got too much to say.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! What is the point of order?

Mr. MILLER: I find the honourable member's statement objectionable. He said the A.L.P. was going to reduce the interest rate, whereas it increased it from 6 per cent to 10 per cent. That's not reducing the interest rate; it's increasing it. The honourable member's statement is objectionable, and I want it withdrawn.

Mr. WRIGHT: Nothing I said was objectionable.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! We will have some order in the Chamber.

Mr. MELLOY: I rise to a point of order.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I am already listening to a point of order that has been taken.

Mr. WRIGHT: Thank you, Mr. Kaus. I am sure you will have to pull the honourable member for Ithaca into line.

Mr. MILLER: On a point of order, Mr. Kaus—I want that statement withdrawn.

Mr. MELLOY: I rise to a point of order.

Mr. MILLER: I rise to a point of order.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! What is the point of order of the honourable member for Ithaca?

Mr. MILLER: The honourable member for Rockhampton made a statement that is objectionable to me. He said the A.L.P. was going to reduce the interest rate, whereas instead it increased the interest rate.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! If that is objectionable, the honourable member may ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr. WRIGHT: He can't do that.

Mr. MILLER: It's a downright lie, and I am not prepared to have lies told in this Chamber. I want the statement withdrawn.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: The statement is objectionable to the honourable member for Ithaca. The honourable member for Rockhampton will withdraw it.

Mr. WRIGHT: I take exception to your ruling, Mr. Kaus. I made a comment about the Australian Labor Government. I did not mention the honourable member for Ithaca. If we are to have a ruling that whatever we say is objectionable, we will never have any debate in this Chamber.

Mr. MILLER: On a point of order, Mr. Kaus—the honourable member has not withdrawn the statement. I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr. WRIGHT: I can't be forced to withdraw such a statement. I suggest you read Standing Orders, Mr. Kaus.

Mr. MELLOY: I rise to a point of order.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! What is the point of order?

Mr. MELLOY: I tried to rise on a point of order five minutes ago, Mr. Kaus. My point of order is that the honourable member for Ithaca is deliberately eroding the time of the honourable member for Rockhampton and I call on you to restrain him.

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

Mr. MILLER: Mr. Kaus, I have every right to take a point of order. While I was making my speech the honourable member for Rockhampton and other Opposition members took up the time of the Committee.

Mr. WRIGHT: This is totally unfair. I suggest that if you can't keep things going, Mr. Kaus, you ask the Chairman of Committees to come back and take charge of this Chamber.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! Would the honourable member for Ithaca state his point of order?

Mr. MILLER: Yes, Mr. Kaus.

Mr. WRIGHT: Oh, come on. I have never seen such shocking chairmanship in all my life.

Mr. MILLER: I repeat again what I said before. The honourable member for Rockhampton stated that the Australian Labor Party was going to reduce interest rates. That statement is objectionable to me. In fact it is a downright lie, because since 1972 it has increased interest rates from 6 per cent to 10 per cent.

Mr. WRIGHT: This is shocking. This is a prostitution of this Parliament. I suggest you have lost control of the Committee.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for Rockhampton is now reflecting on the Chair. He will withdraw his statement.

Mr. WRIGHT: I withdraw my reflection on you, Mr. Kaus, but it was very well founded.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! Carry on with the debate!

Mr. WRIGHT: The Australian Labor Government introduced a \$16 savings on home payments. It also had a scheme for leasing homesites. I could go on at length to explain what the Australian Labor Government did.

I heard the honourable member for Ithaca and other honourable members speak about what this State has lost. I took it on myself to get Mr. Riordan's reply to such statements, which I intend to read in full. He stated—

"The Queensland Government claims that advances to the State for welfare housing in 1975-76 are down by 29 per cent from 1974-75. This is not true. This year's advance is the same as for last year. The advance from this year's budget is \$31,000,000, to which should be added the \$6,400,000 allotted to Queensland in June as an advance against this financial year's allocation, granted because the State Government had over-committed itself on public housing projects. Thus, the total for 1975-76 is \$37,400,000, the same as for 1974-75.

"The Queensland Government says that it did not agree that the \$6,400,000 granted in June was an advance against 1975-76. This is also not true."

At the Housing Ministers' Conference, Mr. Riordan said, quoting himself—

"The funds that will now be available to Queensland and West Australia (i.e., advances to these States over and above the 1974-75 Budget allocation) are clearly advanced on the basis that they will be considered in the light of next year's commitments."

(Page 84 of the Conference transcript)."

Mr. Riordan then stated—

"Though the Queensland Minister was present, he did not disagree with this at any stage. He did say—

"We do thank the Commonwealth for giving us \$6,400,000."

The Federal Minister then stated—

"On 23 June, in a letter to the Queensland Minister, Mr. Riordan confirmed the point."

The letter was in these terms—

"As I said at the conference this allocation will be taken into consideration when funds for welfare housing purposes in 1975-76 are being determined".

Mr. Riordan then stated—

"Even Mr. Bjelke-Petersen himself told the conference that the funds 'provided by the Commonwealth Government are very much appreciated.'

"Finally, on the \$6,400,000 point, it is being said (e.g., by Mr. G. Alison, M.L.A., Maryborough Chronicle of September 30) that Queensland asked for the extra money 'because the housing program in Queensland was going very well.' In fact, the Queensland Minister told the conference on June 11 (page 88 of the transcript) that 'Queensland went ahead and over-committed itself to the extent of \$6,400,000'.

"The Queensland Government asked for \$80,000,000 for 1975-76, which is more than double the advance in the previous year and almost as much as the State had received over the last three years. To double public home building activity within one year would be economic madness. Which means, unless the Queensland Government is economically mad, that its request was not meant to be taken literally. In fact, it is estimated that, if all the money for welfare housing had been paid that the States asked for the deficit estimated for this year would be increased considerably.

"Queensland Government supporters are saying that Queensland got less money for welfare housing this financial year than did South Australia which has less population, because we are favouring the S.A. Labor Government. This is not true. The regrettable fact is that, for reasons best known to the Queensland Government it has traditionally concentrated less on welfare housing and asked for less money for it than South Australia. This has been the case for at least 20 years. Even this year Queensland actually asked for less money than South Australia did. Our welfare housing advances are based on requests by the States, not on some arbitrary measure devised in Canberra.

"The Queensland Government has received \$92,200,000 million in our first three full years of office—half a million dollars more than the State got in the last 10 years of the Liberal Country Party administration.

"The \$37,400,000 that Queensland got in 1974-75 and 1975-76 is \$4,300,000 more than it got in the last three full years under the Liberal-Country Party.

“Advances per head of population to Queensland for welfare housing have increased from about \$8 when we took over to more than \$15 now.

“Queensland has been allocated \$17,300,000 for various forms of housing this financial year, over and above the \$37,400,000 advanced to the State under the Housing Agreement. This extra assistance comprises: \$13,300,000 for welfare housing; \$1,600,000 for aged persons’ homes (97 units have been approved for this year); \$423,500 as a basic housing grant under arrangements carried over from the previous housing agreement and \$103,750 as a grant to assist very low income renters of Housing Commission accommodation.”

Let it be stated in “Hansard” once and for all exactly what is the truth of the matter. Unfortunately, lies have been told.

How much time do I have left, Mr. Hewitt?

The CHAIRMAN: Five minutes.

Mr. WRIGHT: What a tragedy it is that something like eight or nine minutes was wasted by the member for Ithaca on what he said.

I would like to make one final point in the time left to me. In view of what he said (that is, that just because a report has been presented to the Australian Labor Government, therefore it should be that Labor Government’s policy), I refer to the recommendations of the committee inquiring into the status of women. I would like the honourable member for Ithaca to tell me at some time whether or not he now believes that, because a report was recommended to this Parliament, accepted by Mr. Knox and tabled here, the policy of this Government is now, as we see on page 31 of the recommendations, voluntary sterilisation and sex education programmes. I make the point rather well that, if we are to have this stupid, ridiculous remark made that, simply because a report is presented to the Australian Government, it therefore has to be its policy, then this other recommendation has to be this Government’s policy. It means that this Government accepts abortion, it accepts sex education and it accepts voluntary sterilisation.

Getting back to the Estimates in the few moments I still have, I have listened carefully to the contributions of other members in the Chamber to this debate. Most have made requests about what might be called the needs of their electorates. They have spoken about more houses, more schools, more classrooms, better police stations and so on. I think that is to be expected. Even though sometimes it is said that we play parochial politics, it is important that, after our three-year term, we demonstrate our effectiveness as members.

Irrespective of the individual political affiliation of members—except for the member for Ithaca now—most members pursue these issues first and foremost because they have a sincere interest in the students, the teachers and the very low-income families that need housing. I acknowledge the work that has been done by the Works Department and the Housing Commission over many years and also when it was the responsibility of the now Minister for Police.

Mr. MILLER: I rise to a point of order. I find it most objectionable that the honourable member for Rockhampton should make the point that everybody is concerned about low-cost housing with the exception of me. I have always represented the workers of my area. That remark is most objectionable to me and I ask that it be withdrawn.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. WRIGHT: I accept the denial, Mr. Hewitt. He is trying to waste more time. I’ll fix him.

Mr. MILLER: Mr. Hewitt, was that withdrawn? I did not hear whether it was withdrawn.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The comment was withdrawn. The honourable member for Ithaca will resume his seat.

Mr. MILLER: I find the remark objectionable and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr. WRIGHT: I accept that it is objectionable and I withdraw it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. WRIGHT: Sit down. You’re like a little—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! When I am on my feet, all members will sit down. I intend to hear the member for Rockhampton. He will proceed.

Mr. WRIGHT: Whilst I have accepted the efforts of the Housing Commission and the Works Department, I sometimes question the priorities of expenditure. We are always crying out for more money. The usual answer is that there is no money available. I have a list of letters that I was going to quote and record in “Hansard”; but, because the member for Ithaca wasted my time, I cannot do that.

We notice that there is never a shortage of money to buy the Premier a new plane. We never seem to lack money when we want to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on propaganda in the Premier’s Department and to employ P.R. specialists. We do not seem to lack funds when the S.G.I.O. buys new buildings or lends money to private enterprise. However, when it comes to schools and houses, we do not seem to have the money.

In the annual report we notice that something like 8,000 applications were made for Housing Commission homes, although last year only 2,000 homes were built. We know that we cannot meet every demand. I have a list of the various needs of schools. Just on the aspect of toilets, the details of which have been given to me by the Queensland Teachers' Union, it would seem that we have a crisis in toilets in Queensland schools. One thing that the department has to do under the new Minister is to rethink its priorities and its spending power and, above all, start co-ordinating with the various other departments.

Years ago a library was built at a school three weeks before it was to close. On another occasion the school had in fact received notification that it was closing when the Department of Works came along and built a tank stand. Now, dozens of schools—in fact on this list they go from "A" to "Q"—are in urgent need of toilets alone. I have also statistics of various schools that need walkways, sheltered accommodation and classrooms. Obviously we are never going to overcome this problem unless we change our priorities and change our attitude to other departments.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member's time allowed under Standing Orders has expired.

Mr. WRIGHT: As the honourable member for Ithaca took up most of my time, may I go on?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. WRIGHT: Well, can I speak to points of order during the next speech?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable gentleman will be dealt with under Standing Order 123A.

Mr. NEAL (Balonne) (3.21 p.m.): I rise to support the Minister—

Mr. WRIGHT: I rise to a point of order. I find what he has said objectionable to me because he is not going to rise to support the honourable member for Ithaca surely. The point I was making before is that there is certainly not enough co-ordination and planning—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! This Committee had better realise that points of order, when they are taken, will be made as succinctly as possible or I will not even listen to them. We have heard a series of speeches by way of points of order today.

Mr. NEAL: As I said, I rise to support the Minister's Estimates for Works and Housing this year. I hope that no points of order will be taken because I have only a few minutes at my disposal. As I said, I congratulate the Minister—

Mr. Houston: Why waste time doing that?

Mr. NEAL: The honourable member should dry up and clean his eyes out.

I congratulate the Minister because he takes into his portfolio the same managerial skills and expertise that he has shown in his capacity—

Honourable Members interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Committee is becoming unruly and my tolerance is being tested to the full. If I have to, I will deal with any honourable member.

Mr. NEAL: As I said, the Minister takes into his portfolio the same expertise and managerial skills that he showed when he was a contractor and also when he was on his grazing property at Roma. I am sure that they will be well reflected in the affairs of the department that he administers.

Public enterprise should compete with private enterprise in the various facets in which they are engaged, such as tenders, design, workmanship and conditions. I acknowledge that there are areas that are best served by the Works Department in the provision of public utilities. Other areas can be better served by private enterprise. I am sure that the Minister realises this and will ensure a balanced spread in the capacity of both sectors.

The Minister has been promoted at a time of turmoil and instability created by the Federal Government. Owing to its financial and managerial policies, inflation, interest rates and unemployment have increased greatly. Those policies have also created a tremendous demand for rental homes. I spoke on this matter during the Budget debate. The figures are reflected in the annual report of the Queensland Housing Commission.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr. NEAL: Because of the problems caused by the Federal Government, young couples simply cannot afford to buy land and build a home, or buy a home. This has resulted in the increase in applications from 7,666 to 8,193—after a record number of 2,314 houses were constructed last year.

The inflationary trend and high interest rates are reflected in the increased number of applications for rental houses and also in the fall-off in the number of new homes built in this State. In 1972-73, 22,549 homes were built. In the year just ended, only 14,221 were built, which is a reduction of 52.5 per cent. As can be readily seen, inflation, and the problems created by the Whitlam Government, caused difficulties throughout the industry.

The timber industry plays an important part in the building industry, and in my area it has been severely hit. Overall for the State, there has been a decrease in the last year of about 7.4 per cent in the output of processed log timber. To further compound the over-all situation, there

has been a reduction in the allocation for housing by the Federal Government from last year's figure of \$43,800,000 to \$31,000,000. That is a reduction of \$12,800,000. As the Minister said, he sought approximately \$80,000,000 for Queensland's needs, and at least \$54,000,000 was needed merely to break even with last year's allocation, allowing for an inflation factor of about 25 per cent. At least another \$11,000,000 was needed to bring the figure up from \$43,800,000 to \$54,000,000.

It is simply the old story all over again—if you have a 44-gallon drum, you cannot get 54 gallons out of it. In that sense, Queensland did not even get 44 gallons out of the Canberra drum; all it received was 31 gallons. The figures mentioned by the Minister in his introductory speech show that Queensland has been discriminated against in comparison with the other States. Most received allocations equal to those of last year, whereas Queensland suffered a reduction of \$12,800,000.

It is no wonder that the Minister has said that he regrets his inability to satisfy the needs of members of Parliament. The present situation is certainly no satisfaction to me, nor is it any satisfaction to those who are waiting for homes. There are people in my area who are forced to live in caravans, old condemned homes and other forms of substandard accommodation. Such a situation lowers the general standard of living in an area. I realise, of course, that my area is not alone in this problem; it is apparent in many other places.

There are at present 47 applicants for Housing Commission rental homes, and about six for purchase homes, in St. George. As it has a population of only about 2,500, that is a large number of people looking for homes. In Thallon there are people who have to live in cottages on properties away from their places of employment because they cannot get accommodation in the township. I hope the Minister will give sympathetic consideration to my request for more Housing Commission homes.

I hope that the installation of septic systems in country schools continues. Such systems, of course, need an adequate supply of water. I know that the department has been putting down bores, and in many areas this is fairly expensive. I ask the Minister to give serious consideration to obtaining some form of surface water. I am sure that it would be less costly.

The provision of fly-screening has continued, and I thank the Minister and his department for the progress that has been made with this work. Unfortunately fly-screening in a hot climate creates other problems. Screening restricts the free flow of air and makes rooms very hot, particularly in summer. There are then pressures for the provision of fans and air-conditioning units. I hope that the Minister gives consideration to the provision of such amenities.

Another building that I should like to mention in the few minutes of my speech that remain is the residence at the Hannaford School. This was an old school, once known as the Burrows School, which was shifted to its present site. It is a building of about 14 ft. by 20 ft. which has been partitioned inside, and the teacher is living in it. Hannaford is a three-teacher school, and usually only single teachers are sent as head-teachers. But, of course, invariably they get married, and the teacher and his wife then have to live in this small house. I ask that the Minister give consideration to the provision of a residence there.

I do thank him for the new school that has been provided at Begonia and also the teacher accommodation which has been provided there. A couple of new homes have been provided for teacher accommodation in St. George. I congratulate the Minister on the excellent design of the libraries that the Works Department is providing for our schools. I do not think there is too much more I wish to say as I see the Minister is getting anxious to get on with his reply. I thank the Minister for his co-operation in the short time he has been Minister and I also thank his departmental heads and their staff. I am sure that while he remains Minister he will tackle the problems facing his department quite efficiently and do the best he can for this State.

Hon. N. E. LEE (Yeronga—Minister for Works and Housing) (3.31 p.m.): First of all, I would like to thank some honourable members for their very good contributions to the debate. Unfortunately, I cannot say that about all honourable members, although I can say it about almost 99 per cent of them. Let me say at the outset that I certainly do not intend to answer the honourable member for Archerfield further. Because he went on with a lot of hysterical garbage, I feel I should not answer him further than I have.

I would like to reply first to the remarks of the honourable member for Rockhampton despite the fact that he delivered a tirade of abuse and a personal attack on the honourable member for Ithaca, and a personal attack on me too. At one stage he said we were telling lies. All I can say is that he tried to twist the story of finance. It is a bit like him, really. He is himself a twister. He cannot help twisting the truth, and that is one of his great problems. He knows as well as I do that in 1974-75 Queensland had an allocation of \$43,800,000, whereas in 1975-76 the amount is only \$31,000,000. He knows damned well that that is 29.2 per cent less and yet he will rise in his place and, with a whole lot of figures, try to twist everything around. If anybody should talk about telling lies, it would not be him. He is the one who should be embarrassed.

He even started to talk about toilets. That is what he should have confined his whole speech to, because if ever a man got down into the sewer and into the gutter, he did when he tried to make out that the honourable member for Ithaca was telling lies about the whole thing. It is a disgrace to see this Chamber used and abused in the way it is by members of his party. They know damn well that there is a Federal election coming up, so they try to twist these figures around to suit themselves. Shame on them! They have lost the election now and they ought to give up and go home. They have lost because the people of Australia certainly will not trust the A.L.P. any longer.

Because I gave some time to the honourable member for Balonne, I do not have much left, but I will try to cover the points made by each member and possibly not spend as much time as I would have liked on each. The honourable member for Isis is next on my list. One of his great problems has been that his electorate suffered from six years of bad representation prior to his joining the Government. What he is trying to do now, and I do not blame him for it, is to catch up in 12 months, after the former member failed his electors for six years. I ask him to be patient. We will try to help him wherever possible, but he must realise (I know he does) that our allocation was cut by \$12,800,000 or 29.2 per cent—despite what the honourable member for Rockhampton said—and as well we have the effect of inflation, which is the equivalent of a cut of at least 45 per cent in our Budget. That is one of the reasons why I as Minister cannot do all the things I would like to do. I am sure he appreciates that.

The honourable member really made the point that many things have been happening in the Isis electorate since he became its member. He did say that one school in the electorate had been built the wrong way round. Perhaps he was lucky to have that school built at all. However, I asked my officers to look into the matter, and they told me that a Jennings-type building is being erected. They admit that it could have been built the wrong way round, but it is being erected according to the conditions on the site. Blinds are now being provided to give shade. The honourable member also spoke about landscaping. He would know that it is impossible to spend money on landscaping when there are so many schools and classrooms to be built. I am sure he understands the position.

The honourable member for Belmont complained about the maintenance of Housing Commission homes. I say to the honourable member that a record amount of \$4,200,000 was spent on maintenance last financial year and that \$1,200,000—also a record—was spent on improvements. In fact, 1974-75 was a year of records for the Queensland Housing Commission.

Basically, what the honourable member wants to see is a 1945-model house, if I may put it that way, brought up to a 1975 standard. In my opinion, it is impossible to do that. However, it must be like a breath of spring to the people of Belmont to have representing them, after so many years, someone who really cares and to know that they are now being represented so well.

The honourable member spoke about housing on which the rent was too high. The average rent for the houses of which he spoke is \$18.43. I have no doubt that similar houses rented privately would bring about \$40 or \$50 a week in rent.

He said that one of the most important functions of government was to build houses. As indicated in the report of the Queensland Housing Commission, a record number of 2,283 homes was built last financial year, so I think it is obvious that the Government has that thought well in mind. Gough Whitlam said, "You give us the money. We will build the houses." However, one cannot accept what he says. He is a bit like the honourable member for Rockhampton in that respect. I say to the Commonwealth, "You give us the money and we will smash any record that has been established."

Mr. Wright: You got the money, and you know it. You are fiddling the books.

Mr. LEE: The honourable member would be greatest fiddler there is. He gets down to the gutter. That is how low he got in the last episode. The words that I fiddled the books are very offensive to me and I ask that they be withdrawn.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Kaus): Order! The Minister asks the honourable member for Rockhampton to withdraw the words.

Mr. Wright: What words?

Mr. Moore: You said he fiddled the books.

Mr. WRIGHT: I withdraw them. The Minister said that I was the greatest fiddler. Those words are very offensive to me and I ask him to withdraw them.

Mr. LEE: The honourable member for Bundaberg said—

Mr. WRIGHT: Mr. Kaus, in view of your recent ruling, I have asked that the Minister be directed to withdraw those words as they are offensive to me.

Mr. MILLER: I rise to a point of order.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. WRIGHT: I am asking for your ruling, Mr. Kaus.

Mr. MILLER: May I take a point of order?

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! Will the Minister withdraw those words?

Mr. LEE: I am stuck for time, so I will do anything that will enable me to continue my speech.

Mr. Wright: Will you withdraw them?

Mr. LEE: I will withdraw them.

I turn now to the honourable member for Bundaberg. He complained, among other things, that Maryborough was getting more houses than his electorate was.

Mr. Jensen: That's correct.

Mr. LEE: I can't help it if the honourable member's electorate has bad representation. That's all there is to it. If he can't represent his electorate as it should be represented, surely to God he can't expect me to find out where the houses should go.

The honourable member also said that the residents of Bundaberg were asked to put up the sum of \$65,000, or half of \$135,000, interest free.

Mr. Jensen: \$60,000 out of \$120,000.

Mr. LEE: Well, \$60,000 out of \$120,000—interest free. As he claims to be one of the leading residents in Bundaberg, I would take great pleasure from seeing him start the ball rolling by giving his first year's salary. Will he do that?

Mr. Jensen: No, I said—

Mr. LEE: All right, he refuses to do it. In other words, he does not believe that the residents of Bundaberg are being asked to do that. If he had done as I asked, I might have given thought to providing him with another house in Bundaberg. However, as he does not appear to want to help his constituents, I will have to withdraw the offer. But even if he had put up the money, I would like to see the whole matter put down in writing, especially in view of the way he rigged those strike ballots and other things.

Mr. Jensen interjected.

Mr. LEE: He's really not a bad fellow, so I suppose I shouldn't be too rough on him.

A Government Member: He's pleasant but dumb.

Mr. LEE: That's a very apt description.

The honourable member for Ipswich West made a very good contribution to the debate. He understood the problems posed by inflation and the present monetary situation. The home-construction programme has been severely affected by these problems. He has a very good grip of land matters, as naturally he should have. He is, after all, an authority on land matters. One thing he did for sure in the few minutes at his disposal was give the A.L.P. a fairly good touch-up and bring Opposition members to life. No doubt his comments are recorded in "Hansard", so Opposition members can read them. I greatly valued his contribution.

The honourable member for Wynnum clearly understands the financial problems facing the Housing Commission. He expressed appreciation of the new stylings as did the honourable member for Pine Rivers. The Housing Commission has drawn up eight new stylings. The member for Wynnum also spoke about the importance of a review of priorities. This matter was referred to by the honourable member for Ithaca, too. No doubt when the new Liberal-National Government is elected to office in Canberra on 13 December, the recommendations put forward will be considered. I am not as worried as the honourable member for Rockhampton. Now that we have a decent Government in Canberra, we need not worry as much as we have done in the past.

The honourable member for Rockhampton North spoke in a reasonably rational manner and I give him credit for it. I have made copious notes of his remarks and it is unfortunate that I will not be able to reply to all of them. I assure him that I will endeavour to reply in writing to some of the points raised by him. As I say, his comments were rational and worthy of attention.

The honourable member for Mansfield, our capable Temporary Chairman, expressed satisfaction with the department's efforts. He, too, realises that one of the major problems confronting my department is lack of money. He spoke about a person not being able to purchase a home if he earns over \$131.30 a week. To me that is the worst socialist document we have ever had to live with. But the State had to sign it. I give my colleague the Minister for Police great credit for the fact that, when it first came to him, he opposed it because it was totally wrong. Thanks to the present Minister for Police, and his fighting it, we were the first State to break through. However, we got only 30 per cent for purchase homes and even then a means test was applied. These days, a means test means a great deal to the A.L.P., because it wants to see people in rental homes. That is the backbone of its socialist ideas. If it can keep people in rented homes, they will never own anything. At least under our philosophy and principles we allow people to purchase a home. It seems terrible to me that a person can enter into a contract to purchase when he is earning \$131.30 or less a week and then, through no fault of his own—simply because he gets an across-the-board wage rise—be denied the right to purchase a home at a later date. In the meantime, he may have spent hundreds of dollars on improvements to the home knowing that he had the intention, and the right, to purchase it. I am indeed disappointed and sad when such people who receive over the minimum wage are told that they cannot purchase a home. That is completely wrong.

Mr. Yewdale: Setting aside the means test argument, people who are now allowed to rent a home instead of purchasing it still have the right to buy it.

Mr. LEE: No, only 30 per cent is allocated for this and even then applicants are subject to a means test.

The honourable member for Maryborough spoke basically about the Builders' Registration Board. That board is causing me some worries. In the near future I shall be looking at the possibility of introducing some amendments—

Mr. Moore: You should abolish it.

Mr. LEE: I would not say that. The board has done some good work but some amendments would give it more teeth in some respects and less in others. I think that is what should be done.

I sincerely thank the honourable member for Mackay for his congratulations. He believes that an old contractor like me should be able to carry on with the job. I know that the honourable member presented a three-year plan, but he is sensible enough to realise that we cannot always carry out the plans and projects put before us. He referred to modular housing. We are looking into this method of construction. It would be suitable in certain places but certainly not throughout Queensland.

Mr. Hanson: Why are you against day labour?

Mr. LEE: Because it is not as efficient as contract work.

I did not know that the honourable member for Merthyr had so much culture. He outlined at length why he wanted this building preserved. He could not have read my speech to the Chamber in which I stated clearly that when the new building is completed we intend to restore this building. We are even going so far as to rebuild and restore the old cottage. I see some honourable members shaking their heads, but I believe that that should be done.

The honourable member for Toowoomba South spoke about—

An Opposition Member: He gave you a bucket.

Mr. LEE: He did no such thing. He made a sensible contribution about forward planning for school sites. I agree with him entirely. However, it is not always possible to look forward. Like other people, we may be short of money to buy the land. It is very easy to look forward and say, "We would like to be able to buy this today." But, because we have to prune our spending, we are forced to let the opportunity pass by. At other times, houses are built on the land. I feel as sad as the honourable member for Toowoomba South that that should happen, but I am sure he understands that most problems arise not from a lack of planning, but from a lack of finance.

As a matter of fact, at the moment we have \$2,000,000 worth of land in the pipeline so far this financial year but only \$1,500,000 with which to purchase it. That is without any additional land during the

rest of the year. I can assure the honourable member that it constitutes a worrying problem.

The honourable member for Cairns—I do not think I have missed anybody so far—spoke about the Cairns Court House and a few of the problems with schools in his electorate. He also drew attention to the high rainfall and the necessity to have concreting done underneath Housing Commission homes, police houses and so forth. I do not disagree with his remarks but once again it comes back to priorities. What is one to do—put concrete under somebody's house or give another person a roof over his head? Which is preferable? It is not raining all the time. That is a judgment to be made by the commission and the officers of the department—and it is a very difficult one. I do not altogether disagree with what the honourable member said; but, because of lack of money, it is difficult to achieve all our aims.

The honourable member for Albert spoke about home-ownership and people not being able to obtain deposits under the housing scheme. I think the Queensland Housing Commission has one of the best schemes. A person who has almost no deposit at all can, by paying so much a week, reach the situation of purchasing a home by building up the deposit to \$500—that is, provided the means test does not prevent him and our 30 per cent allocation is not already taken up.

Mr. Casey: If he qualifies under the means test. Because he is on a low wage, once he gets into the home he cannot afford to build that deposit up.

Mr. LEE: Yes; on many occasions he can. I do not accept that that interjection is completely right.

The honourable member for Townsville South is one of the few people who got to the crux of the problem by pointing out that inflation had eaten the heart out of the State. He made a particularly good contribution. He is an able statesman with many years' understanding of our problems. Therefore, he would certainly know both sides of the story. He realises that, through inflation, the A.L.P. has broken the hearts of the very people it is supposed to represent.

He spoke about a pensioner who came to Brisbane. It is a pity he did not contact us to see whether we could put her into an aged persons' unit. We are very proud of the fact that our aged persons' units cost only \$6.80 rental a week. If the council rates rise, we do not increase the rent. It stays at \$6.80.

The honourable member for Townsville South made the best case I have ever heard when he spoke about the Commonwealth Government not paying rates in Townsville. He suggested that the Commonwealth Government, through the States, should be providing extra money for local authorities. It was a particularly good example.

The honourable member for Belyando made a very good point. He said that Belyando had a higher cost of living than other places. As Minister, I recognise that. I have written to Mr. Riordan and Mr. Johnson to try to get assistance at least in the recognition of the same system as that under which taxation rebates are allowed—in other words, zoning and so forth. The honourable member for Mackay can shake his head, but it would be worth something. It would be a start. We tried to have our own zoning but the Commonwealth Government would not listen to us. We asked it to do what it does in the taxation of people. We asked that we be given the same advantage.

After many months of haggling, we finished up with Mt. Isa as the only place that was given some recognition and received some relief. Mt. Isa is a mining town. The others are mining towns. The people in them do have difficulty and the cost of living is high. But let it be accepted that at least the Queensland Government has done its best to get them into this particular system.

Mr. Casey: The scale you use for your incremental payments for public servants would be a better type of scale.

Mr. LEE: We put that forward. We made a last desperate effort to have the taxation system recognised.

The honourable member for Belyando referred to non-welfare housing. I realise that there is a great need for it. The Government has set up a non-welfare housing committee.

Mr. Jensen: Mr. Minister——

Mr. LEE: I haven't enough time.

We are doing our best to accommodate these people. Departments should be allocated an amount to house their own employees, such as policemen and teachers. It is beyond the capacity of the Housing Commission to provide this accommodation. This is why we set up the non-welfare housing committee.

The honourable member for Belyando took us on a Cook's tour of his electorate. It was quite interesting to hear that so much work has been done there. He certainly must have been active prior to his election to Parliament. I think that a man up there named Turner keeps trying to get under his neck, but Turner would never do him in a fit. The honourable member has been on the ball. He is one of the most intense honourable members in his concern for his electorate. It must be a change for people in electorates that were represented by Labor members before the last election to have his type of representation.

The honourable member for Ithaca made one of the best contributions to the debate. In saying that, I do not denigrate any of

the other speeches. He made a good contribution on the history of the housing documents, which are the worst I have seen. The A.L.P. wants people to live in rented houses. That is all it cares about. Never will it reach the stage where some houses——

Mr. Alison: You have to help them to buy their houses.

Mr. LEE: That is right. That is what the Queensland Government has done, whereas for the past three years the Labor Government has stopped people from owning their own homes.

At 4 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Under the provisions of the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 22 October, I shall now put the questions for the Vote under consideration and the balance remaining unvoted for Works and Housing.

The questions for the following Votes were put, and agreed to—

Works and Housing—

	\$
Chief Office	7,216,149
Balance of Vote, Consolidated Revenue, Trust and Special Funds and Loan Fund Account	235,971,508

MINES AND ENERGY

CHIEF OFFICE, DEPARTMENT OF MINES

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (4.1 p.m.): I move—
“That \$2,358,780 be granted for ‘Department of Mines—Chief Office.’”

It is appropriate that the Committee debate the Estimates of the Department of Mines this year. 1975 marks a major milestone in the long and impressive history not only of the mining industry but of the Department of Mines itself.

This year the department began its second century of service to the people of Queensland and this nation. During the past 100 years, the mineral industry has been the major contributor to decentralised development in this State. At no time during this long period has the economic impact of mining on the community been greater than in the past decade. In the late sixties and early seventies the mineral industry in Queensland experienced a period of unprecedented growth and development. Queensland became a mineral base on the world scene and seemed poised for an era of long-term prosperity.

However, Mr. Hewitt, this was not to be. For three years the mineral industry has been sailing like a ship without a rudder, and one does not have to look far to see the reasons why mining has gone off course. In Queensland we as a Government have done everything possible to make sure that mining has had the best atmosphere in which to

grow. However, it is an unfortunate fact of life that we in Queensland do not have the final say on many vital questions affecting our future. As well-meaning as we might be, we cannot counter indecision, ineptitude, harassment and lack of leadership when these are adopted as the hallmarks of those who control the Treasury benches in Canberra.

I know that there will be those, both in and outside this Assembly, who will choose to disagree with these facts. Nevertheless, there is no escaping the plain truth of what has become, in a mineral sense, an appalling situation, and one that is destined to leave long-term scars on this nation's economic future.

Today, Mr. Hewitt, I propose to expose the Whitlam Government's non-existent mineral policies for what they are. However, before doing so, I would first like to outline briefly Queensland's mineral programme for the next year, and also to review what has happened in 1974-75.

It is pleasing to be able to say that, in spite of our Canberra-based problems, a great deal has been achieved by our mineral industry during the past year, and we look forward to a further period of consolidation for 1975-76. This situation has been due to two main factors. It has been the policy of this Government, since it came to power 18 years ago, to create the right atmosphere for free-enterprise mineral development. The success of this policy can easily be measured in terms of the expansion that has taken place in the industry during the past two decades. I believe the second important factor contributing to our mineral success has been the spirit of co-operation that has grown up between Government and industry.

At this point, I would like to pay tribute to the contribution that officers of the Mines Department have made to the maintenance of this relationship. In this regard, I would like to make particular reference to the achievements of the Under Secretary of the Department of Mines, Mr. Kevin Healy, who retires next month after nearly 50 years in the Government service. Queensland owes a debt to Mr. Healy and his officers for their untiring efforts, particularly during the difficulties of the past decade. When the history of mining in this State is written, Mr. Healy, who has occupied the position of under secretary for such a long time, will be recognised for the part that he played during the major expansion of the mining industry in Queensland, and the successful way in which he dealt with the various mining companies that came to this State to further Queensland's mineral development.

Tribute also must be paid to the chairman of the Queensland Coal Board, Mr. Alf Crowley, who will also retire next month after many years of valuable service to the State's coal industry.

Since 1972 the mineral industry in Queensland has worked hard to maintain the status quo. During this same period the Mines

Department has extended its resources to the limit in an effort to maintain progress, particularly in the vitally important fields of research and exploration. The success of this programme is reflected in a number of important areas. Take, for example, the field of exploratory drilling. As I have said, and it is a point I propose to elaborate in detail in a few minutes, the level of exploration throughout this nation has declined rapidly in the past three years.

In an effort to compensate for this deficiency, the Queensland Government has expanded its own drilling programme. In 1974-75 the Mines Department spent \$2,150,000 on exploratory drilling for coal, minerals, underground water and to increase vital geological knowledge. This expenditure accounted for no less than 10 per cent of the whole of the exploratory drilling undertaken in the State. This made the State Government a more than significant partner with private enterprise during a period of extreme hardship.

This year the Government proposes to spend more than \$2,750,000 on its drilling programme. In the light of the depressed nature of exploration throughout Australia, we are getting more than value for money for this expenditure. For the benefit of the Committee, I would like to mention just a few of the concrete results from this programme. Departmental drills have already established the existence of extensive resources of coal in the Bowen and Galilee Basins and this work will continue. In the coming year it is planned to upgrade the previously inferred large reserves of coking coal suitable for underground mining in the Moranbah area. Work will continue in the Galilee Basin, which has large inferred reserves of non-coking sub-bituminous low-rank coal that may be suitable for the manufacture of synthetic fuels and petro-chemicals. The department's investigations in this basin have already proved to be more than worth while.

Major companies, both Australian and overseas, are known to be interested in the long-term development of industries based on coal processing. In addition, a very recent discovery by a departmental drilling team may prove of considerable economic importance to the north-west of the State. The rig intersected a very thick seam of coal about 15 km south of the town of Pentland, on the Townsville-Mt. Isa railway. The coal seam lies at a depth of only about 50 metres and further work is being undertaken to assess its extent and importance. One would not need to gaze into a crystal ball to grasp the significance of a major source of energy located so close to the main rail link between Mount Isa and Townsville.

In addition to coal exploration, the Mines Department Drilling Branch is actively engaged in the search for minerals. Programmes either under way or planned for this year include examination of an interesting copper-silver-lead-zinc deposit near

Warwick and a detailed exploration programme of the Anakie sapphire field. The department will also continue with its important water resources and stratigraphic programmes. As part of its water resources programme, the department last year examined the Logan, Albert, Coomera and Nerang River Basins in Southern Queensland, the Mackenzie and Styx Basins in the Central Division, and the Mulgrave and Barron Basins in the North. Work was also undertaken on town water supply works for several western towns and potential power generation works in the southern and central parts of the State.

In the area of stratigraphy, the department is a major contributor of geological knowledge, particularly for the oil search industry. The drilling programme represents just one of the department's activities aimed directly at the exploration field. The great bulk of this work is undertaken by the Geological Survey of Queensland. The Survey, operating with an almost full complement of staff, provides a full range of technical services to the Government, the mining industry, and to the State generally. Field work is supported by specialised laboratory research and testing facilities. Many of its activities are co-ordinated with the work of other State departments and authorities, particularly in the fields of coal exploration, engineering geology, and resource assessment of economic minerals and extractive materials.

I have already mentioned a number of areas of Survey activity in connection with the drilling programme. However, the Survey is involved in many other fields as well.

To meet a growing demand for environmental protection and alternative land use in the field of future urban and industrial development, a specialist section in Urban and Environmental Geology has been established.

The Economic Geology Section has been concerned largely with an assessment of the limestone resources of the State, and with investigation of metallic and non-metallic mineral deposits.

Geological mapping, undertaken jointly with the Bureau of Mineral Resources, is being continued in the north-west of the State and semi-detailed mapping by the Geological Survey commenced in the south-east. Compilation of the new geological map of the State is virtually complete.

Systematic studies in the geology of Moreton Bay have been supported by shallow core-drilling to determine sedimentary characteristics.

Stratigraphic drilling is being continued in the Galilee Basin to investigate its petroleum potential and provide samples for sedimentological and palynological studies.

Palaeontological studies are currently related to off-shore oil search, marine geology and rock-phosphate deposition.

Geophysical investigations are carried out largely in support of projects undertaken by other sections. New areas of activity for the year are marine seismic reflection profiling and examination of the possibility of detecting and defining areas of intruded and naturally coked coal.

Geochemical investigations of potentially metalliferous areas are being continued.

Progressive introduction of computer-based information retrieval and data management systems is designed to service the Geological Survey and facilitate provision of data to other Government authorities, industry and the public.

It might appear as if a great deal of the time at my disposal today has been devoted to the area of exploration. This is true, but there is a very good reason for interest in exploration.

In simple terms, exploration is the life-blood of mining. Without it, no new discoveries can be made, and without discoveries there can be no new projects. This makes sense to me, and I am sure it makes sense to thinking people everywhere.

This being the case, I cannot see why this vital message has never filtered through to the halls of power in the Department of Minerals and Energy. Since it came to power in 1972, the Whitlam Government has mounted a non-stop vendetta against the mineral industry in this country. The anti-mineral campaign has been dressed up in a number of guises. The Government purported to set out to save Australia from the multi-nationals, money-grabbing foreigners and too-successful Australians. This campaign has been eminently successful. All of the major projects on the drawing board when the Labor Government came to office in 1972 are still on the drawing board.

The worst aspect of all stems from the fact that in the intervening period very few foreigners or Australians have set out seriously to look for anything. The industry has been stripped of both its incentive and its confidence.

In no part of this nation has the backlash of Canberra's unenlightened policies been felt harder than in Queensland. Let me quote a few figures to illustrate my point, and bear in mind that these figures come from the published records of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, not from my department.

Between 1970-71 and 1973-74, the level of exploration for minerals throughout Australia, in terms of metres of drillhole, fell by one-third. In Queensland during the same period, the fall was 57 per cent. That is a very significant figure when one considers that in 1970-71 Queensland was the nation's second State in an exploration sense.

I know that metres of hole drilled might not mean much to many people, so let me put it another way. In 1970-71, \$7,600,000 was paid in wages and salaries to Queenslanders engaged in the exploration industry.

By 1973-74, and accounting for the fact that money values had been boosted by rapid inflation, the wages bill had fallen to \$4,600,000. The national wages bill for exploration during this period fell by 7 per cent. In Queensland the figure went down by 40 per cent.

Unfortunately, this depressing story goes on and on. However, there is one major exception.

In spite of the obstructionist policies of the Commonwealth, people throughout the world who need the minerals we produce have continued to buy them in ever-increasing quantities. As a result, the output of our existing mines today stands at its highest-ever level and minerals are our biggest single export income earner.

Were it not for the fact that the industry has been able to consolidate its position during the past three years, this country would have been in a far bigger mess today than it is. We must never forget, however, that the maintenance of the status quo will never lead to growth. Even the most optimistic economists must be prepared to admit that, for various reasons, there will be flat spots in economic growth from time to time. However, in Australia today, in a mineral sense we face depression, the reasons for which can be laid squarely at the door of the Labor Party.

I would like to be able to tell the Committee the reasons that lay behind the Labor Government's peculiar attitude to the mineral industry. Unfortunately, I am unable to do so because I have never met a Minister for Minerals and Energy face to face. For almost three years the former Minister, Mr. Connor, refused to attend any meeting with State Mines Ministers. Consequently, I can only guess at the reasons which lay behind some of the Commonwealth's extraordinary actions.

Of course, I am not alone in this dilemma. The industry has had the same difficulty as I have in trying to nail down the Commonwealth's so-called minerals and energy policy. In Queensland we have worked in co-operation with the industry; in Canberra the industry has been frustrated.

I may not be able to explain the reasons for Commonwealth policy but I can enumerate some of its damaging effects on the mineral industry in this State. One could perhaps best sum up the attitude of the Commonwealth in the terms of the Petroleum and Minerals Authority Act, which had a stormy passage through Federal Parliament. This Act would be perhaps the most discriminatory piece of legislation ever brought before an Australian Parliament. In it, the Commonwealth announced a policy of take everything and give nothing.

Admittedly circumstances have forced the Commonwealth to modify its thinking. However, these modifications still place Labor's minerals and energy policies outside the

realms of reality. In spite of the meagre concessions that have been offered, not one organisation has come forward to announce concrete proposals for a major mineral development.

Let me give a simple example of what I mean. In recent times Labor has modified its policy regarding the percentage of foreign equity and levels of overseas investment in mineral undertakings. The industry had rightly claimed that the Commonwealth's previous policy in this direction was retarding the possibility of new undertakings, particularly in coal. It is a well-known fact that Australia generally, and Queensland in particular, has a big future as a coal exporter, and that overseas help would be needed to bring new mines into operation.

Having modified to some extent this area of its policy, Labor decided to hit the coal industry to leg with a brand-new discriminatory tax equal to \$6 a tonne on export coal.

Quite obviously the Commonwealth thought that by this means it would reduce the profitability of overseas-controlled coal-mining operations.

To get at the so-called rich, Labor made two classic mistakes. First, its new tax also applied to the not-so-rich. Let me quote what one not-so-big underground operator in New South Wales had to say about the new tax. The operator said—

"A recent development with serious implications for the coal and other export commodity industries has been the introduction of an Australian Government export tax on coal. A substantial section of Australia's underground coal mines have, for many years, experienced low profitability. The increase in coal prices arising from the world energy crisis has only recently permitted a more satisfactory return on investment in these projects. The full impact of the introduction of the coal export tax at a time of substantial increases in wage rates for the industry may well return the industry to its long period of stagnation in earnings from underground mining activities."

So much for the problems of existing operators.

Labor's second classic mistake lies in the area of new projects. Coal-mining is, after all, a speculative investment. Wise coal producers work out the long-term viability of new projects before they undertake the vast capital investment necessary for development. In the over-all scheme of things, profits are important, because this is the area that in the final analysis pays for capital investment. If there are going to be insufficient profits, a project will not get off the ground in the first place. Who among us would be prepared to undertake the investment of hundreds of millions of dollars in a country whose Government has a proclaimed policy designed to tax the successful to bread-line levels? We can only milk the

cow so far, and when common sense gives way to greed we are only a step away from stagnation.

It is an unfortunate fact that the damage Labor has caused with its coal export duty has its parallel in almost every other area of Commonwealth and mineral industry relationships. The mineral industry has suffered as a result of the withdrawal of incentives and the imposition of harsh direct-taxation policy. This has been reflected in the big downturn in exploration activity.

For many years Australia received favoured-nation treatment at the hands of those prepared to invest on the developmental scale. We were trusted throughout the world and respected for our resolution to foster development. Australia has lost its credibility as a country prepared to foster development. There are going to be many people who will smugly believe that the only ones to suffer as a result of the Commonwealth policies are the multi-national corporations and international financiers. How far this is from the truth!

New projects such as mines and processing plants have been deferred, and others, which would have been established in Queensland, have been relocated elsewhere. As a result we have lost valuable investment capital but, more importantly, we have lost job opportunities for thousands of Queenslanders. It has been reasonably estimated that about 70,000 people are either directly or indirectly employed by the mining industry in this State. It is a matter of simple mathematics that if we increase industry activity we also boost the number of jobs available. In Australia today we have record unemployment and we cannot afford to turn away those prepared to create employment opportunities.

These problems of the mining industry are legion and no-one can deny that they exist. I know that some of these problems are the result of events and trends overseas. However, there is no escaping the fact that the big percentage of our mineral problems can be attributed to national Government lack of policy and indecision. For three years the industry has been looking to Canberra for a clear-cut policy statement on mineral development but none has been forthcoming. My Government stands pledged to support mineral development in this State for the utmost benefit of the people of Australia. However, we can go only as far as Canberra policy will allow.

Fortunately the opportunity has now arisen whereby the existing non-progressive policies of the Labor Party can be changed dramatically. Soon the people of this nation will be given the chance to have their say at the point where it counts most—the ballot-box. If common sense prevails at that time we in Queensland will be able to get on with the job of developing our State. Under Labor, mineral development, not only in Queensland but throughout this nation as a

whole, has come to a stop. Now is the time to get its wheels of progress moving again.

I would like to speak now on the Estimates of the Department of Electricity Supply which, as honourable members know, is the department responsible principally for the planning and control of electrical development throughout this State. The Estimates this year provide for a total expenditure of \$89,825,238 made up as follows:—

	\$
Electricity Development Fund	227,156
Electricity Trust Fund ..	2,674,695
Gladstone Power Station Construction Fund ..	73,570,857
Gladstone Power Station Operation Fund	13,273,800
Electrical Workers and Con- tractors Board	78,730

The electricity supply industry, like most other industries in Australia, has been seriously affected by the inflationary spiral. The costs of plant, equipment, materials, and particularly fuel and labour have all rocketed, and this has resulted in the industry having to keep a very close watch on expenditure priorities. Contractual commitments and other essential works must, of course, take top place when funds are allocated, and it is unfortunate that in recent years some of the less important works have had to be deferred for a time owing to lack of finance.

Honourable members will appreciate that major electricity projects take many years to reach fruition and this acts like a double-edged sword against the industry. On one side we have inflation gobbling up the value of capital funds even before they are spent and, on the other side, the industry is not getting any revenue for its outlay over this period. The Gladstone Power Station is a case in point. This project was commenced in 1970 and will not be productive until 1976.

In addition to this, we have the situation where, despite the Government's representations to Loan Council, the industry is not being granted the level of loan authorisations which it requires to keep pace with inflation and demand development.

I use the words "demand development" to emphasise the fact that the industry is not spending money unnecessarily. The development is based on five and 10-year forecasts, which are updated annually. These forecasts, at the date of adoption of annual works programmes, are as accurate as is humanly possible.

I admit that the rate of development is fast, but it is a sensible rate and it is based purely on consumer demand.

In 1974-75, permission to raise \$38,600,000 in new debenture loans was granted. This year \$62,800,000 has been authorised, but \$32,500,000 of this is for the Gladstone project, which leaves only

\$30,300,000 for the major electricity authorities in the State to finance their individual capital works programmes.

In association with this, the Department of Electricity Supply has installed its own coal-crushing and loading plant at the mines to process the coal economically for power-station consumption. The plant cost \$7,500,000 and was commissioned towards the end of the last financial year. It is hoped that we can amass an adequate stockpile at the Gladstone Station before the first set is commissioned early in 1976.

I do not propose to dwell very long on the subject of coal stockpiles. However, in the case of Gladstone we are hoping for a stockpile of at least 120,000 tonnes by the time the first set is commissioned and approximately 700,000 tonnes by 1978 when the station will be in full operation.

The result of this is that the industry is being forced to draw more heavily on revenue funds for capital works, which can only be obtained by increased tariffs. This year the authorities will have to contribute approximately \$42,000,000 in revenue funds to help finance capital works, as against \$27,000,000 in 1974-75.

It is the concern of this Government and the Department of Electricity Supply to effect economies wherever possible and, in pursuance of this aim, I, as Minister for Mines, successfully negotiated with the Utah Development Company for the supply at cost of high-quality steaming coal at Blackwater for use at the Gladstone Power Station and for supplementing supply to Swanbank Power Station.

While on the subject of the Gladstone Power Station, I would like to point out to honourable members that, when this station is commissioned and the 275 kV line between Gladstone and the northern grid is completed in 1977, we will have a powerful interconnected system running from the New South Wales border to Cooktown. This will be a very important milestone in the electrical development of this State, with all major stations feeding into the one system.

In addition to the planning of future requirements, the industry has been actively engaged in research of a nature which we hope will produce economies and thereby slow down the rate of inflation. To this end, investigations are being conducted into the possible use by power stations of reject coal, which is not usually suitable for this purpose. If they can find some cheap way of adapting this coal for power station consumption, it will be a major step towards a better utilisation of our fuel resources.

The greater use of our rivers for the production of low-cost hydro-electric power is another item under review. The Brisbane, Caboolture, Burdekin and Herbert Rivers are being thoroughly investigated with this idea in mind.

In fact, as I announced recently, it has now been decided to proceed with the 500 MW Wivenhoe pumped storage scheme on the Brisbane River, with the commissioning date set for 1983. \$335,000 has been programmed for the scheme in 1975-76.

The Queensland Government has not overlooked the special problems of the industry in the western areas. When the former Australian Government withdrew the fuel subsidy, several western electricity authorities were seriously affected financially. It should be appreciated that these authorities operate on very small and very tight budgets to minimise tariff increases, and any setbacks of this nature mean a deficit result for the year.

To stabilise the situation, the Queensland Government introduced its own fuel subsidy and has allocated \$125,000 this financial year to the undertakings most affected. They are the ones operated by the Murweh and Paroo Shire Councils, the Roma Town Council and the Central Western Regional Electricity Board.

In addition to this, the Government last year introduced a subsidy scheme to reduce tariffs in small western townships to the level obtaining at Barcaldine. The authorities receiving this subsidy are the Barcoo, Boulia, Bulloo and Quilpie Shire Councils and the Mt. Isa City Council for the township of Camoowale and the Central Western Board. Approximately \$147,000 was allocated to these authorities to 30 June 1975, and a further \$150,000 is included in this year's Estimates. These two special subsidies are additional to the subsidy which the Government has been paying for many years to assist in financing the industry's capital works in the rural areas. In 1974-75 this subsidy amounted to nearly \$920,000.

As the power-lines of the electricity authorities penetrate deeper into the rural areas of the State, the cost of providing supply to consumers becomes progressively dearer. The population in most of these areas is very sparse, with the result that additional miles of power-lines are needed to service fewer consumers. The Government's revised rural subsidy scheme has done much to alleviate the problem in these high-cost areas and mainly because of this we are now experiencing extensive development in the West.

I was very pleased to read from the records of the Department of Electricity Supply that the electrical accident rate had dropped substantially during 1974-75. A total of 264 accidents were recorded for the year as compared with the average for the last five years of 315. Sixteen of these 264 accidents were fatal. The main causes of these accidents were again lack of maintenance and unauthorised work by "amateurs". The electrical industry has endeavoured for many years to keep the public continuously aware of the dangers of misusing electrical appliances and equipment, but the problem is that electricity is such

a ready servant and its use is so common place that people tend to forget about safety. Much of the credit for this drop in accidents must go to the industry safety campaign which is conducted through various avenues. Lectures and film screenings to high school students and the public, the issue of safety literature, and the testing of new production appliances and equipment are only a few of the many safety activities of the department.

The electricity supply industry can be justly proud of the fact that, despite the various problems it encounters, each year continues to be a year of considerable achievement with the goal of complete and adequate electrification of the State drawing rapidly closer.

Mr. HANSON (Port Curtis) (4.34 p.m.): This afternoon we have listened to one of the few presentations of the Mining Estimates in which the Minister has occupied the time of the Committee—or the time that he has taken to introduce his Estimates—to make a thorough and unfounded criticism of the recent Australian Government. Naturally, in my address, I aim to put the record straight and to tell a few stories about the matters under discussion, particularly appertaining to the coal industry, so that there will be a fair assessment in the public mind of many of the benefits that that Australian Government brought to this industry.

I think it is generally conceded that the Department of Mines is charged with the responsibility for the regulation and development of the mineral resources of this State and, as well, the responsibility for planning, in very precise detail, the mining laws and also for implementing the policy as laid down by the Government of the day. It is not disputed that there is a very fine administrative staff to carry out the functions of the Mines Department, and it contains highly qualified people such as scientists, engineers and draftsmen who are actively engaged in the planning and development of mineral resources.

The large-scale development of specific mineral resources throughout the State requires very detailed planning. This has been evident for a very long time. In one of his few generous moments the Minister referred a couple of years ago, I think, to the action of the Labor Government in bringing a firm named Powell Duffryn to this State. Officers of that company undertook considerable technical investigation and came up with recommendations which, as the Minister said, were very helpful in what we all hope will be the future industry of gasification of coal.

I should also like to pay a tribute to the under secretary, Mr. Healy, who will be shortly leaving the service of the Mines Department. He is one of whom I have not seen very much during my parliamentary service, but a gentleman whom I knew prior to my entry to this Assembly. He is a personal friend of mine, and I have always

appreciated the fearless and courageous way in which he has carried out his duties in the interests of the people of Queensland. He has, of course, also been very loyal to the Government of the day, whatever its political complexion.

I also wish to pay a tribute to his assistant under secretary (Mr. Cook), Mr. Woods, and many others in the department. I should also like to acknowledge the work done in the department by the Chief Gas Examiner, Mr. Noume, who has stood up and been counted in acting fearlessly and courageously in the interests of the consuming public of this State. Press reports in recent times have shown that that is exactly what he has done. There is a responsibility on the department to see that the consuming public obtains gas at a price that is fair and equitable, and in accordance with the legislation as laid down by this Parliament. Despite the manipulations and acrobatics of the suppliers, they had to conform to the rules as laid down here. There has been a certain amount of confrontation with gas companies in recent times, and I hope that in the interests of the consumer those who have been granted franchises will live up to their responsibilities.

In one of my few generous moments in looking at the Government's performance, I might say that the Opposition was in agreement with the legislation passed some years ago under which a monopoly in the supply of gas in this State was prevented. We all saw the great battle between interests on the north and south sides of Brisbane. It was a pleasure on that occasion to support the principle behind that piece of legislation.

This afternoon the Minister used the whole of his time to rant and rave about the recent Federal Government. But what did we see some six to nine months ago? We saw a great split develop in the ranks of the Government because of very ill-advised statements made by the Premier that placed in serious jeopardy the whole coal-export trade of the State. I quite realise that at that time the beef industry was, as it still is, in a very serious position. Of course, the Opposition realises this, and realises it only too well. But why sacrifice, scuttle and sabotage a viable industry by saying, "You will get no coal unless you buy some of our beef."?

Mr. Moore: What's wrong with that?

Mr. HANSON: Playing to the gallery. It was eminently clear that this was so, and has been shown to be so in subsequent months. And what did we find at the time? We found the Treasurer—

Mr. Katter interjected.

Mr. HANSON: I do not want to deal with lightweights. I do not want to deal with people who have such an inflexible attitude that all they think of is feeling the cloth and trying to make some profit out of shoddy-dropping. I am here to present the Opposition's case in the Estimates for the Department of Mines.

The Treasurer was very much alarmed at the statements of the Premier. He went on record and told the "Financial Review" that the self-styled resources policy of the Premier had never even been discussed at Cabinet level. He rejected it out of hand and said that it would be a very serious thing for the coal industry to suffer because of the Premier's premature and immature statements. And what did we see? Did his deputy, the present Minister for Mines, come to his aid? Certainly not! In the same article headed "Queensland Cabinet split on resources", the Minister for Mines disowned the Premier because of his intemperate statements in this regard. One has only to look at the "Financial Review" of 17 February this year to find that what I am saying is absolutely correct. So if there is to be criticism of the recent Australian Government for its attitude, surely there should be criticism of a person who, as Leader of the Government in this State, was willing to sacrifice a viable industry because he hoped to pick up some political advantage in the western areas by preaching his philosophy of hate and trying to inflame the people.

Mr. Katter interjected.

Mr. HANSON: It might be all right in Flinders.

The honourable member has a few cows and he is worried at the moment that he will not get a good price per hundred. That might be his concern, but the concern of the Opposition is not only the beef industry but the coal industry and the people of Queensland and we will try at all times to espouse those views.

I want to say something about the criticism of the former Minister for Minerals and Energy, Mr. Connor. Prior to the entry of Mr. Whitlam to the Treasury benches, we saw a very sorry state of affairs in this country. There is evidence of it in the "Financial Review" of 7 October 1972, two months before that wonderful day when Labor attained office. We saw the New South Wales coal exporters go to Japan and try to adopt a united approach. The industry throughout the length and breadth of this country was getting encouragement from the McMahon Government to adopt a united approach so that business would not be conducted on a trader-to-trader basis, which would allow the Japanese to lower their prices and fleece the coal exporters, thus denying them the profitability that they now enjoy because of the policies of Mr. Connor. Instead of rival companies in this State competing with each other and with New South Wales producers, they are now in a position where they have a guaranteed market at guaranteed world prices.

Of course, the Government very conveniently forgets to inform the people of this State that the contracts of the largest producer in this State, Utah, are long-term contracts and are renegotiated on an annual

basis by the grace of the Japanese steel mills following the representations of the Australian Government. Instead of having to wait until the termination of long-term contracts, export prices are now renegotiated on an annual basis and we ask for payment in Australian dollars, one of the world's best currencies, to avoid fluctuations in currency parities. This was a great weakness in many of these contracts prior to the entry of Rex Connor into the Federal scene.

Although the deal that Mr. Connor negotiated in Japan, under which the price for hard coking coal was increased from \$11.26 to \$37 a tonne as from 1 July 1975, evidently is not appreciated by the National-Liberal Government of this State, it is appreciated by leaders of the industry, many of whom have said to me, "His terms were hard, but at least you knew where you were going." I ask: Was not the Treasurer very anxious to get increased royalties before the Budget was introduced?

This afternoon the Committee heard the great squeal about the export tax of \$6 a tonne reiterated by the Minister for Mines. I say here and now that if Fraser, by some mischance, happens to become Prime Minister of Australia, I am quite willing to lay a bet that the export tax of \$6 a tonne will be retained. As a matter of fact, both Mr. Fraser and Mr. Anthony have said in the newspapers that they will retain it. Therefore, why does one hear criticism from honourable members opposite who have the responsibility of administering this State? They are very ungrateful. They are not telling the real story to the Australian people. In fact, one could say that they are trying to lead people up the garden path.

It is true that there is an Australian equity of only 11 per cent in the Utah mining company. If Mr. Connor and the Australian Labor Party objected to that, what is wrong with that? Why should we not be proud of our own country? Should we not demand a larger percentage of the shareholding in its natural resources? It is only correct that we should do that.

Mr. Katter: Where are we going to get the money from?

Mr. HANSON: The honourable member for Flinders asks where we are going to get the money from. When he realises that Utah is at present making a profit of about \$3,000,000 a week, he will realise that money will be available.

Mr. Camm: How much?

Mr. HANSON: About \$3,000,000 a week — \$165,000,000 a year. As a matter of fact, the profit for the six months to 30 June 1975 was \$42,000,000, and it is expected that the profit for this six months' period will be \$80,000,000 or \$90,000,000. The Australian people like a winner. Does the Minister not think they would back Utah?

As I said, it is about time the Government told the real story. In the time available to me, I think I have explained some of the more pertinent points that justify the attitude adopted by the former Minister for Minerals and Energy to some of these matters. He put arguments to the Japanese and obtained for the industry in this country, at long last, a good price for its product. I know that many companies are very grateful to him for adopting that attitude.

This morning I asked questions of the Premier about the future of Mt. Morgan, a very important town that I represent. As all honourable members know, over a long period there has been a great downturn in all production in that locality. London Metal Exchange prices and base metal prices throughout the world are depressed. That is one reason why there is a lack of exploration not only in this country but also in many other countries. However, in recent months there has been a very significant upturn in prices, and I hope it will continue. If base metal prices do not continue to increase, people in the town of Mt. Morgan will suffer very badly indeed.

In the late 1920s the mine closed and so did the town. The people of Mt. Morgan are very friendly and the town has a very good infrastructure, and I do not think that any right-thinking Government would want to see the town closed and the people dispossessed. The Government should do all in its power to ensure that the town remains viable. Since the 1880s the mine has made a wonderful contribution to mineral production in Queensland, so it is incumbent upon the Government to do everything possible to assist the town of Mt. Morgan. It should certainly carry out a full investigation into all aspects of the town's potential for development.

As a matter of fact, two or three years ago such an investigation was carried out, and the Minister for Industrial Development, Labour Relations and Consumer Affairs promised to furnish me with a copy of the report on that investigation. That was two years ago. I still have not seen the report. Perhaps a carpenter is at work in his office erecting a filing cabinet in which the report can be stored.

I do not wish to touch on the matter of the Kianga inquiry; I realise it is sub judice. Nevertheless, I suggest that the recommendations contained in the report on the Box Flat disaster, which occurred some two years ago, should, in the light of subsequent events, be examined very carefully.

As the Minister is well aware, the mining warden in Gladstone will in the near future conduct a hearing concerning the Bracewell area. I hope that as a result of the petition I presented recently on behalf of the local residents, as well as of representations I have made to the Minister, their farms and, therefore, their livelihood will be protected. The local people have stood up and fought hard to save their farms.

The State Electricity Commission has the clear responsibility of maintaining electricity tariffs at the lowest possible level. Shortly after the 1974 floods we saw the sorry state of affairs of the mining companies demanding export prices for the coal they were delivering to Swanbank. They contended that the necessary rearrangement of railway rolling-stock to transport coal to Swanbank deprived them of the means of transport of export coal, and they claimed that unless they were paid export prices they would be robbed of profitability. As I have already pointed out to the Committee, a profit of \$160,000,000 a year is not too bad. How greedy could anyone get?

As I say, it is the responsibility of the State Electricity Commission to ensure that tariffs are kept to the lowest possible level. I am pleased to note that, despite the arguments put forward by coal-hungry companies, which wanted retrospectivity and the inclusion in their contracts of lack-of-profitability conditions, the commissioner stood up to them and did battle on behalf of the consumers. Naturally he must feel a sense of frustration at the hands of the State Government, which on that occasion was caught flat-footed. As a result of its lousy attitude, it did not provide sufficient space for the stockpiling of coal. No industry that has an investment of \$1,125 million and 671,000 consumers could afford to operate as the Government did on that occasion. It was very inefficient indeed, and its actions showed the total inadequacy of its decisions.

On page 3 of the commissioner's report, in relation to investigation and planning, a number of comments are made concerning stockpiling. It is a case of too little, too late. Something should have been done a couple of years ago. The crisis that was inflicted upon the people of South-east Queensland was the result of lack of action on the part of the Government, which totally ignored advice given to it by the Coal Board.

(Time expired.)

Mr. GUNN (Somerset) (4.54 p.m.): It is with great pleasure that I participate in this debate. Since my entry into Parliament I have been a member of both the mines and electricity committees.

One of the greatest tragedies in the history of Queensland is the intervention by the Federal Labor Government in the affairs of our mineral industry. Queensland is very rich in minerals.

Mr. Hanson: The only thing you know about is cows.

Mr. GUNN: I have learned a lot about minerals, too, since my appointment to the committees. It was my pleasure to accompany the Minister on a tour of the Utah mining developments at Saraji, Peak Downs and other places.

Mr. Camm: You'd have to know a lot about male cattle to understand what the member for Port Curtis was talking about.

Mr. GUNN: The honourable member is well out. We all remember what his A.L.P. friends did prior to 1957 in relation to mineral development in Queensland. It was not very much!

Mr. Neal: Do you think that the honourable member for Port Curtis has a gold mine in Gladstone?

Mr. GUNN: He has done very well from the development in Queensland. He is a good businessman and I am sure that he grasped the opportunity that was offered to him. But this Government was responsible for the development. If he has done well, it is to his credit.

Without overseas capital we could not have achieved as much as we have done. Opposition members may say what they like, but events have shown that Australians have never been interested in investing risk capital. Prior to 1957 an odd fossicker could be found looking for gold at Cracow and in other areas. While we had the deep mines on the West Moreton fields, there were few open-cut mines and none of the magnitude of those that are operating in many parts of Queensland today.

Queensland has mining developments other than coal, such as gold, silver, copper and kaolin and brick clay from my own area. In fact, mineral development is taking place throughout Queensland. In 1974 the value of minerals produced in Queensland exceeded \$690,000,000. I do not know what Queensland would have done without its mineral earnings. We should all recognise that mining has been the mainstay of the State's economy. Not so long ago Queensland was mainly a primary-producing State, but the value of primary products fell with the collapse of the meat and wool industries. We were indeed fortunate to have this mainstay of \$690,000,000 to rely on. Last year Queensland produced 2,267 k. of gold, and in excess of 175,000 tonnes of copper valued at \$226,000,000. Lead returned over \$50,000,000, coal \$211,000,000 and zinc \$56,000,000.

But we have merely scratched the surface. If the A.L.P. Federal Government had offered a little incentive to encourage mineral exploration, Queensland would be in a far better position. In spite of Labor's policy, mineral development in Queensland has been meteoric. It speaks very well for the Mines Department, which has handled developments so well. Intervention by the A.L.P. put the clock back many years. However, I assure honourable members that after 13 December our problems will be rectified. I am certain that once again we will see investment in our wonderful State.

We should make full use of our natural resources while there is world demand for them. Although we have done a lot of

exploration, a lot remains to be done. The magnitude of our mineral resources is not fully realised.

It is most unfortunate that petroleum production from the Moonie, Alton and Bennett fields continues to decline. During 1974, 62,342 tonnes of crude oil, valued at over \$1,000,000, was sold. However, the value of oil produced was \$400,000 lower than that for 1973. Oil produced on the fields comes by pipeline to Brisbane.

Natural gas production in 1974 was 289,000,000 cubic metres, valued at almost \$2,000,000. All gas was produced in the Roma area, and the value of gas produced increased slightly as additional consumers were connected. Gas is reticulated to Toowoomba, Ipswich and Brisbane, through the Roma pipeline.

Until I visited Peak Downs, Saraji and Dysart with the Minister, I did not imagine that we had such large coal developments, but their development would have been impossible without the expertise and investment capital of the Utah people. The honourable member for Port Curtis spoke about the profit they have made. Surely he does not want them to sustain a loss! As a businessman, he must realise that it is absolutely imperative that a profit be made.

Mr. Hanson: You wouldn't like the Japs to own your farm!

Mr. GUNN: I'd like them to buy my product, just the same.

Australians have never been good investors. It is all very well to invest after it is found that a venture is a success, but Australians have never been keen to invest in the early stages.

I believe that Queensland has an excellent future in minerals. In the Tarong area we have very good coal. I am most disappointed that it now appears that a powerhouse will not be built there at this stage. Probably the decision to build a power station in the area of the honourable member for Port Curtis was the best one. However, I am concerned because I believe we may be putting all of our eggs in one basket. If at a later stage there are major strikes, we could find ourselves in an embarrassing position.

I do know that, when the next powerhouse is built, there is no earthly doubt that it will be built at Tarong, where there is access to cheap coal. I think that will be in the next seven or eight years. I am very pleased, of course, that there will be power generation in my area with the Wivenhoe hydro-electric scheme in 1983. That is something I look forward to.

A lot of my electors are employed in the West Moreton field. We must accept that deep mining is becoming more expensive and antiquated. The honourable member for Wolston must realise that. No doubt he will try to protect the miners as much as possible, but he must realise that

it is inevitable that the day will come when they will be out of work. I have read a report—I cannot remember the name of it now—stating that there is plenty of coal there. However, it is in deep and dangerous seams and breaks away very quickly.

The West Moreton field has played an important part in the development of the State. I do not dispute that. But I am all for cheap electricity; if we are to encourage industry in this State, we must have cheap electricity. While I appreciate the necessity to keep the field open to retain these men in employment—personally I would not like to see a general shutdown of the mines—I do not consider that Ipswich depends entirely on the mines. Some time back there was much sobbing done about a closure of the mines. I do not know exactly what their contribution is to the economy of Ipswich. It is probably important. However, I know Ipswich. It has grown in other directions, and at the present time it is not wholly dependent on those mines. There will and must be a phasing out of mining in the area. The honourable member for Wolston must accept the fact that the coal from those mines will become too expensive for electricity generation.

From the point of view of cost, that coal cannot be compared with open-cut coal. Although I am not quite certain about it, it is probably just as good for steam generation. I do not know the department's policy, but I consider that there will be a phasing out and Swanbank and Wivenhoe will take over the peak loading of the south-eastern area. When the Gladstone Power House is completed, it will supply electricity to the whole of the State.

I reiterate that it is imperative for us to have cheap electricity. For many years the price of Queensland's electricity did not rise, which is all to the credit of the department. It kept the price down. It has only been in the last couple of years that the price has risen. In my opinion the recent strikes in the West Moreton field did not do us much good. Coal had to be brought in from Blackwater. That should never have had to be done. The West Moreton field can supply it. There is no doubt about that. I believe that the Communist-dominated unions over the border caused this trouble. They have been concerned at the production of coal in this area. The honourable member for Port Curtis well knows this. Of course, he might not want to admit it here. Those unions have been concerned with the type of coal produced in Queensland, because they have their own mines over the border.

I spoke to many of the Utah miners. I have never seen better conditions than they enjoy. They have wonderful conditions in the electorate of my colleague the honourable member for Belyando. We stayed at Moranbah and looked over the fields. Those young people there enjoy better conditions than those

offered by any other industry in the State, yet they were being influenced by the Communist-dominated unions in the South.

This would apply also to the West Moreton field. I know many miners there and I do not believe that they wanted to strike. They want to produce all the coal they can for Swanbank and to keep going. The Minister gave them excellent guarantees for the future. They must accept that they will eventually be phased out.

Mr. Marginson: Those guarantees were a bit late coming.

Mr. GUNN: That is a whole lot of rubbish. The Minister gave them guarantees early in the piece. They knew full well that they would be gradually phased out. But that would not be the end of coal production in West Moreton. Coal is still an exportable commodity that is wanted all over the world. I understand that the ash content of West Moreton coal is much lower than Tarong coal. Tarong coal would have to be washed. I am not really conversant with the ash content of West Moreton coal but I would say that it would be lower than Tarong coal. In addition, West Moreton is very close to the seaboard for the exportation of its coal. At that time there were some scare tactics that were not necessary at all. Whilst it was probably good television viewing, a lot of it was unnecessary and many people suffered. I hope that we never see a repetition of the problem and that the West Moreton miners will produce all the coal that is necessary for the Swanbank Power House. They will be producing coal for many years.

It was a sad situation that we had to bring very expensive coal from Blackwater to the Swanbank Power House when the mines in Ipswich and Rosewood in the West Moreton area were able to produce enough coal for Swanbank. We had to burn diesel oil in the boilers when we had an area such as West Moreton with its reputation for coal production.

Mr. Marginson: Don't you agree that they had enough coal before the Box Flat disaster and the floods?

Mr. GUNN: The honourable member must accept that there is always a certain danger in deep mining. It is a dangerous occupation. We have always acknowledged this. We have lived in the West Moreton area for all of our lives and we know of the sad situations that have occurred there. We have also seen floods there. Of course, what happened at Box Flat was a disaster. What happened at Kiangra was also a disaster. We have not as yet completely mastered these problems. We take safety precautions but just look at the history of those fields. Of course they are brave men who go down the mines.

Over the years there have been disasters in the Ipswich field. Some of them have been small, but they have all been disasters. Whilst

it is unfortunate that Box Flat suffered as it did and that all the other areas were flooded, we have to face the fact that those things happened.

At that time a proposition was put forward that the Government should spend millions of dollars to open up more mines. The Government could not be expected to do that, particularly when we have areas such as Tarong where open-cut mining is practised. I forget what the tenders were at that time but I have an idea the prices were a little over \$3 a tonne for open-cut coal as against \$9 or \$10 a tonne for coal from the deep mines at West Moreton. I think that the Government has been very generous and fair to the West Moreton field. I do not want to see it close down, but we as a Government are honour bound to supply electricity at the very cheapest price to the people of Queensland. This is absolutely necessary if industry is to be encouraged to this State.

In my area people are starting to think twice before installing electric pumping plants because electricity is becoming very expensive. We hope that when the powerhouse at Gladstone begins operating, prices will level out. But if wages keep increasing and the cost of generation continues to increase, electricity will price itself off the market. It is imperative that the Electricity Supply Department so manages its affairs that it buys the cheapest coal available.

I hope that officers of that department will not be deterred by threats of strikes in the meantime. I hope that they will go ahead in the next seven or eight years and announce the building of a power station at Tarong. I hope that they will ignore unions that have threatened not to handle machinery for that area. That surely is the silliest situation that I have ever heard of. A worker in that area is just as important as one in Ipswich. People in the Tarong area are just as entitled to work as those down here, and if workers took jobs there they would find that they had just as good a life as they would have if they remained where they are. They would be just as happy if they went to Tarong, and that is about all there is to it.

As a matter of fact, many Ipswich miners have told me that they would be prepared to go and work in a much safer area. I know that many miners, particularly those who are middle-aged, love underground mining, and it would probably be hard to get them to shift. However, many younger people would be quite prepared to go into the Tarong region. The older miners do not seem to worry about danger—they have lived with it and stood it for so many years—but the younger miners would be prepared to go to the open-cut mine.

Actually, there are quite wonderful jobs in open-cut mining. Most of it is done by machinery, and there is not a great deal of manual work involved. I have seen the drag-lines working. I think the average wage is about \$250 a week, if I remember rightly.

The cost of board and lodgings was \$10 a week, and the conditions and food provided were much better than those enjoyed by honourable members in this Parliament House. There is no doubt about that.

(Time expired.)

Mr. BERTONI (Mt. Isa) (5.14 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Mines and Energy Estimates, I should like in the first place to pay a tribute to the Minister for the way in which he organises and runs his department. It is indeed an honour to serve on the mines and energy committee. On behalf of my constituents, I should like to pay a tribute also to the Under Secretary of the Mines Department, Mr. Kevin Healy. The people of my area recognise his contribution to the mining industry, and before my time as a member of this Assembly they named a suburb after him as a tribute to the wonderful work that he has done for mining. I should also like to pay a tribute to the other departmental heads.

The Mines Department is indeed one of the most exciting Government departments. We all realise the excitement that is caused by the discovery of new energy fields. But, following that, problems arise in creating an infrastructure, finding housing for employees and providing financial assistance to the company concerned. We saw this recently when Government assistance was given to Queensland Phosphate Limited. Such assistance is necessary to get projects off the ground, together with co-ordination by and co-operation with Government departments.

Today the honourable member for Port Curtis paid a glowing tribute to the benefits of the Federal Labor Government's policy.

Mr. Marginson: He spoke very well, too.

Mr. BERTONI: He spoke quite well; I must admit he is a good speaker. However, what he did fail to explain was why the stocks of the mining industry are so low at the present time. He forgot to mention that exploration is almost non-existent, that profitability of mines is decreasing every day and that the industry is being over-taxed, thus removing incentives. If he is willing to attribute that to Mr. Connor's policies, then he is a very learned man. I am sure the honourable member for Port Curtis will admit that the whole mining industry is in a quandary because of indecision in the Federal sphere. We all realise that mining is a long-term project. For that reason people must know where they are going in the years to come, and any indecision on the part of either the State or the Federal Government certainly sends a ripple through the mining industry.

I must also express my concern at the continuing attitude of certain parties that most mining companies are multi-national, money-grabbing thieves, and that they all send their profits overseas. What they seem

to forget is that it is those mining companies which provide employment and prosperity for our great State, and but for their being able to obtain finance overseas a lot of projects would not get off the ground. I dare to say that the development of Gladstone would not have occurred if overseas money had not come into the area to turn Gladstone into the great city that it is. No doubt this is due in no small part to Utah, the company that was attacked so vehemently by the honourable member. But for that company I do not think there would be very much coal-mining in the Bowen Basin.

There are certain items in the Estimates of the Department of Mines to which I should like to draw the Minister's attention. They concern assistance to industry. In particular I am concerned about items that appear in the Estimates under the headings of "Drilling Programme", "Grants and Loans to Prospectors", "Gold Mining Encouragement Fund" and "Metalliferous Mining Fund". I believe that, collectively, those four items could conceivably be described as being for the encouragement and expansion of the mining industry in this State.

I will deal first with the item "Drilling Programme". During the year 1974-75 the Mines Department expended some \$2,238,000 on drilling in this State. The estimated expenditure for the current year is about \$2,780,000. Undoubtedly the major proportion of that money has been spent on drilling for coal. As was indicated by the Minister, coal has certainly been discovered. It is pleasing to see that coal has been discovered in the Pentland area and, as was indicated by the Minister, that will be most beneficial to industry in the North West. However, it appears that the only area in which metals were discovered was at Warwick. I am disappointed that no drilling has been carried out by the Mines Department in the north-western areas of the State. I may be incorrect in saying that, but there do not appear to be any results from that area.

Apart from coal discoveries, the results of the drilling programme appear to be very poor. After the change of Government in the Federal sphere, perhaps it would be beneficial to again offer incentives to private enterprise to develop and implement drilling programmes. Of course, drilling programmes involve high-risk expenditure and, even though the Minister has indicated that such programmes are essential for the development of the State, one might well wonder whether the Government has gone too far with some of them.

Under the heading "Grants and Loans to Prospectors, Etc.", I should like information from the Minister for Mines and Energy as to how much of the \$34,000 spent last year was of direct benefit to prospectors. It is my understanding that prospectors are people who go out and search for mineral and energy deposits. There is

an asterisk against this item in the Estimates, and I am advised that some of the money has been spent on roads and bridges to mining fields. I question the worth of the roads and bridges constructed during the past 12 months and those planned for the current year under this heading. Of what benefit were they to the prospectors? Although the encouragement of prospectors could be beneficial both to the State and to the minerals and energy industry, I am somewhat concerned about the effectiveness of this expenditure. As far as I know, the mining industry is the only industry that has to meet the cost of construction of roads and bridges giving access to mines. No other industry has to finance the infrastructure needed for its operations.

Under the Gold Mining Encouragement Fund, \$3,400 was allocated for 1974-75. The Estimates show that none of that money was actually spent. This year, another \$3,400 has been allocated. The price of gold is at a record high level at the moment, and it seems to me that the revenue of the State would benefit greatly if this precious metal could be discovered in Queensland. I should like to know what plans the Department of Mines has to encourage the discovery of gold in the future.

I also take this opportunity to ask the Minister about the reasons for closing the Venus gold battery at Charters Towers. I might also ask whether it would be possible to use some of the money from the Gold Mining Encouragement Fund to improve the gold assaying facilities at the Government Assay Office, Cloncurry. If it could be used for that purpose, I think it would give positive encouragement to people to search for gold.

Under the Metalliferous Mining Fund, \$17,878 was allocated for 1974-75. For 1975-76, \$15,500 has been requested. I should be pleased to hear from the Minister the reasons for that fund, why the money was not spent last year, and what is planned for the current year. I have no doubt that the expenditure under these hearings was well intentioned.

The Government should do everything possible to encourage the continued growth of our mineral and mining industries. I question whether we are achieving the best results at the present time. In spite of the vast mineral wealth that lies untapped in North-west Queensland, a number of once-profitable mines are, for the want of Government understanding, closing down. I suggest it is far more beneficial to the State to assist the mines in North-west Queensland so that they may remain in operation and provide employment, thereby assisting in decentralisation, than to spend vast sums of money on high-risk exploration ventures in South-east Queensland.

I remind the Minister of the policy of the present Federal Government. Doug Anthony has often stated his opposition to the involvement of Government in exploration. He also

recognises the need for the development of a small mining industry in Australia. The Federal Government should do all it can to assist the small mines in my area. A large number of them are closing down under the tremendous pressure exerted on them in today's economic climate. The recent rail freight increase of 40 per cent has only accentuated the problems confronting the small miners—the gougers, as we know them. These excess charges will force a lot of the small mines to close.

I suggest that the setting up of a small mines encouragement fund would be a positive step towards assisting small mines to remain in operation. We realise that large mines are essential to the economy of the State, but we must not lose sight of the fact that the small mine operators were the people who discovered what are now the bigger mines. If we remove the gougers from our mining fields, we will be left only with the bigger mines, and I do not think this would be beneficial to the industry as a whole.

I turn now to the rope-testing facilities that are available in Queensland. In Mt. Isa two systems are used. One is the electric field system, in which a wire rope is passed over an electric field, which transmits a "bleep" if a defect is found in the rope. I am led to believe that a wire rope could contain as many as 100 breaks and yet still be considered safe.

The system entails winding the rope over a large winder, known as the multi-rope friction winder, in one continuous loop. The rope revolves around the drum, which has special threads on it, and the friction between the drum and the rope motivates the rope down on the shafts. The old-type system is the coil system, where the rope is wound around a coil drum. I think the law in this State stipulates that each year a 6 ft. length of rope must be taken out and sent to the responsible Government department for testing. This is a necessary safety measure. However, it means that in order to allow for the lengths of rope that are taken out, a mine operator must purchase an additional 60 to 80 ft. of rope.

I am led to believe that recently the Charters Towers rope-testing station was closed down and that rope must be sent to New South Wales for testing. The Minister has not yet responded to my inquiries seeking advice on this matter.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! The Chair is conscious of a continuing level of conversation in the Chamber which must be very disconcerting to the honourable member when making his speech. I ask honourable members to please desist.

Mr. BERTONI: If this is so, it is amazing that a State like Queensland, with such a large mining and energy industry, does not have a rope-testing facility. I ask the

Minister to see whether such a facility can be established in Queensland so that we may be self-sufficient in this field.

We all know that the Chief Inspector of Mines holds a very important position. His duties must certainly keep him very busy. Although we have three mines inspectors attached to the Mt. Isa area, we are concerned that the Chief Inspector has visited the area only once or twice in five years. That could be taken as a tribute to the efficiency of the mining operations in the North west—an indication that there is no need for him to visit. However, we would certainly like to see the chief inspector more frequently so that he may be available to discuss any problems that we have. He could also give his general opinion on the efficiency of our mines.

I note in the Estimates that provision is made for two assistants in the Government Assay Office at Cloncurry. I sincerely hope that, if the need arises, more assayers will be appointed in the Cloncurry area. I have often urged the Minister—he may not agree with me—to do something positive about Cloncurry, which was one of the first mining towns in the North West. There are numerous small mines surrounding Cloncurry. I have been told by mining consultants that we could develop a special type of operation which would permit ore from the small mines to go to Cloncurry for smelting. The consultants' reports indicate that the ore could be reduced to 99 per cent copper, and that Cloncurry could handle the different types of copper ore for which, I have been told, large smelters are required. I ask the Minister to investigate this matter again because Cloncurry is certainly in need of an industry. It seems to be foolish to ignore Cloncurry and send all ore to the city of Mt. Isa. I realise that the mine at Mt. Isa will be in production for hundreds of years to come and that it will take as much ore as the small producers can supply. However, at the same time, we certainly should not downgrade a small town like Cloncurry.

Mary Kathleen is again in production and, on what I have been told, uranium supplies will last for five to 10 years.

(Time expired.)

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (5.34 p.m.): I was very interested in the speeches made by other honourable members in this debate. In the light of the criticism of the A.L.P. Australian Government by the honourable member for Mt. Isa, it is a pity that he did not comment on the fact that when Mount Isa Mines was in its formative stages, and was facing grave financial difficulties, the State Labor Government of the day guaranteed it for something like £500,000. Admittedly that amount was repaid, but I am sure that the company remembers very clearly the guarantee.

Returning to the Estimates before the House, one has only to travel to Central Queensland to see the development and the advances that have taken place in the State as a result of the mining industry. As was stated by the honourable member for Mt. Isa, one can see that new towns have been established, thousands of jobs have been created and renewed impetus has been given to regional development and decentralisation in the State. If we add to those factors the expansion of the railway industry, the jobs that have been created, the additional work that is available for people in Queensland and the increase in population generally, it is easy to see just how valuable the mining industry is to our State.

It is unfortunate, however, that the benefit that we have received as a State is only minute compared with the millions of dollars that have been made by the overseas companies that unfortunately have a stranglehold on our mineral resources. It is no wonder that the previous Australian Minister for Energy (Mr. Connor) tried to do something to remedy the situation. As we say, he tried to buy back the farm.

We have a policy on this matter. It always pleases me that we can go to the people of any State or nation and say, "This is our policy." Unlike our opponents, we have had the courage to write it down. They are afraid to do that. It is Labor Party policy to eventually achieve and maintain full ownership of coal, oil, natural gas, uranium and all other fuel and energy resources of the nation. It is our policy to put the ownership of those into the hands of the Government on behalf of the Australian people.

We make no apology for that, especially when we see what the multi-national companies have done and how they have raped the resources of many countries in the world. No care has been given to the future needs of those countries. I doubt really whether they have much interest in the future needs of this country, except for the value of their profit. It seems that they accept only two obligations: firstly, to look after the interest of the shareholders, and, secondly, to meet the consumer needs of western society, which unfortunately is extremely greedy. The way in which we are consuming the world's resources, we are certainly not being fair to the other people in the world.

It is not my intention to dwell at great length on the action taken by the Australian Labor Government or Rex Connor. History will show that they were right and that what they tried to do was in the interests of the nation. But no-one could expect that the hold of the foreign interests would be released overnight. The realism of that has been recognised in the State A.L.P. policy on minerals and resources, which clearly states that a State Labor Government would require at least 15 per cent equity participation in any major developmental project involving mineral and energy resources.

It could be said that it is very difficult to encourage Australians to become involved in exploration, but the opportunity has been there. I know that the opportunity has been available to this Government. I give as an illustration the prime example of the Moura venture. Some years ago I was at a house with some friends who are very closely associated with the Thiess family. Being a member of the A.L.P. and a member of Parliament interested in the Central Queensland region, I took this fellow to task about the Thiess family—the family, not the company—allowing the Japanese and the Americans into the Moura venture. I made quite a point about it. I said that it should have been an Australian venture and they should have gone to Australians. He retorted, "It is all very well to say that, but we could not get Australian people to come in at the time. We just were not able to find Australian companies or individuals who were willing to risk money in Moura."

However, he then dropped the bombshell on me. The bombshell was that, as he told me, before they entered into the agreement with the Peabody Mitsui group, an approach was made to the Queensland Government under the then Premier, Mr. Nicklin, and the Mines Minister, who I think was the late Mr. Evans. They were asked to join in the venture. He went on to explain why they wanted it. He said that State participation would create some stability and would give the State tremendous income, help to develop Central Queensland and so on. He said, however, that the Queensland Government was not interested. He did not go into all the reasons why, but the point is that it was not interested. History shows that it did not go on with that venture.

The Government had the opportunity—the ideal opportunity, in fact—but it seems that it preferred to have the outside interests, the Peabody Mitsui group, come in and take over our coal resources. Today we see what has happened. Thiess has 22 per cent, the Peabody interests have 58 per cent and the Mitsui interests have 20 per cent.

It is interesting to note that under the new anti-trust laws of the United States, the Peabody group and its owners, Kennecott, are to sell all of their coal-mining interests both in Australia and elsewhere. So it seems that the very nation that has held our resources in its stranglehold has now brought down laws that may very well save us. The Australian Government has told Peabody before—and will maintain it after 13 December—that the Queensland interests are not to be sold as part of a world package but, instead, must be offered to a suitable Australian consortium.

As the honourable member for Port Curtis said, the Minister went to great pains in his opening address to denigrate the role of the Australian Government in the mining industry. Even though there are only 11 of

us in Opposition, it behoves us to place on record exactly what has happened. Let us put some facts down.

Government Members interjected.

Mr. WRIGHT: I know that this always upsets Government members. They do not like it. They try to yell us down and scream us down and take points of order to try to shut us up. They talk about the slump in the mining industry and how Queensland is supposed to have been affected adversely by it.

Since the A.L.P. came to office in Canberra, the price of Queensland coal has increased from \$A11.26 a tonne to \$A37 a tonne. In the past three years Queensland has emerged as the major exporter of coal. In 1975-76 it will export something like 17,500,000 tonnes compared with 13,000,000 from New South Wales. Queensland companies no longer have to compete with rival companies or even with other States, because they all have the benefit of a guaranteed market at full world prices.

Let me come back to what we have got out of it—the nitty-gritty, the purse aspect, the finance. The total revenue from coal exports in 1974-75 was \$A316,000,000 compared with \$A600,000,000 in 1975-76. The argument put forward that we have suffered is just not correct.

I expect the Minister to put up this argument. I do not deny what he has done. I do not deny what the Queensland Government has done for the mining industry and the way it has tried to foster it. I have never tried to take away the credit due to the Minister or people in the Mines Department or the mining industry. But what gets me is that no Government member is prepared to give any credit to anyone else. They have to get all of the boiled lollies—as if they were Grade 3 children. They put up their hands every time. They must get them and if there are any little black balls or aniseed balls, they must have them, too. They never share. They never give credit.

Honourable Members interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! Honourable members will desist entirely from cross-firing in the Chamber. I do not mind interjections, but I will not allow cross-firing.

Mr. WRIGHT: I could tell the story about Nat King Cole or Joe Louis but I had better not.

Mr. Frawley: Go back to the Commo blokes like you did yesterday.

Mr. WRIGHT: I will take the honourable member on because that is a blatant lie. I was very pleased when some of his National Party colleagues came up to me after he said that at question time. Those members said they were disgusted with what he tried to do. They saw me standing

on the balcony. They saw me simply standing there with some of the attendants. They were shocked that the honourable member for Murrumba would get up in this Chamber and, for no reason, tell a blatant lie. Now we know how much trust we can put in what he says. This is very typical of him. I do believe the stories of attacks that he has been making on Protestants in his electorate. We will be telling the people about that at the next election.

I now want to comment on another aspect—

Mr. Burns interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: I remind the Leader of the Opposition that it is the honourable member for Rockhampton who is making the speech.

Mr. BURNS: I rise to a point of order. Pull up the honourable member for Murrumba.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I have already done that. There is no point of order.

Mr. WRIGHT: The next aspect I want to deal with relates to the State policy of the A.L.P. on the promotion, research and use of solar energy. I was asked by some conservationists to look very carefully at this matter. My first thought was that we have a fair amount of coal and other energy resources in this State that should last some hundreds of years at least and therefore there was no real need for solar energy; but the argument has been well put to me that there are many valid reasons for looking into this question not only from an anti-pollution point of view but from the point of view of saving energy resources. We have a certain responsibility to this nation and to the world to try to preserve what we have and to formulate a policy that will ensure that future generations will have access to energy resources.

I learned that experiments with solar energy have been taking place all over the world. I noticed only the other day a report in a newspaper to the effect that soon an entire village in southern France will be solar heated. This will be the first of its kind in the world.

Mr. Moore: That has been going on for years.

Mr. WRIGHT: The honourable member for Windsor is known in this Chamber to have something to say on every subject. I do not mind that because I must admit that a lot of what he says is intelligent, and I know that he has a wide experience and background. But I suggest that he reads this article. He will find it in the library.

Mr. Moore: That's old hat.

Mr. WRIGHT: It had not been completed at the beginning of November. Perhaps it has been completed in the last few days. The honourable member may know.

An Opposition Member: He said this has been done for years.

Mr. WRIGHT: I think we have to accept that he just does not understand what is happening now.

Some other experiments are being carried out in America. I note that the powerful United States Energy Research and Development Administration, simply known as ERDA, has elevated solar energy from near the bottom of its list of priorities to the highest level. Scientists envisage that by the year 2000 the sun will be providing the United States with energy equivalent to that derived from 3,500,000 barrels of oil a day, which is 7 per cent of all that country's projected needs by that year.

It is now envisaged that by the year 2020 solar energy will provide 25 per cent of the energy resources of the United States. It will be seen how important these developments are to Australia. Whilst it may be said, "But you are talking about the year 2000", that is really only 25 years away. It is no more than a generation and a bit.

Similar experiments with solar energy are taking place in our own country. I quote from "The Australian Financial Review" of 21 January 1974—

"Research teams in Sydney and Brisbane have independently developed cheap organic substances capable of being mass produced in quantity, which convert the energy of sunshine into electricity.

"The discoveries by groups at the University of Queensland and the University of NSW open up the most promising path yet towards using the energy from the sun to replace fossil or nuclear fuel.

"Until the petroleum crisis, science regarded solar electricity as a distant but desirable dream.

"The Australian breakthroughs create the probability that these dreams will become real and certainly much quicker than the scientific world, governments and industry realise.

"The discoveries, although they still have to be developed considerably, could even rank higher in the technological history of mankind than the Bell Laboratories development of the transistor 20 years ago.

"The implications of cheap sources of solar electricity generation are staggering. They would inevitably create a new industrial revolution."

Another newspaper article of 23 July of this year headed, "Perth—solar city" begins—

"With fuel prices leaping and the world's natural resources depleting, Western Australians are moving into the solar age at a staggering rate.

"World solar energy experts acknowledge that WA is one of the leaders in this field. While many parts of the world are experimenting with all types of materials and gadgets to make the sun work for humanity, companies and individuals in the State have adopted a common sense approach and have made practical progress.

"Western Australia, and the population centre of Perth in particular, is perfectly situated to use solar energy. By the end of this year, more than 20,000 WA homes will get hot water from the sun."

Unlike the honourable member for Merthyr I do not mind mentioning that I am reading from articles. Time and time again he goes to the Parliamentary Library and gets all his information from Press cuttings and then comes into the Chamber and makes out it is his own idea. I am not prepared to do that.

Mr. LANE: I rise to a point of order. The remarks of the honourable member are not only untrue but they are offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn without equivocation.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! The honourable member for Merthyr has asked for a withdrawal of the remarks.

Mr. WRIGHT: I will have to accept what he says. It was good to get him to come into the debate.

Mr. Moore: You didn't withdraw.

Mr. WRIGHT: I have accepted what he says. Now, no doubt, we can take it that he has never used Press releases and has never asked for anything at all from the library. I will check on that later and perhaps I will have something else to say about it.

I want to point out the advantages to people in the home, especially when we remember that something like 20,000 homes in Perth are already using solar energy. I have another article here, again from the "Financial Review" about solar energy's huge industrial-heating potential. I will not go into that at any length—I have only a few minutes left—but again we can see the advantages. So whatever way we look at it, from the industrial point of view, from the domestic aspect and from saving and preserving our fossil fuels and nuclear fuels and so on, there is a very good case for further investigation into the potential of solar energy. Not only does it allow these other fuels to be used for other purposes but it also has an important non-pollutant aspect. So I suggest that the Minister for Mines and Energy should meet with the other Ministers involved—especially, in this instance, the Minister for Works and Housing. A special Government housing authority has just been created which will no doubt be building many homes for people who work for the State,

so surely we should be experimenting with and using solar energy in these Government-built homes. Surely this is the ideal type of experiment.

Mr. Lane: There is another advantage.

Mr. WRIGHT: Yes?

Mr. Lane: The sun does not go on strike.

Mr. WRIGHT: That is not as funny as the honourable member for Merthyr would think, because it does not matter how many days a year the sun shines. Whilst honourable members might laugh at their colleague, in fact the point he made is a valid one and in this field he is way ahead of them.

To get back to the point—Queensland should lead the way on this question, just as scientists from the University of Queensland have done in other fields. This Government needs to increase research in this field. It is the responsibility of all Governments now to take it upon themselves to undertake this research because it is a vital responsibility. We are 25 years away from the year 2000 and we have the oil crisis with blackmail from the Arab nations. It has been blackmail because the price of fuel has gone so high and we know what that has done to the cost of living in this nation. We know that in fact it was the main catalyst in creating inflation in the Western World because it increased the cost of production in the major manufacturing nations such as Japan and the United States. The increased cost of fuel was the main cause of the rise in the inflation rate.

If we are going to face a fuel shortage in 10 years' time, then surely we need an alternative. I suggest the alternative is solar energy and that we are in an ideal position, because of the size and geographical location of our State, to experiment further, and there is no better way to experiment than to use this system in Government-built homes.

Mr. FRAWLEY (Murrumba) (5.54 p.m.): I am very pleased I had the opportunity to be here today to listen to the speeches of the honourable members for Port Curtis and Rockhampton, because if ever I heard utter tripe spoken it was by those two members.

The honourable member for Rockhampton spoke of the A.L.P. policy on mining. Labor want to take over all mining. They want to take over everything! We know what happened when they had their finger in the mining pie many years ago. What about the Mungana scandal when thousands of dollars of Queenslanders' money disappeared into A.L.P. pockets? There is no doubt about that. We saw the honourable member for Rockhampton rise today and espouse some more of his Communist philosophy of wanting to socialise the mining industry. And what has the A.L.P. done? While Connor, "The Strangler", was in power he did

everything possible to strangle the mining industry not only in this State but all over Australia.

Anything that the A.L.P. takes over, it ruins. We had evidence years ago of many ventures besides mining that the A.L.P. took over. What happened? They were a failure. Nothing the A.L.P. has taken over has ever been a success. Even when the A.L.P. was in Government in this State, it was a rotten Government because of the way it carried on.

The honourable member for Port Curtis spent a great deal of his time attempting to convince the Committee of something that he did not even believe himself—that is, that the Premier was wrong in the attitude he adopted towards the sale of Queensland coal by trying to do a deal on beef sales. There was nothing wrong with what the Premier did. In fact, he did exactly the right thing for this State.

The honourable member for Port Curtis certainly carried a brief for the former Minister for Minerals and Energy, Mr. Connor. He had to do something to try to bolster Mr. Connor's image. In fact, when one considers carefully some of the claims made by Mr. Connor about the mining industry and his desire to obtain \$4,000 million to buy back the mining interests of Australia that had allegedly been given to overseas investors, one can understand just what a crook he really was. There is no doubt that much of the money from those loans would not have been used to purchase mining ventures in this country. It was to be borrowed under the guise of buying back the farm, but in fact it was to be used by the Whitlam Government to carry on when it could not get Supply. A fair bit of the commission on that loan was not going into the pockets of Khemlani; it was going to disappear into the pockets of members of the Labor Party—Whitlam and his cohorts—who were going to get their fingers into the pie.

Mr. Alison interjected.

Mr. FRAWLEY: They were the biggest bunch of crooks that this country has ever had the misfortune to have foisted on it. I sincerely hope that on 13 December the people have enough sense to throw them out.

Now I wish to speak about something very important pertaining to the Minister's department—applications for mining leases in my electorate. Recently, five applications have been made for mining leases in the House Mountain Range area between the headwaters of the South Pine River and Cedar Creek, which is in the electorate of Murrumba and mostly in the Samford Valley. These mining lease applications were taken out by a company known as Warcam Minerals Pty. Ltd. It was first registered in New South Wales, and on 13 September, in this Chamber, I asked the Minister for Mines and Energy whether he had any knowledge of that company, how many

applications for mining leases had been taken out in the Samford, Highvale, Cedar Creek, Mount Nebo, Closeburn and Samsonvale areas and what minerals were being sought by the company. I also asked him would he have an investigation made into the company to see that it was a genuine mining company, not a dummy company. When I received the answers to my questions, I found that I could not trace the principals of the company because the subscribers to it were a couple of chartered accountants, and a couple of solicitors were acting as secretaries.

At least 12 people, plus A.P.M. Forests Pty. Ltd., have been affected. One of the applications for a mining lease is for an area on the Petrie-Dayboro road, in the Parish of Whiteside, and it affects A.P.M. and a couple of other people.

The interesting thing about these applications is that it was stated on them that the company was interested in gold, lead, zinc, copper, felspar, silica and serpentine. I have checked and found that about 60 per cent of the outer 15 kilometres of the earth's crust is composed of felspar, which is quite a common material.

The methods used by this company were certainly highly questionable. One of the people who owned land at Closeburn found surveyors on her property going about their work of surveying for an application for a mining lease. They were there without her permission. They had asked the permission of some property owners, but in most instances they just went onto properties and carried out the survey without having the decency to inform the owners what they were doing. It is a shocking state of affairs when surveyors can enter a property and carry out a survey, especially in connection with an application for a mining lease, without notifying the owner. That is a sneaky and underhand way of doing things, and it leads people to believe that the company involved wanted to keep its dealings secret. Even though it had made applications to the Mines Department, it still did not want very many people in the Samford Valley to know that it was endeavouring to obtain mining leases over certain areas in that valley.

To date—and I checked as late as this morning with some of the owners—no approach has been made to the owners of the properties in the Samford Valley and Cedar Creek areas by the agents or principals of this company, and, of course, the matter has yet to come before the mining warden.

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

Mr. FRAWLEY: Before the dinner recess I was discussing the applications for mining leases in the Samford Valley.

A Government Member: They're a rort.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I think they are. Before the applications are heard in the Mining Warden's Court, all the owners must be

notified in writing by the applicants for the leases. I and many of the people over whose properties these applications for leases have been made believe that the applications are merely a blind and that their real purpose is to tie up the land in the hope that the owners will sell to unscrupulous purchasers who, in turn, will later subdivide it. In fact, one applicant for a subdivision in the area is being blamed for doing this, but I must say that my investigations reveal that he is totally innocent. He is being unfairly blamed for something that is beyond his control.

I believe that a mining lease, if granted, can extend for a term of 21 years, so the chances of selling a property over which a mining lease is granted would certainly be remote and the value of that land would be depreciated. Naturally, of course, the local authority would not reduce its rates.

I am not entirely conversant with the Mining Act, but I hope that it imposes a time limit on the period that may elapse between the date of application and the date of hearing of that application and objections to it in the Mining Warden's Court. I think a reasonable time limit would be 90 days.

Fortunately, every application for a mining lease must be considered by the mining warden. This gives the property owners the opportunity of appearing before the court and of voicing their objections to the applications. I hope that, when the six applications concerning the Samford Valley are considered and before they are granted, the applicant, Warcam Minerals Pty. Ltd., will be required to carry out an environmental impact study into the effect of mining in the Samford Valley. I believe that the results of such a study would show that mining would have a detrimental effect on the ecology of the Samford Valley.

Samford is presently a quiet farming community with a fair amount of residential development scattered over a fairly wide area. Many people have moved out to Samford, about 13 miles from Brisbane, to enjoy the peace and quiet of the area. Its environment is such that it would be adversely affected by mining or, for that matter, any other industry. The valley should remain as a peaceful residential area.

The property owners have not yet been notified by the applicants of the intention to apply for a lease. They have not even been consulted since the day they discovered surveyors on their properties. As recently as this morning I checked as to whether or not they had been contacted, and I know that they have not been. I do not blame the Mines Department for this—it has nothing to do with the department—but I do blame the applicants, whose business it is to notify the landholders. When they do so, I intend calling a public meeting at Samford in the hope that a petition can be drawn up or, alternatively, as many of the local

people as possible will voice their objections to the Minister, asking him to reject the applications.

Mr. Hanson: The Minister has the final say, so you'd better keep in sweet with him.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I know he has the final say; but I don't have to keep in sweet with any Minister. I stand on my own two feet; I don't crawl to anyone.

Mr. Hanson: You can't even make a speech without having interjections.

Mr. FRAWLEY: Oh, shut up. I can make a speech at any time without interjections. Don't get on to me tonight; I'm in the mood to take anybody on.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Miller): Order!

Mr. FRAWLEY: Ministers have always treated me fairly, just as they treat all other members fairly.

A Government Member: Including the Opposition.

Mr. FRAWLEY: Yes, and the Ministers have given the Opposition much better treatment than that given by the Labor Party, when it was in power, to the members who were then in Opposition. I can remember that the member for Townsville South was unable to obtain a bed in "The Lodge" when the A.L.P. was in power, and the Leader of the Opposition, Sir Francis Nicklin, could not even obtain an official car. At that time 12 Country Party members shared one room, below this Chamber, and had the use of only one telephone between them. Back-benchers received absolutely nothing under the Labor Government.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member will come back to the Estimates under debate.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I am sorry, Mr. Miller. Once again I was distracted by A.L.P. members. Of course, they are terrified. They know that if they can waste my time by interjecting they will stop me from dealing with important matters.

As I was saying, I approached the Minister about these applications for leases in the Samford Valley, and he was good enough to write to me enclosing a report from the Government Geologist. I do not intend reading the whole report. I don't read my speeches like a Trades Hall parrot. I shall read the pertinent part, which is in these terms—

"There are no mineral occurrences of any kind that are known to the Department of Mines within the areas of the lease applications."

There is no evidence that serpentine, one of these minerals applied for, exists anywhere in these areas. An authority to

prospect was granted in 1969 to a firm whose name I do not intend to mention. It has nothing to do with these applications. The firm carried out sampling of the sediment in streams and the headwaters of Cedar Creek and the South Pine River. It found a certain amount of anomalous zinc of a low order. It is possible that the applicants may be following up some of the original surveys.

The other area farther down the Dayboro-Petrie road contains nothing of value. From the information I have received, it appears that there are no minerals of any significance. That makes the purpose of these applications for mining leases suspect. I sincerely hope that the Minister gives proper consideration to these applications when they come before the Mining Warden's Court.

In 1974-75 there was a total of 264 electrical accidents in Queensland, 16 of which were fatal. It is interesting to note that seven of the 16 fatal accidents—a couple of which involved children—occurred when people were barefooted. Even today, with all our technical expertise, electrical accidents still occur. Most electrical accidents in the home are caused by amateur electricians. As a certified electrician, I can speak with some authority on this subject. Too many people carry out repairs on electrical cords and appliances at home. They do so mainly because of the high cost of employing electrical tradesmen. Too many people repair flexible cords with a knife and a screwdriver. And they even repair them when they are plugged into a power point. I have known amateur electricians or householders to rewire houses. Instead of placing a switch on the live wire, they put it on the neutral wire, with the result that anything that is plugged in or is hanging from a cord—such as the lights above us—has a live wire at all times. This is one way in which many accidents occur.

I have referred only to the reported accidents. Many people do not report accidents, feeling that they are not sufficiently important. I cannot stress too strongly the danger to children of these little repair jobs. On one occasion I saw under a house a tough rubber-wire cable running along a beam which had a sling over it. The man of the house was an amateur mechanic who used the sling to lift motors from cars. Eventually the sling wore through the coating. That livened the sling which, in turn, livened the motor and the man received an electrical shock. The human element is usually involved in electrical accidents. If people were more conscious of the danger of interfering with electricity, there would be fewer accidents. Many people are capable of changing a fuse. Probably every honourable member has done so. Even women change fuses.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: You fixed up a lift when a strike was on.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I recall that the honourable member for Windsor and I were accused of working on the lift in Parliament House when a strike was on.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: You scabbed.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I shall not take objection to that. Anyone has only to look at the honourable member for Archerfield and me to see who the scab would be.

A Government Member: He has just arrived in the Chamber hasn't he?

Mr. FRAWLEY: He has been to a Communist meeting inciting the Communists, like his mate the honourable member for Rockhampton did yesterday. When the Communists stood outside the gate, he went outside to meet them. I did not hear him speak to them outside the gate, but I understand—

Mr. WRIGHT: I rise to a point of order. I bring to your notice, Mr. Miller, the fact that the Speaker ruled on this matter this morning. It is a reflection on the Speaker and myself for the member for Murrumbidgee to repeat that accusation. It is untrue as I stated this morning, and the Speaker backed me up in his statement. I ask that the honourable member withdraw it.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Miller): Order! The honourable member for Rockhampton has asked for a withdrawal of that statement. I therefore ask the honourable member to withdraw it.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I do. In fact, I must apologise for what I said this morning. It was only later that I found out that the member for Rockhampton spoke in sign language to them. I did not realise that.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the honourable member to return to the Estimates being debated.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I wish to comment shortly on the investigations being carried out at the Rocksberg area, in Upper Caboolture, on the feasibility of establishing a storage hydro-electric plant of 1,000 MW. It would be quite possible to build a dam across the river at Upper Caboolture at Rocksberg as a holding pond, to pump water up to Ocean View and then to run the water down through a small hydro-electric set.

I have been asked by many people in the area who have heard rumours about this whether the scheme is a goer. They have probably seen people up there carrying out investigations. There is no secret about the fact that it could be used in the 1980s. Naturally, some properties will be inundated by the waters of any dam that is put across the Caboolture River. I do think, in all fairness to those people who will be affected—I do not think they will object to it—that I should say they will be quite happy to have their properties used for this

purpose. Of course, they will want compensation—and in all fairness to them, they should be notified as soon as possible whether this proposal looks like coming to reality in the future—even in the 1980s. I think it is important to let people know. A few young people have properties up there on which they run cattle. It will not affect the pineapple or banana farmers, I know, because they are not in the low areas that will be affected by the waters of the dam. It seems to me to be reasonable for the department to notify anybody as soon as possible if the resumption of properties is contemplated.

Mr. Gunn: It would have an effect on the sale of the property.

Mr. FRAWLEY: Yes. It would affect the sale of the property right now. I repeat that there is no secret about the fact that a dam could be put across the river up there and certain areas of land would have to be resumed. I do not know anybody up there who wants to sell his property at the present time. If they did, they would find that the resale value would be affected. I hope the department takes some notice of that.

In conclusion, I congratulate the Minister. He has been a fairly good Minister since I entered this Parliament.

Mr. Wright: Only fairly good? That's not much of a rap-up, you know.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I do not have to crawl to the Ministers. They know where I stand. I treat them properly and they treat me reasonably well.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: They think you're a ratbag.

Mr. FRAWLEY: That is possible. It is a matter of opinion who is a ratbag, but I know who is the big useless Trades Hall parrot who gets up here and mouths speeches for his masters daily.

I congratulate the Minister and his staff on carrying out their duties. I am certain that he will be here for a long time to come.

Mr. ALISON (Maryborough) (7.28 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Estimates under the control of the Minister for Mines and Energy, firstly I congratulate the Minister on what he has contributed to the economy of this State not only over the last year but also for the last few years. He has guided the destiny of the State in mineral development. Of course, mineral development has resulted in untold benefits right throughout the State—not just round the coal-mines, sand-mining or whatever. Throughout the State there have been benefits to everybody in the community, across the board. It has been due to the development, guide-lines and management by this Government—and in particular the Minister for Mines and Energy. Over the last three years we have certainly had a slight set-back, or at least we have not had the development that we

should have had. The Minister has made that point. I do not intend to labour it. No doubt we will hear more about it.

However, I do wish to make a few comments on a matter that has a great effect on the economy and well-being of my electorate. I refer of course to the sand-mining on Fraser Island. Three companies are involved. Queensland Titanium Mines has been mining on Fraser Island for something like three years. It will finish its operations—work out its mines—over the next two or three years. The Q.T.M. activities are centred on Tin Can Bay and Gympie. The other two companies—Dillingham, which is a Honolulu-based company, and Murphyores, which is 99 per cent Australian owned—have formed a partnership and work leases, as I understand it, owned mainly by Murphyores. The Dillingham-Murphyores partnership owns considerably more area than Q.T.M. under mining leases. It is estimated it will mine for something like 15 to 20 years. It commenced mining earlier this year.

At present, something like 190 workers are engaged in the sand-mining industry under the control of D-M. Its activities are centred at Maryborough. When it really gets into stride it will employ in excess of 200 workers—30 or 40 workers at the dry mill in Maryborough with the remainder engaged in mining activities on the island.

The mining is done on the ocean side of the island. The mineral is then taken across the island by truck and is dropped into a barge, taken across the straits and up the river to Maryborough, where it is handled by the dry-milling plant.

This new industry is of tremendous importance to my electorate. It has helped to make up for the loss of the shipyards, which were closed last year. That is a very sorry tale, too. If Mr. Charlie Jones, the former Minister for Transport, and his Federal A.L.P. Government had kept their promises, the shipyards would not have been closed down. Maryborough people are well aware of this. It is to the eternal shame of the A.L.P. that the word of Mr. Jones as an A.L.P. Minister was not worth a fag-end, and he proved that. Having lost the shipyards, we now have the sand-mining industry. It has rejuvenated the city. It has been a terrific shot in the arm and has boosted morale. We are very grateful for it.

There is a great amount of misconception about how much of the island will be mined and how much is held under mining lease. A good deal of this has come about through lies—and I use the word “lies” advisedly—and misrepresentations by various people who, for their own devious purposes, have set out to distort the issue.

The total area of the island is approximately 160,000 ha. The mining-lease applications cover only 10 per cent of the total area—a little over 16,000 ha. Mining leases

have been granted over only 12,800 ha, but the total area covered by mining-lease applications is 10 per cent.

It is a favourite trick of the so-called conservationists or preservationists to have a map of Fraser Island with the mining-lease areas blacked in, with a suitable caption such as “The rape of Fraser Island” or “We must stop this beautiful island from being sunk in Hervey Bay.” The inference to be drawn is that the total area of these mining leases is to be mined.

That is utter garbage for the good reason that the mining companies are not mad. Let us face it; they are there to make a dollar and they will not mine anywhere other than where they are permitted to mine and where the ore has been proven. There will be only a little over 1 per cent of the total island surface mined over the next 15 to 20 years by the two businesses Q.T.M., and D-M. I think that that puts the matter into the correct perspective.

Unfortunately, the attitude has been engendered in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and some other areas that there is a stack of bulldozers at one end of the island ready to tear through it and that someone will pull the plug out of the island and it will never be seen again. That is not correct.

At a public meeting in Maryborough a group was formed. Through the hard work of its members and the support of the public in Maryborough an endeavour will be made to correct these erroneous ideas. Later, I will make a few comments about the Fraser Island and Maryborough Citizens Action Group.

We in Maryborough have no doubt that we can enjoy the benefits of the sand-mining industry and retain our beautiful island in its natural state with only minor disturbance of a temporary nature under the wise management and stringent controls imposed by the Department of Mines. I have somewhere among my papers about six or eight pages of lease conditions imposed by the State Government to ensure that rehabilitation and revegetation are carried out so that in due course anyone returning to the island would not be aware that it had been mined.

This has been done in other areas. I am not saying that the sand miners have always done the right thing. Certainly in some areas they have done the wrong thing, but by dint of public pressure, and because the Government has become alive to what must be done, they are now doing the right thing, whether they want to or not. What the sand-mining companies have done, and are continuing to do, in rehabilitation and revegetation on Fraser Island is quite remarkable.

There is a considerable amount of misconception about sand-mining on Fraser Island. One often sees through the news media pictures of rain forest, coloured sands, lakes and other natural beauty spots, with the inference that all of those areas will

be mined. That is utter garbage and twaddle, but some sections of the news media can be blamed for producing this type of misconception. No mining will in fact take place through any lakes, rain forest, coloured sands or creeks. The conditions imposed by the Queensland Government require a stand-off distance of one-third of a mile from all lakes.

The lease agreement that I picked up (which is now in operation) provides, for instance, that the stripping of vegetation is restricted to 20 chains ahead of the mining operation. The removal of topsoil and grass is restricted to 10 chains ahead of the mining operation. Topsoil to a depth of 12 inches must be removed and stored for re-use after mining. The mined area must be back-filled and graded to conform to the surface of the adjoining land, and be graded in such a manner that the surface or slopes will not exceed an angle of 20° from the horizontal. That gives some idea of the conditions imposed by the State Mines Department.

The attitude of the Maryborough people to sand-mining is very clear. There has never been an issue in Maryborough while I have been living there on which one could be more definite. Ninety-five per cent of the Maryborough people are in favour of sand-mining because they know that, when it is subject to strict Government control, they can have the benefit of it and still retain the beauty of their island. It is as simple as that.

I say here, as I have said elsewhere, that the people of the Maryborough district know more about Fraser Island, its problems, the dangers to it, and what has been done to ensure its protection, than any other people in Australia. Certainly they know much more about the island than some of the academic rat-bags from Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra who, like peewees, fly in, make a mess and fly out again. They make a two-day visit, and they have all the answers. Before they came, I do not think they even knew where the island was. If I seem a little annoyed, I am doing no more than expressing sincerely the attitude of the Maryborough people. We are fed up to the back teeth with these people who fly in, make trouble and fly out again.

We do not want the island damaged at all. It would be quite ridiculous to allow it to be damaged, because the people of the Maryborough district have been taking timber from Fraser Island for 100 years, under the guidance and strict control of the State Forestry Department. We realise what forestry operations on Fraser Island have meant to our district. No-one in Maryborough in his right mind would want to see the island damaged, or even run the risk of damaging it.

The attitude of the Maryborough people to sand-mining has been made very clear at two public meetings. In July of last

year a public meeting was called by the mayor to give the people of Maryborough a chance to express their views on a ban proposed by certain unions on sand-mining activities on Fraser Island. There were 500 people at that meeting and they expressed their viewpoint in no uncertain manner. There was a resolution passed. I will not bore honourable members with the details, but it was to the effect that the people of Maryborough resented this proposed ban. A copy of the resolution was sent off to the various people concerned; the trade union leaders, Governments and so on.

A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since July and I certainly do not have the time to go into all the details. As a result of the activities of these conservationists or preservationists—whatever we like to call them—it was necessary to call another public meeting in June this year to give the people of Maryborough another chance to express their viewpoint, because nobody from the South seemed to give a damn about their viewpoint against the campaign that was being whipped up largely by this Fraser Island Defence Organisation and the Australian Conservation Foundation and other people, some well meaning but mostly misguided. There was a remarkable roll-up of at least 1,500 people. Maryborough is not a big city; it has a population of 20,000. My guess is that there were nearly 1,700 people at this meeting but a conservative estimate would be 1,500 people.

One is doing very well if one can get a few hundred people to a public meeting in Maryborough. One practically has to run a bus to get them to some meetings, but this attendance, I think, indicates the real feeling of the people of Maryborough, the people who know more about what makes Fraser Island tick than anybody else in Australia.

Let me now spend just a few minutes talking about this mischievous little group, the Fraser Island Defence Organisation. This is a conservation group which was formed some years ago and has virtually no support in Maryborough and district. It is propped up and kept going by this vocal gentleman Mr. John Sinclair, who happens to be an Adult Education Officer in Maryborough. He seems to have the time to spend on his various activities in this conservation group. He came out in the Press a couple of months ago—I am damned if I know why; it shows he is a bit unbalanced, I think—and he admitted that this F.I.D.O., this noisy group which has pretended for years to speak on behalf of the people of Maryborough, had 27 members in Maryborough. If I had been him, in all fairness and retaining my right senses, I certainly would not have admitted it, but I am pleased he did because it supported our claim that he did not represent the people of Maryborough.

We realised he had practically no support, and here this gentleman admits he has 27 members in Maryborough out of a population of 20,000. He admits they have 42 members

in Hervey Bay out of a population of 8,000. The rest of his 500 members are scattered around Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and, I suppose, as far away as Western Australia. What the hell these people know about Fraser Island, I wouldn't have a clue.

Again I do not want to give the impression that I am rubbishing all people who call themselves conservationists. Far from it. But unfortunately we hear more from the radical extreme of the conservation groups.

When I use the term "conservationists", I am talking about the rat-bag element, the fringe element, the radicals who are talking more about preservation than conservation or balance. F.I.D.O. has done far-reaching damage to the image of the city and district. It is going to take us years to rectify the situation. I readily admit that the representatives of the people of Maryborough and district, including me, have fallen down on the job in that we were not a wake-up to what this gentleman and his hard-working little band were up to. They have been working like beavers over the years, talking to the people who count in Canberra, in the Federal Government, in Sydney and Melbourne—

Mr. Jensen: Getting money to fight their case, too.

Mr. ALISON: That is correct, Mr. Jensen; thank you. They have been getting Federal money to fight their case, taxpayers' money to knock the people of Maryborough. However, the position is being rectified and I will be offering a few comments, hopefully, on the Fraser Island-Maryborough Citizens' Action Group, of which I have the honour to be vice-chairman. The mainstay of F.I.D.O., this John Sinclair, who is an Adult Education Officer, is no fool. He is also an officer of the Maryborough branch of the Moonaboola Wildlife Society.

Mr. Jensen interjected.

Mr. ALISON: No, not the well-meaning ones. I do not tar them all with the same brush. Mr. Sinclair is secretary of the Maryborough Branch of the Moonaboola Wildlife Society, and he has had the foresight to have that society affiliated with the Adult Education Office in Maryborough.

Mr. Wright: Is he a member of the National Party?

Mr. ALISON: No, he is not a member of the National Party. As I understand it, the National Party would not have him.

He has had the Moonaboola Wildlife Society affiliated with the Adult Education Office so that he can carry out his nefarious activities on conservation. He can be seen over on Fraser Island on week-days and other days and nights and if he is fronted and asked, "What the hell are you doing here? Aren't you working for the Government? Why aren't you at Maryborough or Hervey Bay, or somewhere else, doing some adult education work?", he can quite

easily slip out from under by saying, "Well, I am doing some work with an affiliated body." It is as simple as that. How he has been getting away with that, I do not know, and I do not care very much. To me and to the people of Maryborough, Mr. Sinclair is a spent force. The people of Maryborough have woken up to him, and the people down south are waking up to him.

Alderman Zemek, who is a member of the A.L.P., is chairman of the Citizens Action Group.

A Government Member: You are running him down.

Mr. ALISON: I am not running the gentleman down. He and I went to Sydney and Canberra and saw certain people, and we rapidly reached the conclusion that they are waking up to Mr. Sinclair down there. He has been making the running for a few years, but they are waking up to the fact that he is nothing but an obsessed, fanatical academic who is misusing his position in the Public Service. In fact, he is not only misusing it; he is abusing it.

Mr. Jensen: And wasting the Federal Government's money.

Mr. ALISON: I thank the honourable member for Bundaberg for his interjection. I will add that—and wasting Commonwealth money.

Mr. Wright: Would you prefer Lou to write this speech for you?

Mr. ALISON: To give the honourable member for Bundaberg his due, he knows the gentleman concerned.

Mr. Sinclair uses the facilities of the Adult Education Office for making films, slides and other material to get his message across for F.I.D.O.

Mr. Wright: He is a very sincere man.

Mr. ALISON: He might be a very sincere man, but he has become a little unbalanced. He has become obsessed to the point where he will tell straight-out lies. Again I use the term "lies" advisedly, because that has been proven over and over again.

In Maryborough, too, we are a little fed up with certain sections of the media. I have sounded off before outside this Chamber on this theme. Again, I am not condemning the media right across the board. I have not much time left, but as an illustration of the misguided use of the media and the bias it displays, I wish to refer to a film shown recently on Channel 7 in Sydney and Melbourne. When Alderman Zemek, other members of the group and myself heard that that film was to be shown in Sydney and Melbourne and that it was not coming to Brisbane, we decided to go and see it. It was originally sponsored by the

Shell Company of Australia and Bob Raymond, who calls himself, "Gentle Bob". After seeing the film, I prefer to call him "Bob the Liar".

(Time expired.)

Mr. **AHERN** (Landsborough) (7.48 p.m.): There is no doubt that over the past eight years, or perhaps even longer, the area in which the Government has come under most criticism in this Chamber has been in its decision to develop the mineral industry in Queensland. It has been the subject of campaign after campaign by State and Federal A.L.P. groups, who have fought the Government on the ridges, in the Parliaments and at every other opportunity. However, the Government has persisted with its programme and the profits are now really beginning to flow into the State's coffers as a result of that deliberately planned development.

Members of the Opposition who have had the opportunity of reading the Treasurer's Financial Statement will know that rail profits on mineral haulage in Queensland amounted to \$37,000,000 during the 1974-75 financial year, which made a tremendous contribution to the revenue of the State, and the amount received in royalties presently stands at \$44,000,000. That is an incredibly large sum that the Government has not had to raise by imposing some other form of tax on the people of Queensland.

There are many other areas in which benefits have flowed to the State because of the Government's positive attitude to mineral development in Queensland. Great credit is due to the Minister, who has realised the tremendous benefits to be obtained from this development. He has been at the helm. At the present time our Treasury coffers are obtaining something like \$81,000,000 a year from mineral development promoted deliberately by this Minister. Clearly, in any reasonable man's language, it is financing the State.

Each year the State Government is charged with the responsibility of creating many thousands of new job opportunities. If we fail to do so, we come in for criticism in the Press. Quite often, however, it is difficult to provide these opportunities, so the Government has seized upon the development of our mining industry as a means of creating many thousands of new jobs each year. If for the past three years the Labor Party had not been in power in Canberra, the State Government would have been able to create many thousands more jobs than have been provided. In the next few weeks we have an opportunity to unleash further prosperity onto the State of Queensland. I know that Queenslanders who realise that tremendous benefits flow from such great private enterprise development will endorse the action taken by the Government. The success story is before them.

I would ask the Minister to give earnest consideration to environmental matters after our future mammoth coal developments

occur. I know that certain safeguards are provided. Nevertheless, I hope that where strip mining is carried out an increasing amount of restoration work will be carried out after the completion of mining operations. I know that mining companies are required to lodge with the Government certain trust moneys against the restoration of their areas, but all thinking people generally have the feeling that we should be doing more in physical terms, such as by way of levelling out and replanting, to restore the environment to a state even better than that existing beforehand.

The recent energy crisis has been the subject of much public debate throughout the world. Happily, Australia has not been subjected to the vagaries that beset other countries. This is so only because of the promotion of private-enterprise oil exploration during the late 1960s. Australia entered this critical period virtually self-sufficient in motor spirit and was isolated from the problems that almost ruined the economies of many overseas nations and did them grave permanent damage.

Australia is richly endowed with great coal reserves and will therefore be isolated from any energy crisis revolving around this most important commodity. It might be said that the energy crisis is not with us and we need not be concerned. However, we have a global responsibility and it would be wise for Australia to foster conservation and to exercise prudence in the use of its energy resources. There is a general feeling amongst the community that this should be so. People are tending to buy small, more economical cars. In fact they are prudent in many ways in the use of their energy resources. This is part of the today feeling of concern for the environment generally and concern for energy conservation. All honourable members know what I am talking about. People are not buying detergents that are not biodegradable. They are trying to inculcate in their families a feeling of concern for the environment. It is prudent that they should do so in the world context, and it is certainly good for the community.

A number of people are interested in exploiting the sun's energy. Many people write to me asking if the Government is promoting enough research into the use of solar energy. The sun is the basis of our energy resources. It is a wonderful resource waiting to be tapped; it should be exploited; people are concerned about doing so in the interests of the environment. If we exploit the sun's energy we will minimise pollution in one form or another. We have only to look at the ads on television to note how salesmen are exploiting or promoting this feeling.

Solar hot-water systems are becoming increasingly popular. People believe that this is one way they can improve the environment. It would be good for us as a Parliament to foster this trend. At the very

least we should not provide a financial disincentive in order to minimise the use of solar heaters; but we are doing just that. Several electricity supply authorities in Queensland have offered a very substantial tariff concession to electricity consumers with hot-water storage units, but, as soon as a person attaches a solar-heating apparatus to his hot-water storage unit, he loses the concession. That is wrong. When I put this to the Minister in writing, he said that in his opinion the situation was reasonable. He also said—

“It is true that a lower rate for water heating is offered by most electric authorities in Queensland for storage water heating units with thermostatically controlled or continuously operating elements having a rating not exceeding 1,200 watts or, alternatively, 13.5 watts per litre (61.4 watts per gallon) storage capacity. These restrictions result in a higher load factor of water heating units, thereby reducing the cost of supply and enabling the electric authorities to offer lower electricity rates per unit of electricity.

“Solar water heaters using electric energy as a make-up do not reduce the cost of supply and must therefore be charged at the normal domestic tariffs. Unless this is done, other consumers have to meet the additional costs of supplying these units.”

I do not accept the Minister's proposition. In terms of social equity, people in an electricity supply authority area are offered a concession on electricity used by hot water systems. That is reasonable in terms of social equity. If the Minister or I have a hot water system we should be on the same basis in terms of social equity. If one of us chooses to add a solar-heating device, he might use half as much electricity, but he should be entitled to the same concession. I am concerned because the environmental consciousness that I spoke of earlier is being given a very positive financial disincentive. People are directly disadvantaged financially when they put in a solar water-heating system. In my electorate the S.E.A. authorities instruct electricians to disconnect a hot-water system of that type and wire it as an electric immersion heater would be.

Mr. Lowes: Wouldn't they consume power in the off-peak times, too?

Mr. AHERN: As the honourable member for Brisbane says, they do tend to consume power in the off-peak periods. That is another reason why I would like the Minister to have another look at it—in terms of the very idea of it, which people reject. When people in the community run into this, they say, “Good heavens! For years I have had this concession on my hot-water system. Now I am not going to be able to have it.” I think that is wrong, and I think in terms of social equity it is wrong, too. I would like the Minister to have another look at it. I think it would have very

little effect indeed in terms of increasing the cost to everybody in the community. I do not think it is fair.

The only other point I wish to make in this debate tonight is in respect of Mining Warden's Courts in our State. We would have to agree that generally Mining Warden's Courts have coped very well in recent times with what is increasingly a very difficult task. I have been concerned, as I know other honourable members have, with the immense task that faces some Mining Warden's Courts when they are confronted with a huge national environmental debate. It has been said before that the Mining Warden's Court in this situation is not a court of competent jurisdiction. We have a situation where a little Mining Warden's Court, after determining an argument about whether a couple of mining homestead leases should be in one place or another, is suddenly confronted with barristers briefed by the Australian Conservation Foundation and authorities all over Australia. The Mining Warden's Courts are cluttered up with reams and reams of environmental information for presentation to the mining warden, who is surely not trained to adjudicate on that type of environmental debate. I suggest that the people are not confident in entering that type of arena. They are not confident that they are arguing before a competent tribunal to judge such a great environmental debate.

Perhaps the Minister could argue that that is only one of the various checks that are made and that the Government can order a wider environmental inquiry if it likes; but I suggest to him that the environmental issue is becoming so much greater and appearing in so many circumstances that perhaps he ought to look at a whole new system of adjudging this situation, particularly in the sand-mining industry, where everyone knows that, when one of these comes up before a Mining Warden's Court today, a great environmental debate will almost inevitably ensue. I am sure the mining wardens are bewildered. I am sure the various authorities who enter the court feel that they are in the wrong place. I am sure that it is not the way to arbitrate on and judge such a very sensitive situation.

So I ask the Minister to have a look at the position at a time when the environmental problem is with us. People are concerned. They have a right to be concerned. They have a right to be heard in one venue or another. They have a right to insist on environmental checks. If we do not think so, they will demand it. We have to consider whether the Mining Warden's Court is a court of competent jurisdiction in cases of that type and whether a more informed type of tribunal might not be a better way of approaching the problem.

Having offered a little criticism to the Minister—I hope in a helpful sort of way—I commend him and his department on the wonderful job they are doing in promoting mining generally in Queensland. The people

of this State value very highly the mineral development that has taken place. It is now financing the State of Queensland. It is providing us with a tax scale that is the lowest in the Commonwealth. There is no doubt that that has been created through the initiatives of this department and, in the main, by this Minister.

We must do more of this. With the energy crisis growing, we have to mine more coal. We have to export more coal. We have to build new railway lines. We must drill for more oil in this State. We must develop further the mines in Mt. Isa. We must develop further our phosphate reserves. We must develop the huge copper-lead-zinc area around Mt. Isa and provide incentives for that type of development to occur. We must provide the climate for better jobs for young Queenslanders. We must provide the growth that this State needs if its living standards are to grow. This is something that the Minister and his department have a lot to be proud about.

Mr. JENSEN (Bundaberg) (8.7 p.m.): I enter this debate mainly to talk about the establishment of a steel mill. Before getting onto that, however, I want to say that I agree with the honourable member for Landsborough that the Mines Department has done an excellent job in the discovery of coal and minerals. But why don't Government members tell the truth a little more? Why don't they tell us the whole truth about the price of coal? Let me deal with the price of export coal. Under the export control policy of the Australian Government, Queensland has, in the past 2½ years, emerged as the major coal-exporting State of Australia.

Mr. Frawley: Are you reading a prepared brief?

Mr. JENSEN: I am not reading a brief. I am reading a statement made by Mr. Rex Connor, the former Minister for Minerals and Energy. The statement was published, so it is not secret. He also said that the price of Queensland hard coking coal had risen from \$11.26 per tonne on 1 December 1972 to \$37 on 1 July 1975, an increase of more than 300 per cent. When Labor took office, the black-coal industry was in desperate straits with intercompany competition and exports being on the basis of cost plus a very marginal profit. Our coal was seriously underpriced in comparison with overseas coals. That is a fact and it is in writing.

Let us be honest again about the royalty paid on Queensland coal. Up till last year the royalty was 5c a tonne. That information was given in this Chamber time and time again in reply to questions asked by Opposition members. It was claimed that that royalty could not be altered until the year 2010, yet the Treasurer came into the Chamber last year and altered the royalty on many exported minerals from 5c to \$1 a tonne.

Mr. Alison: That was done by legislation.

Mr. JENSEN: By legislation. But it was said time and time again that the royalty could not be altered until the year 2010. It is in "Hansard". Read it and tell the truth in this Chamber.

The royalties that the Government was receiving from coal amounted to \$800,000 a year. The amount increased to \$8,800,000 the following year.

Mr. Alison: What year was that?

Mr. JENSEN: From 1973-74 to 1974-75. In 1973-74, the royalty on coal was 5c a tonne and on bauxite and other minerals it was 1s. If the honourable member would like me to, I will quote all the royalties for 1973-74 and 1974-75. In 1973-74, royalties from Mt. Isa were \$2,000,000; from coal \$800,000; from bauxite \$600,000; from oil and natural gas \$267,000; from mineral sands \$130,000; and from other minerals \$163,000, to make a total of \$4,000,000.

What happened when the Government had the guts to increase the royalties from 5c to \$1 a ton? Royalties from Mt. Isa increased from \$2,000,000 to \$18,000,000; from coal from \$800,000 to \$8,500,000; from bauxite from \$600,000 to \$6,190,000; from oil and gas from \$267,000 to \$267,000 (no change there); from mineral sands from \$130,000 to \$687,000. From \$4,000,000 in 1973-74, royalties increased to \$34,500,000. Why can't Government members be a bit more honest and truthful in this Chamber? Certainly I always speak the truth.

I should now like to refer to a Press release by Dr. Rex Patterson dated 18 July 1974 concerning steel mills in Queensland. It reads—

"Dr. Patterson said that the preliminary report he had already received indicated that the region had very sound prospects for a large-scale steel plant producing semi-finished steel for export markets. He said that the report also identified a number of other industrial prospects in the Bowen Basin.

The Minister said that the region with its vast resources of coking coal, abundant water supplies, attractively priced power and ample limestone deposits, as well as good harbours and port facilities, had special attractions for a steel works."

I know that the Minister would like to set up a steel mill in Queensland, and I know that he has been looking at the relevant facts. Dr. Patterson released that Press statement last year when he was Minister for Northern Development and the Northern Territory. There is nothing secret about it. His Press release also stated—

"Dr. Patterson said that special attention was being given to the potential transport economies of twin steel plants in Western Australia and in the Bowen Basin region of Queensland, with the

Pilbara supplying iron ore to the East and the Bowen region supplying coal to the West."

Mr. Alison: We know that.

Mr. JENSEN: I am quoting that material as an introduction. I am reminding the honourable member, and the Minister, of these things.

Mr. Alison: Tell us about the alumina plant.

Mr. JENSEN: I shall tell the honourable member some more interesting things. What I want to point out now is that this State of ours could contain good iron-ore deposits. I know that the Minister spoke in his report about the drilling activities of his department and the extensive coal deposits that he has found. But I do not know what extensive iron-ore deposits he has found.

Mr. Camm: Do you want to know?

Mr. JENSEN: I shall get to the Minister soon. He can tell us about that later. He has not done much about discovering iron-ore. He has been concentrating on coal. I believe that extensive iron deposits could be found in this State. We did not know of our extensive coal deposits until the last few years. It is no good the Minister's saying that Queensland does not have extensive iron-ore deposits. I have with me copies of reports that I have taken from departmental files. One of them deals with iron-ore deposits in the Gladstone-Rockhampton belt. It refers to the serpentine belt, the Glassford complex, the Castletower granite and the Targinie area. The Serpentine belt extends from Ipswich to Maryborough. The Glassford complex is a granite intrusion running in a westerly direction from the Many Peaks area. The Castletower granite forms most of the Many Peaks Range and includes the high peak of Mt. Castletower. The Targinie area is about 10 miles west of Gladstone. These are places that have small deposits of iron-ore.

I can show honourable members reports written by my father back in 1918, when he was a Government geologist of this State. I have a report here in the "Queensland Mining Journal" of 1906 about the iron-ore that was discovered in those days. Before 1906 we discovered iron-ore and copper in those areas. I have a report here by my father in the "Queensland Mining Journal" of 1918 about the statements of these mines. What I am getting at is that these are reports of what has happened about iron-ore in that area. My father mentioned coal deposits but did not know the extent of them as we know it today. He was the Government Geologist of this State in the 1920s and one of the greatest geologists we have ever had.

Mr. Frawley: If he were so good, he'd have found out.

Mr. JENSEN: I will show how good he was. We have said we know all about oil. I have here a copy of "The Australian National Review" of 1937 in which appears an article written by my father entitled, "The Search for Oil". A subheading to the article reads—

"Will 'flow oil' be found in Australia? Dr. Jensen, in this article, answers the question in the affirmative. All that is needed, he says, is to 'marshal the known facts, assemble some drilling plants, and get to work!'"

The article reads—

"Cecil Rhodes, the great South African statesman, patriot and millionaire mine-owner, always maintained that mining properly carried out is a sound business investment. Instead of that, mining is to-day in most countries a medium by means of which a group of go-getters make easy wealth out of the gambling instinct of a section of the public which prefers mining gambles to horse-racing, betting and other imaginary easy roads to wealth."

This is what has happened in this State and in this country over the years.

Mr. Frawley: What about Theodore and McCormack with Mungana?

Mr. JENSEN: Yes. My father put Theodore and McCormack out. He was expelled from his position and from the Labor Party for showing them up for selling our assets. He did not believe in selling the people's assets. I believe that anything that is discovered in Queensland today belongs to us and that we should have 10 per cent of the ordinary shares of any company formed in this State. When we are guaranteeing \$80,000,000 for Greenvale—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Miller): Order! Persistent interjections will not be tolerated.

Mr. JENSEN: Last week in this Parliament we guaranteed \$20,000,000 for Queensland Phosphate Limited to mine phosphate deposits in North Queensland. Why is the Government not demanding 10 per cent of the ordinary shares of that company for us, the people of this State? Any company that is formed in this State from now on, especially when we are guaranteeing it, should do this. Half the time we are prospecting for them, together with the Federal department. Why are they not giving us a 10 per cent equity?

Mr. Camm: You can buy shares in Greenvale if you want to.

Mr. JENSEN: Don't be stupid. I am saying that if the Government gives them the mining leases and prospects for them, it should say, "You set up the company and 10 per cent of the ordinary shares belong to the people of this State." My father said this back in the days when people gave up

drilling. He spoke about these oil sharks when he was running Roma Oil in the '20s and '30s, when they jammed the wells and put him out of business. He mortgaged our home and mortgaged his life insurance policies and we were out. He did this because he said there was oil there. I will read now an article from "The National Motorist" of 1950. I do not have a copy of the article he sent to every parliamentarian in 1948 which read, "There's oil in Australia, get on and drill it."

Mr. Alison: He was right.

Mr. JENSEN: My word he was right. He was the only geologist who said there was oil in Australia. In 1950 the University of Queensland was teaching students that there was no oil in Australia.

Right through from 1948 to 1950 the "National Motorist" printed articles by my father, and in one of them he said—

"The oil indications in the Roma district, at Beaudesert and Tara (which is now Moonie) came in water baled from Lower Walloon strata."

That was in 1948. In the 1960s drilling was carried out at Moonie and oil was found there. The fact that oil has been found in Australia bears out what my father said.

Greater efforts must be made to prove the iron ore resources of this State. It should not be necessary to import it all from Western Australia. Even if we have not sufficient quantities to meet all our needs, we must prove our own resources and use them to supplement imports from Western Australia.

Mr. Alison: Will you tell me why nobody is prospecting for oil in Queensland at present?

Mr. JENSEN: Because there were too many rackets in oil-prospecting in Queensland. I bought shares in the companies involved in the rackets. My father said to me, "If you buy shares, sell them as soon as they come onto the market. They have no chance of finding oil in that area."

Mr. Alison: You should have taken his advice.

Mr. JENSEN: I did. I bought shares in a company that was set up by C.S.R. Limited—I forget its name—and a couple of others.

I will tell the Committee what happened when I was working in munitions in 1941. My father was then appointed to find mica for Australia and he went to Central Australia. The country was running short of oil and people came to my father and said, "We have appointed the head of the Shell Company to look into oil for Australia.", and asked him to send in all his maps relating to oil in Australia. He did it, and I said, "What a fool you are! You have fought for Australia all your life. What have you got? You have got nothing from them. They have sent you broke; they

have sacked you, and you have got nothing. If they want oil in Australia, why don't they appoint you?" Six months later he wrote to me from Alice Springs and said, "You were right. They have photostated the material." He said to me, "It is all right; it is for the good of Australia."

Mr. Wright: Was this the Shell Company?

Mr. JENSEN: It was the Shell Company. He always said, "It is for the good of Australia." I said, "Yes, it is for the good of Australia, but what have they done for you?"

After the war the Shell Company spent \$750,000 drilling for oil west of Roma. I said to my father, "Look at that! The Shell Company has misread your reports. Didn't you say they would never get oil west of Roma?" He said, "Yes. They will lose every penny they have invested." I am pleased they did.

In 1948 he wrote to every Federal parliamentarian and told them that there was oil in Australia and to get on with the drilling. Then he had to write articles for the "National Motorist" because the newspapers would not publish the articles he wrote. He said there was oil in Australia; he said there was oil in Queensland. It is here in the Government reports.

My father spoke to me for years about the coal deposits in Central Queensland, but there was no market for the coal at that time. Today the Government has found greater coal deposits than ever, and it is up to the department now to find iron ore that can be used in a steel mill in Queensland.

Mr. Bjelke-Petersen: It is lucky that he was not living in the days of the Federal Labor Government; he would have died of a broken heart.

Mr. JENSEN: As it was, he almost died of a broken heart because of the way he was treated in this country. He was the only person who left Queensland and obtained a Doctorate of Science when there were no universities in this State. He came here from Denmark when he was five, won a scholarship to the Brisbane Grammar School at 14, then went to the Sydney University and won all its medals. I have them at home now. He was not a doctor like some of the doctors in this Chamber, who are Bachelors of Medicine. He was a Doctor of Science, and he was known as one of the greatest Doctors of Science who came out of the Sydney University.

Mr. Bjelke-Petersen: Your father did have a high reputation. I will give you that.

Mr. JENSEN: I know, and so have I. My name rings forth in the sugar industry today as one of the best practical technologists the industry has had and as one who stood up for what was right in the industry. If the Premier had taken some notice of my father, he would not have invested his

money in Ex-oil. That was one company I made some money out of. In fact I made £50. I bought the rights at 1s. and sold them when they came on the market at either 3s. or 5s.—I forget which.

I also made some money from a C.S.R.-backed company (Planet). I bought some rights—I could afford only 500—and made some money because my father said, "They'll get no oil. They are drilling in the wrong area. Sell them." So I sold them as soon as they came on the market. But the Premier waited till they went up to \$1, hoping they would go to \$10, and the market collapsed. A couple of years ago he had half a million shares when they were sky-high, and now he is nearly broke. He has to hold on to his Premiership now. He should have taken notice of honest geologists.

I know of some so-called geologists who shot themselves. Saint-Smith shot himself at the time of Roma, and there was another one, a crook who went out floating Roma oil. And some of the crooks were in the Government. Saint-Smith committed suicide, and my father said, "That's the right way for crooks to go."

Mr. K. J. Hooper: You're not suggesting the Premier is a crook?

Mr. JENSEN: No; I said he was ill-advised. If I had known him in 1964, I would have given him sound advice in relation to the drilling operations that were being carried out at that time. Moonie was O.K., but anything done west of Roma was only a racket. Companies were allowed to be floated. When I entered Parliament in 1969, I spoke about the rackets on the Stock Exchange. Companies were allowed to be formed to rob the people. It is a worse racket than betting on racehorses, and it should be stopped. I believe in sound, honest opinions from Government departments.

(Time expired.)

Mr. KATTER (Flinders) (8.28 p.m.): One of the major sources of energy is alcohol, and from the previous speaker we have just seen a demonstration of the energy that can flow from that source.

Honourable Members interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Miller): Order!

Mr. Wright: Give us a blue rinse.

Mr. KATTER: Stay here, I'll get you later on.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. K. J. Hooper interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member for Archerfield is not permitted to interject from other than his usual place.

Mr. KATTER: The honourable member for Bundaberg mentioned iron-ore and related that commodity to the establishment of a

steel mill in Queensland. He put forward a worth-while suggestion, but with respect to him I suggest that he was thinking in terms of Western Australia. It is worth noting that at Constance Range, in Queensland, there are very large deposits of iron-ore. I hope the Minister keeps this fact in mind in considering the establishment of a port in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Mr. Hanson: Broken Hill spent \$750,000 on prospecting and got to 1,700 ft. before they got to payable ore.

Mr. KATTER: Where?

Mr. Hanson: At Constance Range.

Mr. KATTER: That is the place I am talking about. Constance Range has one of the richest deposits of iron-ore in the world. It is not one of the biggest, but it is one of the richest. Its development is being held back by the lack of a viable port in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The people of North-west Queensland have waited over a century for such a port. I plead with the Government to develop a port in the area to serve the iron-ore deposits at Constance Range, the nearby phosphate deposits, and the numerous silver-lead and zinc deposits in the same region. As soon as a viable port in the Gulf is developed, tremendous expansion will follow in the area to the south of Burketown and Normanton.

I compliment the Minister on the administration of his portfolio. In the whole political history of this State, he is the only Mines Minister who has combined honesty with efficiency. Never at any stage has either of those assets been questioned. We can be very proud of having a Minister of his calibre holding this portfolio. I am certainly proud that he comes from North Queensland.

I could not make this speech without saying something about the former Federal Government. In my brief experience of history, I have never seen a Government do so many somersaults. The major and most staggering somersault relates to the price of oil at the well-head in Australia. Honourable members will recall that Mr. Anthony was scathingly criticised during the last Federal election campaign when he suggested that we should increase the price of oil in Australia. Some papers, such as "The Australian" in its editorial, rather courageously supported him but the majority of the Press, through stupidity and ignorance, criticised his stand. Unfortunately, a number of other politicians in Australia did likewise. The A.L.P. slated him saying that he was trying to increase the price of oil in Australia.

Let me retrace the arguments that were put forward. Within five years we will not be able to provide even 50 per cent of our oil needs. That means that more than 50 per cent of our oil will have to come from overseas. At that stage we will no longer be getting oil at the price we set at the well-head in Australia, but at international prices. Only one other country has oil

prices nearly as low as the price in Australia, and that is the United States. That is the only other country that can all but supply its own oil needs. It also has a price at the well-head. Mr. Anthony was saying that we should increase the price now, get a few people drilling for oil and within five years we might still be able to supply our oil needs. But that brilliant Minister in Canberra, most aptly called "The Strangler", said, "We cannot have any foreign capital. We will not raise the price of oil and petrol to the Australian consumer." In five years' time we would have been at the mercy of the Middle East, paying outrageous prices. We could let our imagination wander to visualise the oil prices they could be charging in five years' time. We would have to pay the price they asked. On five occasions he was asked to retract criticisms of the honourable member for Kennedy, who presented exactly the same argument as I am putting forward tonight—arguments similar to those used by Doug Anthony. Five times this Federal Minister was called on to cut back the abuse he was using in the House on the member for Kennedy—and two days later the price of oil at the well-head in Australia was increased! Those who advocated an increase were proved right. This man was an arch hypocrite or liar or he was overruled—one of the three.

Professor Gifford at the university argued for a long time that wages in Australia were never governed by union action—that union action had virtually nothing to do with the wage level in Australia. He said that the wage level in Australia depended on expansion in the economy. I have seen this in practice. I belong to a family that has been in mineral areas for four generations. In my short time I have seen this principle working, and I have had this philosophy handed down to me by people who witnessed it over a long period. I was discussing it with a man who owned a fibreglass factory in Townsville. He said, "I am now paying almost 50 per cent more than I was paying three years ago because I have lost my entire staff three times. They have all gone to Greenvale, where they get 30 to 40 per cent more than I am paying." That is the pressure which knocks up wages in Australia. Anyone who studies the works of Professor Gifford must realise the truth of what I am saying. It is set out in statistics covering the last 30 years in Australia. Where has the Australian economy expanded?

Mr. K. J. Hooper interjected.

Mr. KATTER: The honourable member stands up and makes a fool of himself reading his brief from down town. I am trying to make the debate a little more interesting for people to listen to instead of making a fool of myself and putting everyone to sleep.

The major expansion in the Australian economy was coming from the fact that every year in Australia two new townships were opened up—two completely new townships—because of the expansion in the mineral sector of the Australian economy.

I will move on to the first argument. Regrettably the member for Rockhampton has left the Chamber. I would very much have liked him to be here. I came in only towards the end of his speech, but one of the expressions he used was, "We have to leave it in the ground and look after future generations." The man has not done his homework. He has not read history. He does not know anything about the actual workings of minerals, mining or the industry.

Let me cite two of our most valuable and sought-after metals—or at least they were until very recently. One is lead and the other is copper. The price of lead has been falling almost constantly now for the last 12 or 15 years because it has simply been superseded. It is no longer a viable metal. All those people who owned lead mines and went forward under the sterling banner of "Leave it in the ground" have been made fools of by history. History has laughed in their faces. They can leave that lead in the ground for ever now because no-one will ever use it. Superior metals have been found.

What about copper? Copper has two major functions. First, it carries electricity. It is 60 per cent more conductive than its nearest rival, which is usually considered to be aluminium. Its other major property is that it can carry water without wearing out or corroding, as other metals do. Copper pipes are now being replaced by plastic pipes—and this is evident in every new home. Therefore, that use, which constituted a major reason for mining copper, has suddenly been superseded. I am not saying that the copper market will vanish. It most certainly will not; it is still the metal that carries electricity most efficiently. I ask honourable members to think about that.

An Honourable Member: What about alloys?

Mr. KATTER: There are some very useful alloys, and copper is used in conjunction with them.

Once a mineral is out of the ground, it can be recycled. A person can do what he likes with it. He has something of value. I have a mine north of Cloncurry. The copper is in the ground. I can assure honourable members that it is of no earthly use to anyone while it stays in the ground. People who advocate leaving it in the ground work on the basis that we will run out of it. To mining men, running out of it is relative. The mine I have is a very small one. Once upon a time it had 40 per cent copper ore. When the 40 per cent ore was extracted, the mine was closed. That was in 1907. We worked it for a little while and were getting 10 per cent ore out of it.

It was possible for us to mine 10 per cent ore commercially. At Mt. Isa, with a large ore body and advanced technology, they are mining 2 per cent ore.

In the Cloncurry district there is an area of cal-silicate formation 15 miles long by about a mile wide which is about .01 per cent copper. For those people who say we are running out of copper, there is virtually a mountain—virtually a township—that is literally made out of copper ore, albeit a very low percentage ore. However, it is only a matter of time and improved technology before that ore body becomes a viable mining proposition. It will probably not be in our lifetime, but there is copper ore there. I fail to see how anyone could seriously make the statement that we should leave it in the ground for future generations because we will run out of it. That is a naive statement, usually made by someone who could not possibly be involved in the mining industry.

Mr. Casey: The same applies to uranium.

Mr. KATTER: Yes, it would.

I regret having to differ with the honourable member for Port Curtis, a man for whom I have a lot of respect. He said that we must develop the industry for ourselves. I return to the fact that I have watched, or my family has watched, four generations of miners go through North-west Queensland. On the develop-it-yourself theme, there was a chap named Ernest Henry who founded most of the mining towns in North Queensland—and most of the mines, for that matter. Gunpowder was founded by Ernest Henry. He failed to raise any money in Australia for any of those mines. He was a very intelligent man, a very gifted man, a man whom we can be proud to name among our pioneers, who spent his entire life of 50 years trying to raise capital in Australia. He did not raise a single cent in Australia. When he was 70 years of age he eventually gave in and marketed his mine overseas. He ended up a very wealthy man. He died some three months later. But he spent his lifetime in a useless and futile effort to try to raise capital in Australia.

Honourable members should read "Mines in the Spinifex". They would learn how three generations of great Australians—and they were truly great Australians—spent themselves trying to raise capital in Australia. They were courageous men. They went over the Great Dividing Range, confronted the problems and challenges of Australia and settled this nation. They went back to the rich people who lived in the cities—the professionals and wealthy capitalist classes—and said, "Invest in mining." Not a single person in Australia would give them a cent. These three generations of men went out and died penniless after trying to raise money in Australia.

The people who say that we should develop mines ourselves invariably come from the big cities and are invariably completely out of touch with the situation in the mining areas and the circumstances that confront people who try to do this. To those who say that we should develop mining ourselves, I say, "Put your money where your mouth is." In all of our history, Australians have never done it, except for a very brief speculative period in the 1960s, which can have done only disastrous harm to the Australian mining industry. Australians are too busy selling land to one another in Brisbane to develop the country. That is left to the foreigners.

Before concluding on this subject, I leave members with one provoking thought. A gentleman named John Kaspalova was returning to New Guinea and was obviously going to be one of the leaders there; and he is one of the leaders now. I said to him, "They will tell you that you cannot develop your own resources and that you have to invest in foreign capital. I do not know whether I am 100 per cent correct but I suspect that if you print your own money and use it for exploration you will be taking a big risk. If you do not find anything, you will have big, bad inflation; but if you find things, your money will be very undervalued. If foreign companies are prepared to come in and risk their existence by spending money looking for minerals in your area, I think you should be prepared to take some risks in developing your own resources."

The major asset with foreign capital is not the foreign capital itself, and anybody who reads the history of the mines in Mt. Isa will find it shows up in neon lights. We could probably do these things ourselves. What we need are the markets and the technology. These are the very things we cannot get ourselves. When someone says to me that we should not have foreign investment in Australia, I say, "But we desperately need it." Anyone who works a mine entirely Australian owned is taking a very big risk and probably a foolish risk, because he does not have the markets or the technology. Anybody who reads the history of the mines in Mt. Isa will realise what I am talking about. Anybody who reads the more recent history of Gunpowder will realise what I am talking about. The people at Greenvale are confronted with the same sort of problems, but they have access to American technology. America went through this business 100 years before we did, so it has 100 years of development technology behind it.

Before closing I should like to say something on the field of energy. A number of sources of energy are available here and now in marketable quantities and are being used in Australia quite extensively at present. The first is methane gas. I wrote to a stove manufacturer and asked if it was possible to use the methane gas coming off the sewerage system or a septic system. I expected him

to write back that I was some sort of nut. In fact he wrote that they had conducted tests, that the system probably needed some sort of a scrubber to remove some of the impurities, but that it worked.

Mr. Moore interjected.

Mr. KATTER: It would provide gas for the stove and would probably run a person's car in the city if he wanted to buy a three-stage compressor to compress it so that it could be carried around. I cannot urge the Government and particularly the Minister for Mines and Energy more strongly to produce pamphlets on this subject so that people have access to this technology. Many people like to live on the outskirts of Charters Towers and do not have electricity connected to their homes. This particular technology would be extremely valuable to them. If pamphlets were produced telling them how to produce methane, and to develop a reliable scrubber, it would be of tremendous benefit to them. Water, for instance, is one form of scrubber. When methane is bubbled through water, sulphur dioxide, which is one of the major impurities, is removed. I could not imagine a scrubber being a very complicated apparatus. Methane is the first source of energy that I mention.

In Brisbane the sewage is being tipped into the ocean. The previous mayor—I forget his name—continued to tip \$50,000 worth of methane into the sea every day, destroying fish and ruining a bayside suburb. He is also the man who introduced diesel buses. That must go down as one of the most stupid manoeuvres carried out in Australia in the last 10 years.

Another means of conserving energy is the use of solar hot-water systems. A figure of 20,000 was quoted in respect of Perth. I should be very surprised if there are not twice as many in Queensland. I would not say that Queensland is following Western Australia; I would say that Western Australia is following Queensland.

Mr. Wright: That is in the city of Perth.

Mr. KATTER: That is about all they have in Western Australia, isn't it?

For those who do not know about solar hot-water systems, I might say that they cut electricity bills in half. That, for starters, is a considerable advantage. No maintenance is needed on them. My father was one of the first people in Queensland to buy one. We have had it for over 20 years, and we have bought one valve for it. That cost \$8, which was an exorbitant price. That demonstrates how much maintenance is necessary on solar hot-water systems. Electricity can be switched on, but that has never been necessary. The solar hot-water system is a major technological advance, and I cannot recommend it too highly to everyone in Queensland.

Of relevance to the Government is the fact that the prices of solar hot-water systems are excessive. I think a research department could be set up within the Energy Ministry to develop a cheaper model. It could perhaps be given to a manufacturer to market under franchise. If that were done, I think that a model could be produced for about two-thirds of the present market price.

In the last matter that I wish to mention, the Americans are so far ahead of us that it is quite depressing. The report of the ASHRAE conference, which is available in the Parliamentary Library, reveals that solar refrigeration is being sold commercially in America.

(Time expired.)

Mr. LESTER (Belyando) (8.48 p.m.): The Belyando electorate has quite a rich history in minerals. The town of Clermont had its origin in the gold in the area. Near Clermont is a small township called Miclere which also has a history of mining from the early days, and some prospecting for gold is still carried on there. It is rather interesting to learn that only recently the Rotary Club of Clermont obtained from the Miclere area the old traction engine that had shifted the town of Clermont after the 1916 flood, in which 63 people died. This old traction engine had spent many days at Miclere after shifting Clermont and the gold battery to Miclere.

Mr. Coolum, too, has a history in the discovery of gold. In fact, quite a rich history is attached to the Mt. Coolum area and some of the people who were shot there. It is a very interesting place. There are also the towns of Blair Athol, Bluff and Collinsville, which has quite a history in the development of coal-mining. I might then move on to mention Emerald, Rubyvale and Sapphire on the gem-fields. Because of their names, I do not need to tell the Committee that gem-mining is in their history. Also in the Clermont area is a place named Copperfield, where copper was mined in the early days. Attempts are still being made today to mine copper there by a process using a solidified solution.

The collecting of bottles has become quite a hobby. Floods have brought to light many bottles in the Clermont, Bogantungan and Copperfield areas. Many beautiful bottles have been extracted by this hobby-type mining and it has become very important to those people.

Mr. Wright: There is an old mine at Copperfield.

Mr. LESTER: Good, I will talk to the honourable member about it after I finish this speech. In recent times the towns of Moranbah and Blackwater have been developed and are now two of the largest towns in the Belyando electorate. We hope in the future to have mines at Vallaria near Emerald, more mines around Moranbah and more mines in the Galilee Basin. We are

still hopeful of some copper development at Clermont in the not-too-distant future, although again I must say that this has had a very up-and-down type of existence so far. In the very early days of mining at Blair Athol and Collinsville, miners had to go and set up their own houses to live in. The miners would go there with their families, including little children, work during the day and go home at night and try gradually to build a little home for themselves.

They had no electricity and they worked for very poor wages. In fact, in those early days the people at Blair Athol banded together and paid for and built their own hospital. Of course, this was in the days of a Labor administration. Now, under our administration things are very different. We insisted that these mining companies assist in building houses, schools, hospitals, fire stations and all of these things that our Government tries its best to provide. It insisted that the mining companies gave a fair deal to the people who were going to work in the mines. I am not saying we have no problems; we have plenty. There is still not enough housing or other facilities, but at least we are trying to attack these problems head on.

Mr. Casey interjected.

Mr. LESTER: No. You might help me with my representations there, I am sure they will listen to you. In a further effort to help the working people in the Belyando electorate connected with mining, the Government has, through financial assistance to the mining companies, made loans possible to provide decent housing for railway workers at Coppabella. These people are connected with the development of the railway lines from Saraji, Peak Downs and Goonyella through to Hay Point. We have insisted that decent housing be provided for these men to keep them happy and this is one of the benefits that we have had from the development of Blackwater. It is a pity we did not insist that the mining companies do more in this area to provide houses and the like for the men on the railways.

We have had all sorts of problems at Bluff. We are starting to overcome them but, goodness me, it would have been so much better if we had known a little more and insisted on some form of help to house the railway workers in these towns.

I might also point out that, through the development of these mining towns, we have seen many more fields of employment created, especially in the towns of Moranbah and Blackwater, but really in any mining town one likes to mention. We have needed more bank personnel, more teachers, more railway men, more private business people and more people to work for them, more council workers and, in fact, most types of workers one can name. The very reason they are there is that our Government

adopted a reasonable policy in the development of the mining towns in Queensland. It goes without saying that the economy of this nation has been helped a lot by the very fact that the Queensland Government has assisted mining development in Queensland. Many more people have been employed. I ask honourable members how this State would have fared without Greenvale, Blackwater, Moranbah, Nebo and the other areas in which development is taking place. Undoubtedly, many more people would be out of work. So the Federal Government can thank the Queensland Government for its early efforts in negotiating mining deals.

I heard some criticism from the honourable member for Bundaberg—and I think he was quite genuine about it—that early coal-mining levies in Queensland were far too low at 5c a ton. Perhaps they were, but at that time there was competition from Canada, Russia, North Korea and North Vietnam. The big mining companies could have gone to any one of those countries and been assured of a reasonably good deal—possibly a better deal than they could get in Queensland. Coal was then available all over the world, and there were not the oil problems that there are today.

Mr. Gibbs: The mining companies built the railways.

Mr. LESTER: They built the railway lines and they also provided employment in associated industries in this State. The Government had to be reasonable in order to attract the mining companies to Queensland. They could well have gone to New South Wales, and this State would have missed out. The mining companies came here simply because the Government was astute enough to be reasonable and negotiate a fair deal.

However, when the price of oil increased and coal again came into its own, the Government was able to increase the levy. Was not that the right way to go about it? The Government brought the companies here and then, when it was proved that they were making good profits, it hit them just hard enough. It certainly did not hit them as hard as the Federal Government did.

The honourable member for Bundaberg spoke about \$1 a tonne. Goodness me! What did the Federal Labor Government do? It imposed a levy of \$6 a tonne on steaming coal and \$2 a tonne on other coal. If anyone has tried to do a good job for this country, the Queensland Government certainly has. Not only has the Federal Government hurt the mining companies; it has also cost the Queensland Government about \$6,000,000. Because the Federal Government intervened in such a nasty, dirty way, the Queensland Government will lose that sum. If 20,000,000 tonnes of coal are produced in a year, the Federal Government will receive an

additional \$120,000,000. Because of the way the tax is levied, the Government of Queensland will lose \$6,000,000.

I point out to honourable members that the Queensland Government has spent a great deal of money at Blackwater. A hospital for the people has recently been opened; the State school is in use, and the high school is almost finished. But what do we find in Blackwater? A demountable post office! It has not even a proper post office. In fact, only about 3 per cent of the money being spent in Blackwater is coming from the Federal Government.

Mr. Wright: That is not right.

Mr. LESTER: The honourable member cannot deny that. I invite him to ask the chairman of the Duaringa Shire whether it is true.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Gunn): Order! The honourable member will continue with his speech.

Mr. LESTER: I am sorry, Mr. Gunn. Whenever I make factual statements in this Chamber, certain honourable members become upset and try to make all sorts of insinuations.

Mr. WRIGHT: I rise to a point of order. What the honourable member has said is incorrect. He is accusing the Federal Labor Government of being responsible for the situation in Blackwater.

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

Mr. WRIGHT: In fact, the honourable member—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member for Rockhampton will resume his seat. The honourable member for Belyando does not have to accept interjections.

Mr. LESTER: I appreciate your ruling, Mr. Gunn. Mr. Bob Katter certainly did not agree with that levy of \$6 a tonne, and he has tried very hard to do something about it. He has been an outstanding member. When the people of Blackwater go to the polls on 13 December, they will show what their opinion of Mr. Katter is. He won the seat before, he's a good man, and he'll win it again.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: He ratted on the Labor Party, he ratted on the Q.L.P., and he ratted on the Communists.

Mr. LESTER: Opposition members can't help getting rough. The moment we say something that hurts, they start making innuendoes.

Opposition Members interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Gunn): Order! The honourable member will deal with the Estimates and ignore the interjections.

Mr. LESTER: I have made my position on mining clear. The Queensland Government has done a good job, but the Federal Government has tried to undo what has been done. If the Federal Government—I refer, too, to the new one—is fair dinkum, it will put some money back into the mining towns. The Federal Government has taken money from the bigger companies and spread it throughout Australia at the expense of Blackwater, Moranbah and other mining towns. It takes money from the pockets of the miners by way of income tax and other taxes on cigarettes, beer and petrol, so it should put some of it back into the mining towns. The Federal boys are copping it in every way, and all I am asking is that they be fair and put at least some of the money back into the towns. Members of the Opposition would realise that what I am saying is quite correct.

Mr. Wright: What do you think paid for your new hospital? Federal money.

Mr. LESTER: The new hospital had been built and opened before Medibank came into existence.

Mr. Wright: Hughie O'Donnell fought for it for years, and you are taking the credit.

Mr. LESTER: Hughie O'Donnell had a lot of assistance from the present member for Belyando, and the first to admit this would be Hughie O'Donnell.

Mr. Wright: They should have named it after him.

Mr. LESTER: I wouldn't be—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. LESTER: I am hurting Opposition members, Mr. Gunn, but they have thick hides.

I refer now to the gem-fields, on which we have tourists, small miners and machinery miners. All of them work together and play a very important part in stabilising Central Queensland. Each Christmas and holiday period, as well as at other times, a large number of people from Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane come to the gem-fields to get away from the hustle and bustle and to relax. The small miner plays an important part in stabilising the gem-fields. A few machinery miners, who have been established for a long time, go over areas previously worked out by the small miners. With their machinery they are able to dig deeper. After the small miners have done all that they can do, the machinery miners re-work the area. This is a pretty good, economical and sensible operation.

I hope there is no chance of any big outside company gaining entry to the gem-fields and damaging them. No-one objects to the people who are already established there, but if any big company from outside comes onto the gem-fields, it will be over my dead body. All hell will let loose if any of them try.

Mr. Wright: How are you going to stop them?

Mr. LESTER: The honourable member should support me.

Electricity is about to be installed on the gem-fields, and for this I thank the Minister. Roads and other means of communication are essential to their continued development. The quicker we get better roads and electricity to the gem-fields, the better off everybody will be. I commend those people who have established facilities on the gem-fields. Cabins, caravan parks and other amenities have been provided by people who are prepared to put their money where their mouth is. Their actions are certainly appreciated.

The Collinsville Power Station, which this Government had the foresight to build, is now supplying electricity to the Collinsville mine, the town of Collinsville and the mines at Peak Downs, Goonyella and Saraji. I wonder where we would have been but for the Government's foresight in establishing this power station. As well as supplying the mines with power, it has brought more people to Collinsville. The number of children at the convent and State school has increased and, generally speaking, the town is much more viable for business people in Collinsville, a town which I enjoy representing.

I commend the Government on its foresight in building the Bowen coke works, which uses Collinsville coal. Collinsville coal also goes to the Mt. Isa Power House, and the coke works plays its part. The recent amalgamation of Bowen Consolidated Mines and the Decon colliery should make for smoother and better operations. It is to be hoped that these companies, in the not too distant future, will be able to export coal. That, no doubt, would bring more employment and people in Collinsville, and make a good contribution to the State's economy.

I ask the Minister to try to get export licences for Norwich Park and Blair Athol. That would mean much more employment and other development. I should be happy to see Blair Athol developed. To date, development has been slow.

(Time expired.)

Mr. TENNI (Barron River) (9.7 p.m.): I wish to congratulate the Minister on the presentation of his Estimates. I have known him for a number of years and have the highest regard for him. In the past 11 months my regard for him has increased because he does not sit on his backside in the Chamber, or stay around Brisbane or his electorate. He gets around the State and visits electorates throughout Queensland.

Mr. Wright: Do you say some Ministers do that?

Mr. TENNI: No; the honourable member said that. He is pretty good at twisting words.

Mr. Wright: Whom do you suggest does that?

Mr. TENNI: I suggest that the honourable member go back outside to some of his mates with the Red flag, which they had yesterday. They are the ones the honourable member wants to be with. They are the fellows he should join; he was out there with them yesterday. Get back there with them!

Mr. Wright interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Gunn): Order! I will have to warn the honourable member for Rockhampton under Standing Order 123A if he does not desist from interjecting.

Mr. Wright: Don't do that.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: I advise the honourable member not to try me out.

Mr. TENNI: To get back to what I was saying when I was so rudely interrupted—to my knowledge the Minister for Mines and Energy has been in my electorate four times in the past 10 months. On each occasion he has assisted me in my job as the member for Barron River. People living in country areas such as the Barron River electorate think highly of a Government that has Ministers like him; men who are prepared to meet the people and sort out their problems, particularly problems that come within the Minister's portfolio, which he is well acquainted with.

An Opposition Member: Speak up; I can't hear you.

Mr. TENNI: The honourable member should clean his ears out. Labor members are all the same; they have potatoes growing in their ears.

Quite a bit of mining is done in the Barron River area. About two weeks ago the Minister inspected with me the area known as Mt. Carbine. This area has big deposits of wolfram and scheelite. The R.B. Mining Company (Roach Bros.) is now the largest producer of wolfram in Australia. Its output is growing daily. The management of R.B. Mining was very pleased with the visit of the Minister to the site and with his sensible answers to the questions posed to him and the general satisfaction it got from him. At present R.B. Mining Company employs about 36 people. It is envisaged that within 12 months it will employ some 80 people. However, now that we have got rid of the socialist regime in Canberra, the number will probably increase to 140. With a Liberal-National Country Party Government in power, once again some form of taxation concession will be introduced for exploration purposes. That will assist with the development of mining in this country. The previous Government—the one that was sacked the other day—tossed out all the assistance that was given to mining companies throughout the nation.

Mr. Lester: It put them back 20 years.

Mr. TENNI: At least; I would say even more.

Mr. Katter: A few workers lost their jobs, but don't worry about that; they are only country people!

Mr. TENNI: In my area quite a few workers lost their jobs.

Mr. Wright: People will be interested to read that, Mr. Katter.

Mr. TENNI: The honourable member for Flinders directed that comment at members of the Opposition, The member for Rockhampton would enjoy seeing country people lose their jobs.

Mr. Frawley: Here is a photo of his mate Senator Georges sitting down in the street.

Mr. TENNI: That's the right place for him, too.

To return to what I was saying—at the Mt. Carbine mining project the owners intend installing a computer to speed up the processing of the minerals. That will make it a very modern plant. I feel that companies such as that should have more assistance with road access to their mines. That mine is on a main road, and unfortunately there are two "missing" links—one of two miles and one of four miles. Thanks to the Minister for Main Roads, the two-mile link will be bitumen surfaced this financial year. As a matter of fact, the work is set down for March, at a cost of \$150,000. I thank the Minister for Main Roads for that.

The four-mile link certainly worries me, particularly when I consider the development that will take place over the next 12 months and the school-children who will have to travel from Mt. Carbine to school at Mt. Molloy five times a week. It is essential that some form of assistance be given towards improving the road access for big companies developing areas of that type. I ask the Minister to liaise with the Minister for Main Roads. The Minister has travelled over the road. I seek his assistance in having the last four miles of road bituminised for the R.B. Mining Company and for the people who work that mine.

In years gone by, up till 1972, as Mareeba is in the centre of a mining field, a tremendous amount of exploration work took place in and around that town. When I say "in and around", I mean that a lot of the work was also carried out in the electorate of Cook, and the honourable member for Cook is quite aware of the activity that took place there some three or four years ago.

Unfortunately that activity is not very extensive at the moment, as I explained a while ago. The exploration ceased, thanks to the socialists who were in power in Canberra. Any assistance that had been given

to the industry was taken from it. Unfortunately, when that happened, the development of minerals in the great mining fields around Mareeba was virtually lost for the time being—and that was not all that was lost. The business houses in Mareeba, Mossman and Cairns, the Railway Department and its employees, the baker, the butcher and the bank were affected because the socialists in Canberra decided to withdraw the assistance that had been given by the previous Government.

Mr. Lester: They would take away their identity.

Mr. TENNI: They would take away anything. They would take a person's pants off him if he went to sleep.

The people who went out into the bush and developed the area were fair-dinkum Australians; they were dinky-die Aussies. They worked hard. They lived in tents and iron-sheds. They worked to develop the country and to assist their fellow toilers. Unfortunately, the mob who were in Canberra were not even Australians, let alone fair-dinkum ones. Their allies are in Red China and Russia. We all know that. We know their attitude during the last three years. We saw their mates outside the gates here yesterday with the Red flag. We have seen Senator Georges—

A Government Member: They're the academics.

Mr. TENNI: They are. I reckon a fire hose should be turned onto those types. That is the only way to treat them. They are not wanted in this country. I would do it because I do not believe in Communism. I detest the word. If any Opposition member is associated with it, I detest him. We do not want Communism in this country.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Gunn): Order! The honourable member will return to the Estimates. He is getting far away from them.

Mr. TENNI: The other loss suffered was the revenue from road transport. A tremendous amount of tin was transported by road from Mareeba to the smelters in Sydney. Unfortunately, these transport operators also suffered; so did the service stations and the oil companies. Everyone suffered.

I am not really familiar with coal, but one of the very big coal-mines in years gone by was at Mt. Mulligan. All honourable members would have heard of the Mt. Mulligan disaster. It is only some 50 miles from the town of Mareeba. It is now non-existent but will one day come back into its own.

What annoyed me was the Federal Budget tax of \$6 a tonne on Queensland coal. This was disastrous to State and country, but was typical of the socialist regime in Canberra.

A Government Member: Centralisation.

Mr. TENNI: Centralisation, yes.

Mr. Casey: Do you think the Fraser Government will drop this tax on coal?

Mr. TENNI: That is up to the Fraser Government. I do not speak for it. I represent this State and it is about time that Opposition members realised that they represent this State and stopped supporting the socialists in Canberra.

Mr. Frawley: They are traitors to this State.

Mr. TENNI: They are traitors to this country as well as to this State.

The energy problems we have had were brought about mainly by unnecessary strikes. I congratulate the Minister on the way this matter has been handled. As chairman of the Mareeba Shire Council, I saw that shire in a drastic state one night about 18 or 19 months ago when the Collinsville strike took effect and we had no power. We were in trouble because we had insufficient power to work the sewerage scheme. After very serious consideration, when sewage started to pop up the sink waste pipes and the bath waste pipes, I was forced to give instructions to open the valves and let raw sewage flow into the Barron River. I hated having to do that. Because we had types who were prepared to go on strike and not care about the woman of the house or the individual, I was forced to take that action. The following morning I had 23 farmers on my back. They pumped water out of that river. This type of thing happens because people are prepared to strike over absolutely nothing.

Most of these strikes are caused by Communist union leaders. The day must come when we will have to get rid of Communist leaders and obtain a reasonable amount of work for wages paid. I often wonder what would happen if there were employers' unions, just as there are employees' unions. When an employees' union went on strike for a week and said that they did not want the boss, the employers' union, when the employees wanted to return to work, could say, "We don't want the employees for a week." This would mean that there would be kick for kick, and we would soon see Communist leaders, who now direct the poor, innocent workers to strike, kicked out. I often think that that would be a very good thing.

There are also deposits of lime in my area—some along the Mt. Molloy road only 16 miles from the town of Mareeba. In the Cook electorate there is a huge deposit of lime in the Almaden-Chillagoe-Koorboora-Ootann area. At present there are lime works at Ootann and Chillagoe. Of course, all members would be aware of the old copper show at Chillagoe, and the old smelters that are still there and are a great tourist attraction.

One day, seeing that my electorate is in what I might describe as the most northerly developed part of this country, I hope that

a cement works will be established in or around Mareeba so that the lime can be used to its fullest advantage. The people of the Far North and the islands would then be able to purchase much cheaper cement than they can now. At the moment they have to pay rail freight on it from Stuart in Townsville to Mareeba, Atherton or wherever they live. Such a plant would bring about decentralisation in the production of a basic material necessary for the foundation of every building today. That is something that I hope will become a reality in the years ahead.

The town of Mareeba and the surrounding area had quite a considerable amount of gold mined from it in years gone by. In the case of samples in the Mines Department I notice that many minerals were from areas in and around Mareeba. Wolfram Camp, Mt. Carbine, Irvinebank, Emuford, Lappa and Petford are represented in samples in the case. It is indeed a great mining area.

At this stage I should like to congratulate the Minister's department on the improvements being made at the Irvinebank State Treatment Works. I think it is most essential that these works be brought up to date and that the miners of the area have such a facility available. The State Treatment Works at Irvinebank have been in operation for a long time, and it is very good for me, as chairman of the shire, to see them being brought up to date and the miners being given the benefit of improved facilities for the treatment of the product that they put through the battery.

There is another battery at Emuford, owned by Green and Son, which has been operating for many years. This is also of great advantage to the Mareeba district.

The development of gold and copper mining at Lappa has been a great thing for the Mareeba area. It has brought about the reopening of the Petford School. That school has been closed for some nine or 10 years, but because of the mining development in this area, this school will reopen on 26 January, thereby creating employment for another school-teacher and enabling the children who have been learning by correspondence to receive the benefit of a proper education.

Mr. Hanson: Do you know anything about Irvinebank?

Mr. TENNI: I heard the honourable member for Port Curtis make statements in this Chamber the week before last about Irvinebank and he went on and on about the area. During the past week I have spoken to, I would say, 60 per cent of the population of Irvinebank and no-one has seen the honourable member in the area. Where he got his information from I do not know, but no-one knows of him up there, nor has anyone seen him in that area. So I am astounded at the statement he made

that he actually visited Irvinebank. I knew he could not have visited Irvinebank when he told me the way he got there, because he would have ended up in Ravenshoe. It is alarming to me that the honourable member would rise in this Chamber and make a statement of that nature when he has never been to the area.

Mr. Hanson: I did some good for them, though.

Mr. TENNI: You didn't do any good for them at all. The Minister had made those decisions some two months beforehand, so those comments the honourable member made to me were laughable.

Mr. Armstrong: He only thought he was there.

Mr. TENNI: He thought he was in a lot of places, but that is one place he has not been. Anyway, he is welcome up there now because the people are after his hide. They say some of the statements he made are completely incorrect and they are after his hide. They would welcome the honourable member for Archerfield up there, too.

The other point I would like to mention concerns the Herbert River hydro scheme. I notice in the annual report that the department is considering that scheme. I did not see any reference in the report to the Flaggy Creek scheme, which I would like the Minister to have a look at. I know he has details of a study on the Flaggy Creek scheme which was done many, many years ago and I would appreciate the Minister's looking at it again.

(Time expired.)

Mr. LINDSAY (Everton) (9.28 p.m.): I rise to make a contribution this evening on three basic points. Firstly, on behalf of the silent majority of the Everton electorate I would like to express their appreciation to the Minister for the manner in which he is handling this extremely difficult and important portfolio—important to every Queenslander whether he lives at Everton or Weipa. Secondly, on their behalf I congratulate him for his excellent handling of the very difficult recent power crisis, and to that I would like to add my own personal appreciation. The other issues I wish to raise briefly are the importance of the Weipa bauxite deposit to Queensland and to Australia and, secondly, the importance of a satisfactory completion of the rehabilitation of Fraser Island to all future generations, not only in Maryborough but all Queenslanders and, in fact, all Australians.

Harking back to the Weipa bauxite deposit—I raised this subject in the Chamber on 15 April last, when I asked the Minister—

“In relation to the strategic valuable bauxite deposits near Weipa, what is the extent of the deposit in terms of quantity and monetary value?”

The Minister answered—

“While testing of reserves of bauxite in the Weipa area is incomplete, they are known to exceed 2,265,000,000 tonnes; their absolute monetary value is unknown, but 1974 bauxite prices were approximately \$5 per tonne.”

That means at last year's prices we have a known-to-exceed-value of \$11,325,000,000.

What is so important about bauxite? As many honourable members know, bauxite is a small, round, reddish pebble which, after a refining process, comes down to a white powder, aluminium oxide— Al_2O_3 . In the space age from 1975 onwards, the importance of aluminium cannot be over-emphasised. In terms of defence, one could rightly say that in any future war, in which the missile delivery systems will require the use of large amounts of aluminium, the control of aluminium will be as important as the control of flax and the production of rope and sail was in the 18th Century.

As to the production of bauxite on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula—let me say first that Weipa is only a small settlement; but, from what I have seen, the bauxite deposit appears to extend right down the western coast of the Peninsula, not only on land but also into the waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria. It is an enormous deposit and it is of tremendous strategic value to Australia.

At the moment, because there is no refinery at Weipa, the crude round, reddish pebbles have to be carried by ship to Gladstone or to other refineries throughout the world. Ideally, of course, what is required is a refinery at Weipa itself. The problem is that the conversion of aluminium oxide—the white powder Al_2O_3 —to aluminium requires the use of tremendous quantities of electricity. The nearest source of hydro electricity—and the Minister mentioned this in answer to my question on 15 April—is in fact in Papua New Guinea. I do not know whether feasibility studies have been carried out, but apparently, with the technology now available, the establishment of a refinery there is not a possibility. The fact that on 16 September this year Papua New Guinea became a separate nation raises a further problem.

There is a possibility, of course, of obtaining electricity from solar energy, and it appears to me that the Government of Queensland should be thinking along these lines with a view to developing the enormous bauxite deposits that are presently lying idle in the Gulf area.

Past generations have regarded Mt. Isa, Weipa, Normanton and Burketown as perhaps the back door of Australia; but I suggest that recent events, particularly those in Timor, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, indicate that in fact they are the front door of this country. It seems to me that former Lieutenant-Colonel Peter White, when

commanding officer of the 2nd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, showed great initiative last year in taking his battalion to that area and carrying out operational training exercises. I suggest that members of this Assembly should generate, through their contacts with their Federal colleagues, the idea that it is essential that the defence forces of this country become familiar with the terrain in that area. They should remember that it has a very marked wet season and dry season. The Weipa bauxite deposits are of such great strategic value that some of our small defence forces should be relocated and stationed there.

There is an obvious need for the development of a deep-water port in the area. One of the big problems that add to the cost of production of alumina is the lack of sufficient water to enable the bulk carriers that call at Weipa to load to maximum draught.

On 15 April I asked the Minister—

“Why are ships not fully loaded with bauxite when they leave Weipa?”

The Minister's answer was, of course—

“It is understood that there are limitations in the port and channel to loading vessels to certain draughts.”

While the mining of bauxite at Weipa is providing considerable wealth to Queensland as well as creating tremendous job opportunities, it is not operating with the utmost efficiency.

I turn now to the satisfactory completion of the rehabilitation of Fraser Island. I had that matter in mind when, on 28 August, I asked the Minister—

“For what period of time do Dillingham-Murphyores have to maintain the rehabilitation programme after sand-mining operations on Fraser Island are completed?”

The Minister's answer was—

“Until the rehabilitation programme has been completed to the satisfaction of the Minister.”

Whilst in no way wishing to give the impression that I am an expert botanist or a keen student of biogeography, I point out that in the formation of Fraser Island the rain forests do not suddenly start in the middle of the island and work outwards towards the sea; on the contrary, the vegetation started just above high-water mark—seral vegetation, as it is termed—and worked inwards. It was a process of evolution, resulting eventually in the formation of the marvellous rain forests that presently exist in the centre of the island.

It is of interest to note that in vegetation generally one species of plant complements another. A simple example of that is the acacia, or common wattle, which, by adding nutrients—mainly nitrogen—to the rather barren soil, the bunya-fillite type soil that is normally found on the floor of Australian eucalypt forests, complements the

eucalypt tree. Without the acacia, there would not be the comparatively enormous eucalypt trees.

To get back to the foreshores of Fraser Island—it is of interest to note that the mining leases generally cover a very narrow section along the entire eastern coast of the island.

I would summarise my recent observations for the information of the Committee. Shortly before 28 August I visited the island. A parliamentary group visited the area some days later. I believe in the simple Army adage that time spent in reconnaissance is never wasted. It is particularly pertinent when a V.I.P. visit is pending. The maxim is to get up and go early, and see what preparations are necessary. I walked over quite a large portion of the rehabilitation that has been done so far. That is point A. Point B concerns the fact that on the day before the parliamentary delegation was due to arrive excessive activity was taking place close to the existing mining operation. A friend and I asked the people who were planting various plants, “What are you doing?” They told us, “Buzz off, mate. A couple of V.I.P.s are arriving tomorrow; we have to knock this place into shape.”

I raise those points because the existing rehabilitation which has been there for seven years is only about so high and consists predominantly of one plant. It should be remembered that all the sand has been processed and the humus has been mixed. The sand is not as fertile as it was. Just as the acacia requires the eucalypt in a complementary way, the rehabilitation programme, if it is to be successful, needs not one plant, but a variety of plants. I suggest to the Minister that he take this into account when he looks at the rehabilitation programme to see if it has been completed satisfactorily.

As I see it, the big danger to Fraser Island is a holocaust. If fire ever gets into the rain forests, it will be the end of the timber industry for everybody—including the people of Maryborough. As the seral vegetation grew, it protected plants growing inland from salt water. When cars are parked on the Esplanade at Surfers Paradise, the windscreens become covered with a salt-water mist. Seral vegetation has hard leaves that withstand salt. When these plants are removed, the sea breeze continues on and hits larger plants that do not have such leaves.

The Minister may correct me if I am wrong when I say that, recently, a very large fire occurred in the southern part of the island. I suggest that it resulted either directly or indirectly from the destruction of the initial native plants on the foreshore, which allowed the sea breezes to come in and dry out the plants and trees that have leaves which are not accustomed to salt. The whole thing became a virtual tinder-box. As the miners move further north along the coast, the huge timber stands and the rain forest growing mainly on the southern slopes of the

sand dunes in the centre of the island will be affected. The southern slopes of the dunes are cooler and moister because in the Southern Hemisphere, the sun warms the northern slopes rather than the southern slopes, and they are therefore more likely to produce rain forests. The point is that there is a danger, as those mining leases go further north and as the prevailing southeasterlies blow up and in, that those trees themselves will become dry. Particularly in an unusually dry season, that drying out would be a grave problem. I raise that issue in the hope that somebody takes some notice of it.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (9.45 p.m.): In the few minutes that are available to me before progress is reported, I have an opportunity to reply to one or two of the contributions to the debate. First, dealing with the remarks of the honourable member for Port Curtis—he appears to be a victim of the propaganda of his party machine. He commenced by giving credit to the Federal Government for the returns that this State receives for the export of its coal. Might I say that the price received for Queensland coal is directly related to the price that is paid for coal received by the Japanese from all parts of the world.

In my office I have a record of all coal mines that supply the Japanese market, the quality of their coal and the contract price for their coal. As the price has risen in other countries, it has risen in Australia also. The people concerned with mining the coal in Australia have sufficient marketing expertise to be able to relate the price being received by overseas countries to the quality and price of coal mined in Australia, and they can justify an argument to the Japanese steel mills for an increase in the price of our coal. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the claims of the previous Minister for Minerals and Energy in Canberra. He has nothing whatsoever to do with the price being paid for coal by the Japanese steel mills.

What Mr. Connor and the former Federal Government did to the Queensland people was to take \$6,000,000 a year from them. Members of the Opposition and their colleagues seem to be proud of the fact that they have done this.

Mr. Houston: What a lot of rot!

Mr. CAMM: The honourable member for Bulimba says, "What a lot of rot!" That just shows why he is now not the leader—not even the deputy leader—of members on the other side of the Chamber. The Australian Government has imposed an export tax of \$6 a tonne on all coal exported from Australia. If we export, as we intend to, 20,000,000 tonnes of coal a year from Queensland, that is \$120,000,000 that will be taken by the Federal Government. That is taken off the top.

Mr. Houston: 5c a ton is all you wanted.

Mr. CAMM: We have levied a royalty of 5 per cent of the price of the coal at the mine head. Consequently, we have to deduct \$120,000,000 before we can impose the 5 per cent royalty. Five per cent of \$120,000,000 is \$6,000,000—and that is the money that the Federal Government has taken off this State!

It is no good the member for Bulimba talking about 5c. If his party had been in power, it would have been a penny a ton. It is laid down in legislation introduced by his colleagues that the royalty would be 6d a ton for the first million tons, 3d a ton for the next million tons and a penny a ton thereafter. They were the royalty divisions under which companies and people were invited to come to Queensland to mine our coal.

It is this Government that has imposed a 5 per cent royalty. As I said at the outset, members of the Opposition seem to be quite proud of the fact that the Commonwealth Government has introduced measures depriving the Queensland people of \$6,000,000 a year at the present rate of export of our coal. Members of the Opposition seem to have a hatred of anyone who contemplates making a profit out of any enterprise in this country. They talk about Australian ownership. They do not believe in Australian ownership. They want Australian Government ownership. They want control by the Australian Government of production, distribution and everything else.

There was nothing in the Petroleum Minerals Authority Act introduced by the Federal Government that gave preference to Australian ownership. It was going to be Australian Government ownership. Therein lies the obstacle that stopped the Federal Government from implementing that Act. Opposition members seem to be enamoured of everything that comes out of Canberra and do not give a damn about what happens to the people of Queensland.

Opposition members talk about what the Commonwealth was going to do to assist mining. The policy of the Federal Government on restriction of capital in-flow into this country hurt the small prospector and the small private Australian company. It had no effect on the big mining operators in Australia. This is how the mineral industry in Queensland has been built up; the small operators find the deposit, form a small Australian company with their friends and, when their capital is exhausted, they invariably farm in an overseas company (or an Australian company if they can find one) that has risk capital at its disposal to develop the project. Because of the actions of the Federal Government, none of this money was allowed in to assist the small mining operators in this State.

While the Labor Government has occupied the Treasury benches, not one mining project has been commenced in this State. The

result of the mining operations and the rise in the income from those operations have come from mining projects that were started before the Labor Party gained the Treasury benches in Canberra. I dare say that had Labor stayed in Canberra for any length of time, the whole mining industry in Australia would have been in a state of stagnation and no-one would have been able to afford to go out and explore for minerals. The policy of the Labor Party was, "You go out and find it and we will take it from you." That is the very principle that is embodied in the Act that Labor had the temerity to introduce in the Federal Parliament.

I shall reserve further comments until next Tuesday afternoon when I sum up on the contributions made by all honourable members who have spoken.

Progress reported.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. W. E. KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (9.54 p.m.): I move—

"That a Bill be introduced to consolidate and amend the law relating to tenancies of dwelling-houses and the recovery of possession thereof and for matters incidental thereto."

This Bill seeks to enact modern statutory provisions which will apply to tenancies of residential premises. At present the legislation on this subject is contained in the Termination of Tenancies Act 1970 which has been repealed by the Property Law Act as from December this year. It is therefore proposed that this Bill will come into operation on and from 1 December 1975.

The advantages of having separate and distinct legislation governing residential tenancies are readily apparent. The Property Law Act is concerned to state principles of general application and that Act will not require frequent amendment for reconsideration but be a permanent code of principles of property law whereas provisions relating to tenancies of dwelling-houses may receive recurring legislative attention according to changing circumstances.

It is also considered that landlords and tenants who are interested to know their rights should not be put to the unnecessary inconvenience of obtaining a copy of a statute of the size and complexity of the Property Law Act merely to ascertain those rights with respect to a rather limited subject matter.

The provisions of this Bill are designed so as to recognise the legitimate interests of all parties involved in the residential landlord and tenant relationship. When a

landlord and tenant enter into a tenancy agreement, be it oral or written, they do not always turn their minds towards a complete and detailed consideration of their potential rights and liabilities. As the statutory laws were not adequate to cover all aspects of the tenancy, the common law developed a number of implied covenants which were deemed to be part of the terms and conditions of every lease except to the extent that the parties expressly or by implication excluded their application. However, under the common law the implied obligations under a tenancy are minimal, and most of them can be displaced by the express provisions of the tenancy agreement.

One of the principal sources of difficulty is that a large number of tenancy agreements are not in writing. In such cases it is particularly difficult to determine the obligations of the parties. Even some written agreements are not of great value in determining questions as to the obligations of both parties under the tenancy. The provisions of this Bill are designed to imply certain obligations on the part of both a landlord and a tenant in every tenancy entered into after the commencement of the Bill. The implied obligations on the part of the landlord are—

(a) to allow the tenant quiet enjoyment of the premises;

(b) to provide and maintain the premises in good tenable repair and in a condition fit for habitation;

(c) to maintain fixtures, fittings, goods and chattels let with the premises in good tenable repair;

(d) to comply with all lawful requirements regarding health and safety standards; and

(e) where the dwelling house is part of a multiple house or other building, to keep the common areas in a clean and safe condition.

The implied obligations on the part of the tenant are—

(a) to care for the premises and all fixtures, fittings, goods and chattels in the manner of a reasonable tenant;

(b) to repair within a reasonable time any damage caused by the wilful or negligent conduct of the tenant or persons on the premises with his consent;

(c) to conduct himself and to ensure that other persons on the premises with his consent conduct themselves in a manner that will not cause a disturbance or be a nuisance or annoyance to adjoining or neighbouring occupiers; and

(d) to pay the rent.

These provisions will ensure that certain defined obligations shall apply to every tenancy in addition to any further terms and conditions which may be agreed to by the landlord and the tenant. These obligations will apply only to tenancies created after the commencement of this Bill. The possibility of applying these new provisions to

existing tenancies has been considered but it would be wrong to alter the terms of existing contractual arrangements by allowing the provisions to have a retrospective effect.

When a landlord lets premises to a tenant, he gives to the tenant the right of exclusive occupation. However, it is clear that the landlord should have a right of entry upon the premises for certain purposes. The Bill implies a right on the part of the landlord or his agent to enter for the purpose of inspection to ensure that the tenant is complying with his obligations under the tenancy and to view the state of repair and carry out repairs.

The landlord or his agent will also have the right to enter for the purpose of carrying out the requirements of any public authority or to show the premises to a prospective purchaser or tenant. These rights may only be exercised at a reasonable time of the day and only after reasonable notice in writing has been given to the tenant. Previous notice of entry will not be required where the landlord believes on reasonable grounds that the well-being of the tenant requires his entry or his entry is to protect the premises from imminent or further damage.

At common law a rule was developed whereby, in the absence of any express agreement to the contrary, the liability of the tenant to pay rent remains even if the leased premises can no longer be used for the intended purpose. This follows the principle that a tenancy creates something more than a contract. It creates an estate in the land and, since this estate remains vested in the tenant for the term of the tenancy, the land remains available to him even though the building and any improvements may have been destroyed or damaged, by fire or other disaster. This can lead to very harsh results in some cases.

The provisions of the Bill will provide that where a dwelling-house is destroyed or damaged from any cause other than the act or the default of the tenant or any other person in the dwelling-house with his consent so as to render the dwelling-house or a substantial part of it unfit for occupation, either the landlord of the tenant may, at any time within one month, terminate the tenancy as from the date of the damage or destruction by written notice to the other.

Previous landlord and tenant legislation has placed a prohibition on any distress for rent. The provisions of the Bill will continue the prohibition of distress for rent in respect of dwelling-houses. At present where premises are abandoned by a tenant prior to the expiry of the tenancy, there is no obligation upon the landlord to mitigate his damages. This appears as an unreasonable distinction between the obligation to mitigate damages applicable to a simple contract under contract law and the total absence of such an obligation under the law of landlord and tenant. The provisions of the Bill

will alter the common law rule by providing that a landlord or tenant who becomes liable to the other for damages resulting from a breach under the tenancy or a provision of the Bill will have the same duty to mitigate his damages, by, for example, re-letting the premises, as applies generally under the law of contract.

Provisions are also contained in the Bill relating to the assignment and subletting of dwelling houses by a tenant. The subject of tenant security is one upon which very wide and divergent views are held by many people. The question of security of tenure is a very complex one and one that is not easily resolved to the satisfaction of both landlord and tenant. In the past, in Queensland and elsewhere, security of tenure has emerged in the form of rent control and the inability of the landlord to terminate the tenancy without cause, that is, the establishment of a prescribed ground. However, rent control and provisions imposing stringent restrictions on evictions operate as an inhibitor of investment in the housing market for both the construction of new housing and the rehabilitation of existing housing. A significant factor which is at the base of landlord and tenant relationships is a shortage of housing accommodation. Any great housing shortage results in an inequality of bargaining power and the absence of freedom to contract in any real sense. An increase in the supply of housing will, of course, strengthen the tenant's bargaining position.

The provisions of the Bill relating to the termination of tenancies by landlords provide that in respect of any type of tenancy, where the tenant has failed to perform or observe any of the obligations implied by the Bill or some other obligation or restriction contained or specified in the tenancy agreement the landlord may terminate the tenancy by notice to quit to the tenant given for a period of 14 days at the least. In the case of a periodic tenancy, such as a week-to-week or month-to-month tenancy, the landlord may terminate the tenancy without cause. That is, without establishing any breach on the part of the tenant by giving notice to quit to the tenant for a period of one month at least. This provision will be subject to any agreement between the landlord and the tenant as to the termination of such a periodic tenancy but any agreement that provides for termination without cause upon less than one month's notice will be void. This will permit the parties, when entering into a tenancy agreement, to agree to a longer period than one month's notice to quit.

In respect of a tenancy other than a tenancy for a fixed term, the Bill provides that the rent may be varied upon giving one month's notice in writing to the tenant in advance. Under the existing law the rent cannot be varied unless there has been some specific provision in the tenancy agreement or the tenant agrees to any proposed

increase. The result has been that many landlords have found that they have been unable to increase the rent or to evict the tenant and this has led to a most uneconomic business proposition for many landlords, especially during the current inflationary period.

The effect of the provisions concerning the termination of tenancies will be that tenancies for a definite period of six months, one year, or as the case may be, can only be terminated prior to the expiry of the term where there has been a breach of an obligation. There will be no statutory right to increase the rent. This is substantially the same position as exists under the present law.

In respect of weekly, monthly and other periodic tenancies—these will be capable of being terminated where there has been a breach of an obligation on 14 days' notice or without cause upon giving at least one month's notice. Subject to any agreement, the rent may also be varied upon giving one month's notice.

The Magistrates Court will continue to have jurisdiction to hear and determine complaints for the recovery of the possession of premises unlawfully held over. A common complaint has been that the present procedure is too slow and cumbersome. The provisions contained in the Bill will provide a new procedure whereby the tenant, upon being served with a copy of the landlord's complaint and a summons, will be required, if he wishes to dispute the complaint, to file a notice setting out briefly the grounds upon which he intends to show cause within five days after service of the summons. If the tenant disputes the landlord's claim by filing such a notice, a date of the hearing will be set. Where the tenant does not dispute the matter, the landlord may apply to a stipendiary magistrate in chambers, or, if a stipendiary magistrate is not available, to a clerk of the court, for the issue of a warrant for possession. This procedure will provide a much speedier and simpler system for the recovery of possession of dwelling-houses in cases where the landlord's complaint is not disputed by the tenant.

I have outlined the general scheme of the Bill and its principal provisions. Honourable members will appreciate that this Bill is an important measure which will have some effect on the rights and obligations of a significant number of people in the community and, as such, demands detailed consideration.

I commend the motion to the Committee.

Mr. Houston: Why bring it on so late, if it is so important?

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (10.6 p.m.): I have always supported the idea that members should be able to debate a Bill at the introductory stage. However, when legislation such as this is introduced, I honestly wonder whether there is any value in debating it at

this stage. As the honourable member for Bulimba said by interjection, it is being introduced now when, according to the Minister, the law must be enacted by 1 December because the Property Law Bill will become law on that date, and I think that is only about 18 days hence.

The introduction of this legislation has been long awaited, and honourable members have now heard the Minister's approach to the matter. I am very pleased to know that he has not removed the rights of the tenant, as it was rumoured throughout the State that he would. However, it is obvious that not all the fears expressed were groundless and some points will have to be debated at the second-reading stage.

It is very important that interested groups and individuals have an opportunity to study the legislation in depth, and I concur with the honourable member for Bulimba that more time is required. Taking into account the week-ends and the fact that an election is facing us, and that many of us will be extremely busy, 18 days will not give much time to study it.

This is an important change in an important law, and it is in line with many similar changes throughout the world. As honourable members may know, the Law Commission in England has brought down a special report—a copy of it came to me recently—dealing with the codification of the law relating to landlords and tenants, and also a special report on the duties of landlords and tenants.

The law relating to landlords and tenants goes back over a century—in fact, to the Summary Ejectment Act of 1867—and honourable members are also aware that in the 1920s the Fair Rents Act was introduced. Most of us remember the Landlord and Tenant Act—I think that is the one that sticks in everybody's mind—and often someone will say, "Am I covered by the Landlord and Tenant Act?" They forget that very soon after a Country-Liberal Government came to power in Queensland in 1957, it amended that Act and removed from it most of the rights that people had.

Then, in 1970, it introduced the Termination of Tenancies Act, which was supposed to be the panacea for all problems. However, it is quite obvious that it has not resolved the problems. The law has lacked clarity, and there have been many and varied interpretations by lawyers of the obligations of landlords and tenants under tenancy agreements. One lawyer says that the landlord can simply give a tenant a notice to quit and seven days later, if the tenant has not vacated the premises, he can terminate the tenancy and seek summary recovery of possession — what is commonly called an eviction notice. Other lawyers have said, "No, you have to go back to the old Act, which says in section 16 that if it is a periodic tenancy you have seven days. But if it is not a

periodic tenancy—in other words, if the rental is not paid week by week—you have 28 days.” Then the question is asked, “What if I am paying it every two weeks? What if I am paying it in arrears every two weeks? Where do I stand then?” It is no wonder that many solicitors have been unable to advise their clients correctly. Members on both sides of the Chamber have asked the Minister for clarification and, in most instances, been told to seek legal opinion. It is no wonder the Minister has answered in that way, because these matters are by no means clear-cut.

This law does not give the people the protection that they want. For example, it does not give protection against security deposits of what are normally referred to as bonds. Many persons have been hurt by these bonds.

On the other side of the fence, it has been very difficult for the landlord to secure payment of arrears of rent. I think most landlords simply give up. After my mother died, my father rented our family home here in Brisbane and lost something like \$1,300 over a lengthy period during which he thought the rent was being paid whereas in fact it had not been. There was no way that he could obtain payment without resorting to lengthy litigation.

It is almost impossible for tenants to say exactly what their rights are. Section 18 of the Termination of Tenancies Act lists the various grounds or reasons whereby a landlord may effect notice to quit. No doubt members have had a chance to read them. The section lists, for example, failure to pay rent, failure to perform certain terms or conditions of the tenancy, failure to take reasonable care of the premises, and so on. On the other hand, the landlord might wish to sell the premises.

These provisions have not been very clear, and we have heard a lot of discussion, debate and criticism concerning their value. The point is, however, that they are provisions. I must admit that, when this legislation was announced, my main fear was that these provisions would be removed. Although they may not be as clear as we would wish, people can depend upon them.

There is no doubt that problems occur on both sides. The draft Act introduced in England seems to come to grips with many of the problems that confront us. I will be taking pains to compare the draft English legislation with that introduced by the Minister.

I would make a point here in relation to changes in parliamentary procedure. No doubt this will interest you, Mr. Hewitt. The English Bill lists each clause as well as explanatory notes to each clause. This copy of the draft Bill is in the Parliamentary Library and is dated 28 October. The clauses are set out, as are clauses in our legislation; then on one page appear the clauses

while on the other appear explanatory notes to each subsection of each clause. This practice is following all the way through.

Mr. Knox: We understand that.

Mr. WRIGHT: The Minister might, but sometimes difficult legislation is introduced into this Chamber, and I think it was Mr. Killen who said that very often members are not aware of the type of legislation that is passed or of its ramifications and that it is totally impossible for all members to understand what has been passed.

I have enough to do in carrying out the duties of shadow Attorney-General without also having the responsibility of shadow Minister for Education, Consumer Affairs and other portfolios. Other Opposition members have, for example, Primary Industries and Lands and many other shadow portfolios. How they are able to carry out all their duties is beyond me. Nevertheless, it is our task.

We may have to do away with party politics in some of our legislation and bring it down to a level similar to that adopted in the United Kingdom. Maybe the Minister for Justice could set the pattern here, as he has made a few historic changes since he assumed his present portfolio.

I am sure that we would gain from such a procedure as would law generally in this State. I suggest that the Minister give consideration to my suggestion. No doubt he provides his members with explanatory notes, but those that I have seen do not deal with Bills clause by clause. Whether or not legislation is difficult, there is some merit in this suggestion.

Mr. Houston: Their members just get a prepared speech for them.

Mr. WRIGHT: We know that most Government members can only make speeches from prepared material.

The changes in the law of landlord and tenant and the problems arising in this law are not restricted to Queensland or to the United Kingdom. Some of the journals in the Parliamentary Library refer to changes in the laws of America. I am more interested, however, in a change that is taking place in the laws of Victoria.

If honourable members do not subscribe to the “Legal Service Bulletin” produced in Victoria, I suggest that they do so. I refer now to Volume 1, No. 10, the September edition, which contains a model tenancy agreement.

Mr. Lindsay: Is that the little red book or the medium red book?

Mr. WRIGHT: I suggest that the honourable member should go home.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If the honourable member for Everton cannot make relevant interjections, I suggest that he refrain from interjecting.

Mr. WRIGHT: If honourable members have an opportunity to peruse this model tenancy agreement, they will see that it covers every aspect. I shall be comparing it with the Minister's legislation. It covers matters such as type of tenancy, rent and rent increases, bond money and security deposits, notices to quit, conditions of rented premises, destruction of premises, general remedies, tenancy rights and duties, landlord rights and duties and so on. It states very clearly what the tenant is up for relative to the bond and security deposits. It explains exactly, in black and white, what the landlord can hold the tenant to. It explains how he can retrieve the money at the end of the tenancy. It would not hurt to have everything stated as clearly in all legislation. It sets out the right to a signed copy of the agreement. It refers, as the Minister did, to the right to assign and sublet, the right to abandon, residential use, the causing of nuisance to others and the care of rented premises. These are very important points which the Minister spoke of.

The model agreement also refers to the alteration of rented premises. It then deals with the landlord's rights and duties, the right to enter rented premises, and repairs and maintenance, which the Minister dealt with. The model lease covers alteration of locks, which is always an important matter. I am sure that many members of Parliament have been approached by people who have said, "The landlord has changed the locks. What can we do about it?" Re-letting after a tenant has abandoned, and eviction by court order are matters which are also dealt with in the model lease.

It contains other interesting aspects, one of which concerns arbitration. It is realised that many tenancy arrangements result in disagreement, and it is suggested that the tenancy agreement should include a provision that, in the event of disagreement, an approach may be made to a neighbourhood legal service, or some other type of legal service, so that a lawyer can arbitrate in some way.

Many valid points are dealt with in the model tenancy agreement. Whilst I will compare the Minister's legislation with it, it seems to me that his department should look at it if it has not done so already. We can always learn from other States. It is important to do something about the preparation of model leases and agreements because many of the leases and agreements that people are forced into are virtually one-sided. They certainly do not cover the tenant's rights. It is important that we should cover bonds and security deposits and clean up the whole of this law.

Other areas must be looked at. The Minister said that we will not be having rent control. I would not expect him to dare to introduce such a thing, but the time must come when we will have to establish a standard for accommodation in this State, and thereby bring in a type of

rent control. I can see advantages in doing something like this. We could have gradings of the standard of accommodation, with maximum rentals applicable. For instance, a class D standard of accommodation could attract a maximum rent of about \$20, while class C could attract \$30, and so on. I am sure there would be some advantage in that. We could do a number of things. Not only would we maintain some control over the standard of houses, but also we would encourage landlords to improve the standard of rented homes, with the realisation that, once they improved the standard and got into a certain classification, their rent could be increased automatically to a certain maximum. There are certain advantages in that, and it would also improve the standard of living of many people who exist in shabby conditions throughout the State.

One man in Rockhampton was renting an old farmhouse. At the same time he rented out the old dairy, which was nearby, for \$20 a week. Fortunately the Rockhampton City Council made him tear it down. This fellow owned about 50 houses. Almost every week he gets notices to demolish. The honourable member for Port Curtis is smiling. Apparently he can guess who I am talking about.

Mr. Katter: Does he own them?

Mr. WRIGHT: No doubt the honourable member for Flinders knows him. Probably he is a relative.

I accept many of the Minister's points, although they will be looked at very carefully. I am concerned about the principle of increasing rent with only a month's notice. Surely in law when there is an agreement, both parties should have certain rights. I accept that the landlord faces difficulty at the moment. If the owner of a house worth \$20,000 sold it and invested the money in a building society, he would receive close to \$40 a week interest, yet many \$20,000 homes bring barely \$25 a week in rent. So I see many problems for the landlord. With increases in local authority rates and other charges today, he is faced with great difficulties.

On the other hand, we have the instance such as occurred in Rockhampton recently of a rat-bag landlord who started off with a pensioner at \$17 a week rent, a month later increased it to \$25, then makes it \$30 and later wanted to make it \$40. The reason was that he had some prospective tenants—students—who were in fact prepared to pay \$10 a week each and share the two bedrooms. There would have been four fellows sharing two bedrooms. Therefore, the landlord would have received \$40 for that house.

Mr. Moore: What rent would you charge on a \$25,000 home, taking rates and other expenses into account?

Mr. WRIGHT: At the moment my father has a four-bedroom home at 17 Humber Street, Salisbury, which is valued at about \$28,000. He is charging \$25 a week, which I think is a pretty reasonable rental. I try to do as I say.

Mr. Moore interjected.

Mr. WRIGHT: The honourable member can drive out there tomorrow and check with the tenants if he likes. We have to look closely at this problem of increasing rents, because it is one that concerns us all.

I did not clearly hear the Minister's comments about the period for the notice to quit. I would like him to explain—and he might do it now through you, Mr. Hewitt—whether or not the minimum period for notice to quit is being increased to 14 days with the maximum still 28 days. Previously it was seven days and 28 days. I would be pleased if the Minister would clarify that point.

We will be looking very closely at many points in the Bill. There have been problems on both sides. We have all had experiences of shocking landlords and shocking tenants. I know of cases where tenants have gone into a house simply to pay rent for two weeks, determined not to pay it for many, many months after that. I know of other tenants who have gone into a house and said they were prepared to pay \$35 a week because it was big. On their income they certainly could not afford to pay it, but the idea was to sublet it immediately. They got in other people who paid a fair amount of money for rooms.

Those things should not happen. There should be protection to allow the landlord to recover arrears in rent. There should be protection for him against damage. He should have right of entry. But so should there be very clear rights for the tenants, because after all we are dealing with a very important aspect of their lives. They have to live in those houses and they should be protected against invasion of their privacy. I was pleased to hear the Minister say that landlords will not be allowed in at night-time, which has often happened. Now they will have to give notice—I think he said it would be 48 hours' notice—and it will be during day-time only. Surely that is necessary.

I am sure that the matter of rent increases will be the subject of some debate, but again I think we should leave it till the Bill is actually printed.

Mr. SIMPSON (Cooroora) (10.23 p.m.): I commend the Minister for bringing forward this legislation to clarify the situation that arises when people in the community do not know their tenancy rights. In Queensland a lot of people rent houses and flats. I do not think it is clear just what people's rights are at times. The law is misleading and dates back to legislation that is a bit obscure. If a building is burnt down, there is an

obligation on the person renting it to continue to pay his rent, when in fact he has nothing to live in. I am interested in a provision to bring that up to date.

I think an agreement in the form of a guide-line as to the general intent of the landlord and the tenant is important. Terms are so varied that it is better to have the intent clearly expressed that the owner is expected to provide and maintain the premises in reasonable condition and repair, rather than have them become run down, and to ensure that the tenant is not disturbed while he is occupying the residence. At the same time there needs to be an obligation on the tenant that he look after the premises, and that he pay for any damage he causes. It is necessary that these facts be known to tenants and landlords.

The inflation that is rampant at the moment because of the actions of the Federal Labor Government has brought about a situation where property-owners are trying to obtain a reasonable return on their capital. They often consider clauses covering escalation in rents. I do not think that that was mentioned by the Minister. However, it seems that the legislation will provide a more ready means of increasing rent by giving one month's notice. Time will tell how adequate that provision is to cover this problem.

It is often the extremes that cause the problems in agreements. For instance, an extreme landlord might get upset with his tenant and try all means to annoy him. The obligation will now be on the landlord to give the tenant the privacy of his dwelling and not to disturb him. At the other extreme there is the tenant who dislikes the owner and sets about destroying the property. When we have the Bill before us we will see if that aspect is covered adequately so that the owner has a real means of ensuring that damage is made good. That is often a difficulty when tenants damage property and then do a moonlight flit. Often they are hard to trace. It would be very difficult to legislate to stop that sort of action.

In the past, the right of entry into property has been vague. If this is spelt out clearly so that members of the public will know where they stand, it will be all to the good.

I commend the Minister for bringing this legislation forward. I hope it will make the way clear for the owner and the tenant to enjoy the sort of amicable relationship which is very important in this day and age.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (10.27 p.m.): I agree with Labor's shadow Minister in relation to the fairly short period of 18 days allowed for finalisation of this legislation. This is a very important piece of legislation for many citizens. Large numbers of homes are rented today. I think that we should have spent a little more time on legislation that will affect so many people.

I want to talk about Australian Homefinders. I do not know, after hearing the Minister's explanation, whether we are legislating in such a way that these home-finding agencies will be debarred—or will they be covered by another Bill at another time?

Mr. Knox: That comes under the Auctioneers and Agents Act.

Mr. BURNS: That will cover it?

As I said, I want to talk about Australian Homefinders of 272 Petrie Terrace and Normanby Fiveways, Brisbane. I have a photocopy of a contract that young people are asked to sign when they are looking for a house, an apartment, a flat or a flat. They have to pay a \$20 fee. The contract reads—

"How To Use Service

"At Our Office: Simply present Policy and Proper Identification.

"Office Hours:

"8 a.m.—9 p.m.

"By Phone: Call . . . only this no. will give you listings. State policy no. and listings will be given (Maximum 2 calls daily)"

Mr. Knox: Is this a renting or—

Mr. BURNS: This is a rental home. A person is looking for a house to rent, looks in the columns of "The Courier-Mail" and sees Australian Homefinders. There are a couple of other firms at present. I did ask a question about this matter. Because some of them might be fairly reasonable agencies, I do not want to mention their names. However, I have seen statements by Mr. Postle and others from the R.E.I.Q. warning people about the actions of these agencies.

The agreement also says—

"The agreement, hereafter called policy, is good for one year at Australian Homefinders in Australia . . ."

Its business address at the Normanby Fiveways is now closed. This agreement, under which \$20 was taken from the person concerned, was made on 17 May of this year. She thought that she might be able to get a flat by 17 May next year. This office is now closed, and her \$20 has gone. Only two phone calls a day are allowed, and each time she went to a place where this company told her to go she found that it was either rented or had never been available for rental. When she knocked on the door at one of the places to which she was sent, the lady opening the door said, "We have never put our house up for rental, my dear. I don't know why you have come here." In other words, \$20 has simply been taken from the home seeker.

This is not the first person who has complained to me, but she is the first who has been able to produce a copy of the agreement. I continue with the agreement. It reads—

"This agreement . . . is good for one year with Australian Homefinders in Australia for as many listings and for as many moves as policy holders may require."

I repeat that they are allowed only two phone calls a day. The policy continues—

"Although diligent effort is made to keep listings current, no guarantee is made that the listings are available when given to the holder. Abuses or unauthorised uses of Homefinders services terminate this policy. No guarantee is made that the holder will find rental properties. No warranty is expressed or implied other than as stated hereunder are made. The company is not responsible for any losses of any nature whatsoever. The policy is not assignable and non-transferable. Listing requirements may be changed at no additional fee only when policy is presented in person at the office by the holder. In the event of loss of the policy, Australian Homefinders must be notified and \$1 replacement charge will be assessed. The company may limit the number of policy holders assigned to one policy. The policy remains the property of the company and must be surrendered upon demand. No refunds."

That is in very fine print; I found it hard to stumble through reading it. The requirement is a \$20 fee.

Quite truthfully, that organisation, with all those restrictions written into its agreement, should not be allowed to operate at all. It is fairly obvious that it is a gigantic rip-off. If a person can get a number of people who want flats to pay him \$20 each and he has only one or two listed, he is doing very well for himself. It seems that it is not even necessary to have one listed, because people who have complained to me were never sent to flats that were suitable or even within their price range. If a person can get 50 clients in a week, he is making \$1,000 without providing any service at all. If this type of agreement does not come under what is now proposed, I hope that it will be given consideration at a later date.

I should also like to raise the matter of the rental of caravans. More and more people are moving into caravan parks, and in some cases rentals of \$25 to \$30 a week are being charged for the right to put a caravan on a small block of concrete and plug into an electricity point in a caravan park or a back yard. I make the point that never could one find more difficult landlords than some seaside resort caravan park proprietors. I know of one caravan park, which is not in my electorate, where the proprietor said to a tenant on

Tuesday, "I don't like what your children were doing in the park yesterday. You will be out by Wednesday night or I will tow you out the gate."

Mr. Lowes: How do you spell that?

Mr. BURNS: "T-o-w", not "t-o-e".

The point I am making is that whilst we are talking about tenancies, we have to realise that we must live with modern conditions. Caravans are part of modern life. There are thousands of people living in them, and rather permanently. No doubt members will recall the argument that arose not very long ago when the Brisbane City Council decided to enforce the camp regulations of 1948, which provided that people in caravan parks were supposed to move after six weeks, and, after moving to another site, move again after another six weeks. Thousands of people said, "We have been living in caravans for three or four years. We don't want to move. We want to live permanently in a caravan, and we are concerned about this situation." They had my support and sympathy.

I am also concerned—and my concern is shared by the Real Estate Institute of Queensland—about the harshness of some tenancy agreements. This was mentioned by the honourable member for Rockhampton, who spoke about some type of trial agreement.

Mr. Moore: What is your attitude to rent control?

Mr. BURNS: I shall state that in a moment.

So many people are so desperate for housing that when a landlord says that a house is available, and the rent is reasonable, they are prepared to sign virtually anything. A newspaper article quoting Mr. Postle on this subject reads—

"Examples of tough new agreements include no visitors after 11 p.m. (or in one form 10 p.m.), no radio, record player or T.V. after 10 p.m."

Late night movies start at midnight, but some tenants are not allowed to watch them, because they have signed an agreement that prohibits their doing so. The article continued—

"No guests staying overnight in the house other than the lawful tenants; no disturbing noise of any description; and the landlord to have the right to enter the premises at any hour of the night or day."

From the Minister's outline of the Bill, I think it covers some of these points. The article continued—

"Parking is another target of rule-happy landlords."

This is Mr. Postle talking. But the next day we see Mr. Darveniza, a member of the Property Owners' Association—

Mr. Moore: One of your fellows; he is a member of the A.L.P.

Mr. BURNS: I don't think so. Make your own speech later on and start to attribute these people to your own movement. I am talking now about a fellow I would not think would join the Labor movement, to be quite truthful. The point I want to make about Mr. Darveniza is that he does not agree with the R.E.I.Q. tenancy agreement forms. He thinks that they are not used by most property managers—because they are not tough enough. It is fairly obvious that he thinks he has to do something about a certain type of tenant. I am equally sure that we must act against repressive landlords.

One matter I did not hear mentioned in the Minister's speech was the question of bonds and that is something that is very important to tenants. Most landlords today are demanding a bond, and I do not blame them for that. But the bond should be just that—a bond. If there is any argument at all, the landlord retains the bond and it is a matter of the tenant having to go to the Small Claims Tribunal to get his money back. If it is to be handled as a bond, we should be starting to make some determination about the size of the bond, because many bonds are being treated as key money. At the termination of the tenancy agreement or when the person is preparing to leave the house or the flat, the landlord comes in and says, "Look, that wall is dirty. That curtain wasn't dirty and this piece wasn't like this," or something like that, and keeps the tenant's bond. Even when we say to the tenant, "You ought to go to the Small Claims Tribunal and argue this with the landlord," we find in most cases that they do not want any trouble, and finally they give in and the landlord just pockets another little bit of key money.

I often wonder whether bonds should be deposited with a third party or put into trust so that the landlord does not pocket the money. A \$100 bond on 10 flats is \$1,000 that the landlord puts into the bank and receives 10 per cent interest on it. It is another charge. If it is a bond and the tenant says, "I will repair your place to the value of \$100," or, "This is against my doing any unlawful act on your premises," then let the bond be placed in some sort of trust fund. Why not? Why should it be left in the landlord's hand, especially if he is using it as an opportunity to make extra money? I understand the Minister spoke about the rights of tenants and landlords in relation to repairs, evictions, inspections and the right of privacy. I think it is very important that copies of this Act be made available to the public and placed in areas where the rental of flats is commonplace.

I know of landlords in Hemmant and other places right now who are buying old homes where industrial developers are about to come in. They are receiving \$40 a week rent on a property they paid \$14,000 for. When the rates rose by a small amount this year, many landlords increased rent by \$2 to \$5 a week. There was not a property

in the area on which the rates paid to the city council went up by \$100 to \$250 a year, but they used the rate increase as a justification to put up the rent.

Mr. Frawley: You bought a house for \$9,000 and sold it to a woman for \$19,000.

Mr. BURNS: I do not think I have ever bought a house for \$9,000. That is the problem with the little lies you tell in this Chamber from time to time; you make them up and then fall flat on your face. I have a house that I am selling. I have just had tenants in and, quite truthfully, I would not like to be a landlord again. I have seen the house that I had at East Brisbane when I shifted—

Mr. Lane: How much do they pay you, Tom?

Mr. BURNS: They pay a fairly good rent. I do not know the exact amount. I was trying to work it out before.

Mr. Lane: Have a guess.

Mr. BURNS: I would say it was about \$60 a week. There is a flat and the house upstairs. It might have been a bit more than that, because the house was sold the other day for \$35,000 and I think the people are moving in on the 24th of this month. I'm not too sure of the details. The funny part about it is that before I moved to Cannon Hill I was offered \$39,000, but because of the floods and the economic situation today I am getting \$4,000 less. The return on \$39,000 or \$35,000 was not worth while, but I make the point that as a result of my experience I realise that there is a need for the protection of landlords as well as tenants. In a very short period after I rented the home and shifted to Cannon Hill, I realised that there can be tenants who move into one's home and have no respect at all for any property. I have walked into many premises in my electorate when landlords have said to, "Come and see what has happened." I have seen some of the despicable acts committed by the tenants.

However, I have also seen some of the things done by landlords. I have in mind particularly one landlord in my area who is not loath to take the windows out of a home or to say, "Well, I am going to do something about repairing the sink or the stove" and remove it and not bring it back.

Mr. Lowes: We are stopping that.

Mr. BURNS: I hope we are. It is not merely a matter of taking one side or the other. If we are to do something about improving the situation of tenants, then we must also do something to increase the number of landlords who will provide rental accommodation. I was not getting the return on my home at East Brisbane that I could get if I invested the money in a building society. Why would a man invest his money in premises for rental if he can get a better return elsewhere? If we are talking about

assisting people who want to provide homes for rental, as a business proposition we must give them a reasonable return on their investment. If we are to do that, we must do something about controlling the type of tenants they have in the homes.

Mr. Frawley: You are a capitalist at heart.

Mr. BURNS: There you are, Mr. Hewitt. When I talk of fair play, I am a capitalist at heart! One can always get an inane interjection from the honourable member for Murrumba. Every time one attempts to make a sensible contribution in this Chamber, Mickey Mouse from Murrumba comes in and away we go again!

As I understood the Minister, he spoke about seven days and 14 days and the landlord in future simply giving the tenants a letter telling them they have to get out.

Mr. Lane: This is the longest five-minute speech I have ever heard.

Mr. BURNS: I am sorry. I got carried away and mentioned a few things that I could perhaps raise at the second-reading stage after I have seen the Bill.

I am a little bit worried about the landlord being able to write a letter to a tenant and say, "I am giving you a certain amount of time to get out of the premises." In mentioning a very short period, I think the Minister said that there is no question of argument. It is a fact of life that, on a week-to-week tenancy, he must get out.

Mr. Knox: I will explain it later.

Mr. BURNS: It is a very short time. I am thinking of people who are away on holidays and people who move around the State. There are many people in such situations these days.

Mr. Knox: I think I should correct you, because you seem to be making an error. You may have misunderstood what I said. This relates to the lodging of notification of a dispute.

Mr. BURNS: The person concerned has five days in which to lodge it?

Mr. Knox: Yes.

Mr. BURNS: I will wait till I read the Bill before discussing that further.

I should also like to raise the question of subletting. I think we should be very wary about formalising the subletting of residential homes, because it usually leads to some sort of rip-off against the second tenant. It is a rip-off situation that allows people to exploit both the second tenant and the landlord. Someone rents a home at \$40 a week. He decides to sublet it, and usually he lowers the standard of accommodation by subdivision of areas. In this case we talk about the standard of habitation and the general standard of living for the people in the home. And then we allow subletting, which is one of the easiest and

quickest ways of lowering the standard of living and the standard of accommodation of people who are renting homes.

On the question of the right of inspection, I do not know that a tenant should have to be sent a letter giving 48 hours' notice of the landlord's intention to go into a home in daylight hours. I think it is more reasonable that a person who owns a home and his tenant should have an agreement under which the landlord is allowed to go in and out of a home at regular set periods. The requirement that a letter be sent should be there only for cases in which a dispute occurs.

I welcome the Bill. Having had short experience as a landlord and having represented good tenants harshly treated by bad landlords, I can understand the need for it.

Mr. LANE (Merthyr) (10.45 p.m.): This is a vital piece of legislation in that it replaces the Termination of Tenancies Act, which has been a burden to many of us who are concerned with the continual friction that arises between landlord and tenant. The Minister, as well as his officers and parliamentary committee members, has worked very hard and long to formulate legislation that would do justice to both sides in the event of a dispute.

Mr. Moore: You worked very well on it.

Mr. LANE: Thanks very much.

This area of legislation is a very sensitive one affecting the everyday lives of people. The Bill contains provisions relating to residence, the homes of people, whether they be the humble flat, the old home divided into flatettes or the palatial \$100 a week apartment in New Farm or Hamilton on the bank of the Brisbane River.

The Bill deals with the problems confronted by landlords and tenants no matter where they live in this vast State, from the Outback to the densely populated central suburbs of Brisbane. As I have said, the people who were concerned with the drafting of this legislation have put a lot of work into it and have studied it in every detail. We have examined every comma and every full stop, and we hope that what we have come up with is reasonable.

The general philosophical approach to this legislation has been one of flexibility. We have endeavoured not to lay down too many rules or too many inflexible guide-lines that would perhaps perpetuate the problems that arose under the Termination of Tenancies Act. It was necessary, however, to impose some basic obligations on both parties in the landlord-tenant relationship.

In the first instance, the tenant has a number of obligations as outlined by the Minister and they seem to me, and I am sure to other honourable members, to be the absolute minimum requirements. Nevertheless, I do not see any need for expanding them. The Bill also provides for a number

of implied obligations on the landlord, and they are very reasonable, too. The obligations are statutory obligations and cannot be contracted out of in any way by either party.

Having laid down these basic obligations, we sought to leave the matter to a common law relationship between landlord and tenant, to enable them to enter into such agreement as they saw fit without encroaching on the basic statutory obligations imposed by the Bill.

Both landlord and tenant will retain the freedom to enter into any fair agreement. Any agreement that sought to encroach on these basic obligations would not be a fair one, so neither party is permitted by law hereafter to enter into such an agreement.

Mr. Wright: What about a model agreement in the schedule?

Mr. LANE: That was one of the ideas considered, and it was thought that it should be left to the parties to settle the form of agreement to be entered into. Most agreements that I have seen contain the obligations prescribed by the Bill, and I suggest that any further obligations are a matter for agreement between the parties.

Having laid down the basic rules, the Bill makes certain other provisions. It does not, for example, ban security deposits or bonds, something which I am sure members of the Opposition would like it to do. In our present fast-moving society security deposits or bonds are very necessary. Security deposits cover the landlord against any damage that might be done by the tenant to the property during the period of tenancy. For example, they cover him against non-payment of electricity accounts, the cost of cleaning the premises and the evasion of payment of rent by the tenant on vacating the premises. Something is to be said for security deposits or bonds that can be an advantage to the tenant. In depressed times he may wish to vacate the premises and have insufficient funds to repair damage, pay rent arrears or a large electric light bill. It is envisaged that the landlord will be permitted to hold a bond to cover such possibilities. At the same time the tenant will be relieved of the burden of having to worry about them at the time of his departure.

On other occasions the Minister has referred to the Small Claims Tribunal being available to iron out differences between a tenant and a heavy-handed landlord who attempts to retain a security deposit unjustly. There are good and bad landlords. Some very greedy, ruthless people rent properties to tenants who are at a disadvantage when they are desperate to find accommodation.

This evening two members of the Opposition referred to their pecuniary interests. The honourable member for Rockhampton spoke of a rental of \$25 a week on a property valued at \$28,000. We can conclude, from a simple mathematical exercise, that that

represents a return of approximately 4 per cent gross on the capital outlay. The Leader of the Opposition spoke of a property that he would rent at \$60 a week, which represents a return of about 7½ to 8 per cent. It seems that the Leader of the Opposition is not quite as generous as the honourable member for Rockhampton in that he would seek to charge almost twice the rental asked by the honourable member for Rockhampton. However, I am sure that none of us would disagree with the proposition that a very low rental was charged. If Labor were ever to be in power and introduced a form of fair rents based on such a percentage return it is not unreasonable to say that there would be a lack of houses for tenancy. Today, an investor can secure a return of 10 per cent on the safest of investments. Returns of 4, 7½ or 8 per cent, with all the worries that go with renting a house, are not realistic. On many occasions, Opposition members are not realistic when dealing with financial matters.

I spoke of ruthless, greedy landlords. At the other extreme there are some terrible tenants. In my electorate I have heard of gangs of bikies moving into flats. One of them cleans himself up, dresses reasonably, presents himself with his girlfriend whom he purports to be his wife, and the unsuspecting landlord admits them thinking they are a young married couple. As soon as the sun sets, seven or eight other bikies arrive, move in and take over. They kick the walls in and do awful damage. They refuse to pay rent and defy all efforts to evict them. In such circumstances most landlords find that all they can do is wait until the bikies tire of that pad, or whatever they call it, and leave of their own volition. There are the two extremes in this relationship.

The Bill has had to provide machinery to deal not only with reasonable tenants and landlords but also with the two extremes I have referred to. That, of course, is dealt with in the section that refers to eviction proceedings. I do not think it is any secret that two forms of eviction proceeding are provided for under the Act. There are two periods of time, depending on the relationship existing at the time. If the tenant is a good one and has not been in breach of any of the obligations—either the statutory ones under the Act or some voluntary ones he may have entered into in an agreement—he is allowed a longer period in which to move out. On the other hand, the tenant who breaks one of those obligations—the gang of bikies or the person who does not pay his rent for some reason—does not have quite the same protection, but he is still afforded the protection of what could be described as reasonable notice.

The provision for those two different approaches depending on the behaviour, the situation of the tenant and the relationship between the landlord and the tenant—is an

admirable one and is to be commended. I am sure that the machinery to be used will satisfy most people.

The machinery for eviction seeks in the first instance to avoid unnecessary court hearings so that the matter can be sorted out quietly by way of what I have described as private judgment, given without the necessity of going before a court, but it still preserves that right of what we would understand to be some sort of appeal. It is a right to have a hearing before a magistrate—a hearing which could be to the advantage of either the landlord or the tenant, depending on who had right on his side.

So this Bill is one that we have been looking forward to. I represent an electorate that is vitally concerned with this subject. I have been looking forward to some progressive and up-to-date legislation to regulate the relationship between landlord and tenant. All human beings can make mistakes, but the drafting of this measure has been done with the best of intentions. I hope that it will be successful. I believe that it will. A lot of work has been put into it by the Minister, his officers and his committee, of which I am a member. As this is a very sensitive area that affects people in their everyday lives, I hope that the Bill will be given a fair trial in the community and that all honourable members in the Chamber will approach it in a reasonable way and not seek to make cheap political capital out of the debates that will ensue.

Mr. HANSON (Port Curtis) (10.58 p.m.): This measure, which carries with it a grave social obligation on the part of the Government, will create problems for responsible members in the Chamber. There are 11 very important, prominent and responsible people in this Assembly.

Mr. Knox: Where are they?

Mr. HANSON: Every single member of the Opposition.

Naturally, a Residential Tenancies Bill or a Bill relating to the Landlord and Tenant Act has grave implications and exercises the minds of all of us. If there were very happy relationships and 100 per cent accord in matters of tenancy, I daresay the lives of the 11 members of the Opposition would be very happy ones indeed.

Mr. Moore: How many houses do you have for rental?

Mr. HANSON: In reply to the very vocal member for Windsor—he is vocal now, but most times he is incoherent—I remind him that if he cares to go to the Queensland Housing Commission he will find quite clearly that my file ranks with some of the biggest of those honourable members who make representations on behalf of the oppressed people of this State in an attempt to find decent housing for them.

Unfortunately this measure might result in considerably more submissions from the humble people we represent. Many tenancy Bills that come before this Assembly do just that. They accelerate the tempo of work of members of the Australian Labor Party who have a general, genuine and profound concern to see that the humble people of this State are adequately and properly housed.

As the Minister said, the Termination of Tenancies Act 1970 has been repealed by the Property Law Act as from 1 December this year. That Act will have application to the leases and tenancies that will not be covered by this measure, which covers solely residential tenancies. As the Minister said, the Property Law Act may not be the subject of frequent amendment, but I dare say that a considerable number of amendments will subsequently be made to the legislation we are discussing.

I quite agree with the honourable member for Rockhampton who said that the Minister has introduced the measure at a time when very serious political matters in the nation will occupy the minds and energy of honourable members. He introduces it in indecent haste at a late hour of the session, 18 days before the provisions of the Property Law Act come into effect. After all the talk and propaganda given to the media by the Minister and his stooges over the past 18 months the measure is now before us. The Minister is asking us to consider it, not in a very microscopic fashion, but merely saying, "This is it. We want the imprimatur of members of the Legislative Assembly." Naturally, the Opposition committee will have a very close look at the Bill.

Obviously it contains very serious intents and imports. The Minister has laid down several implied obligations appertaining to both the landlord and the tenant. What he has put forward on behalf of the landlord indicates that the tenant shall maintain the house in a good and clean condition fit for habitation, maintain the goods and chattels, maintain the house in a reasonably good state of repair and satisfy the various health and safety standards of the local authority. The landlord also has certain obligations, and naturally they are spelt out.

When a Minister introduces a piece of legislation it is difficult to absorb completely every single condition that is contained in it, particularly when it is a very complex, or seemingly complex, Bill dealing with a grave and important issue.

I took notes to the effect that the Minister said that under common law, as it now stands, there are minimal obligations in tenancy, and that most of them could be replaced by express provisions in any tenancy agreement. I think he went on to say that all previous agreements will remain in force until this measure becomes law. I hope that in his reply tonight or in moving the second reading

he will crystallise the matter a little so that we can get a general conception of the intentions of the legislation.

No doubt the Opposition will be very interested in the provisions applying to termination of tenancies for a reason, and their termination without reason. These are new principles that are being introduced, and naturally they are completely opposed to what is presently contained in the Termination of Tenancies Act.

The requirement for a landlord to give one month's notice in writing to a tenant that he desires to increase the rent is another matter that the Committee will have to consider very seriously.

Other speakers have referred to other principles of the Bill. The Leader of the Opposition referred to security deposits. He believes that they are necessary. As one who has rented premises, he would have a very practical knowledge of security deposits. Naturally they can cause considerable confrontation between landlord and tenant. I did not hear the Minister say whether it was the intention of the legislation not to prohibit the asking and collecting of security deposits. As the honourable member for Merthyr said, disputes over security deposits could possibly go before the Small Claims Tribunal. I should like the Minister to comment on that point. No doubt such disputes could possibly go before the Small Claims Tribunal, but there are many people in various areas of the State who would find it inconvenient to take that course.

The Minister has had his photograph displayed throughout the State in many pamphlets, brochures and newspaper advertisements detailing the facilities made available by his department. He could, on the passage of this legislation, make known to the people of the State the courses that are open for the resolving of disputes between landlords and tenants over security deposits.

One thing that causes a good deal of concern in the landlord-tenant relationship is the withdrawal of essential services by landlords. I have known of complete ratbags of landlords who have gone even as far as removing windows and taking out louvres in an attempt to remove tenants.

Mr. Wright: Even steps.

Mr. HANSON: Yes, even removing steps.

Mr. Lane: You are not in the confessional now.

Mr. HANSON: Sometimes I would like to be there to hear the beggings and confessions of the honourable member for Merthyr. No doubt that would be a most interesting exercise. If I were the father confessor, I can assure the honourable member for Merthyr that his penance would fit his misdeeds. It would be better than six months!

Some landlords have taken all types of action to persecute good people in an attempt to get them out of their homes. They have done this not because they have had bad tenants but because they have an almost psychopathic approach to people and will go to drastic lengths to remove them. Incidentally, that was an offence under the Landlord and Tenant Act of 1948, and it was removed by the Termination of Tenancies Act. Naturally I believe that the Minister should have a very serious look at these matters. No doubt he will take notice of me, perhaps not now but in the years ahead, because he realises that I am making a good submission. He has been telling people what a wonderful Minister he is for trying to rectify some of the wrongs in the legislation.

The right of entry by landlords is another matter that requires considerable thought. Many landlords think that they have the right to burst in on tenants at any time, to bring in prospective buyers or to come along in a Sherlock Holmes fashion and try to interfere with people's lives. Sometimes this turns into real persecution. As the present administration believes in the great free-enterprise policy, no doubt there are many members of the Government who believe that landlords have a right to burst in at any time, and for no reason. Provisions dealing with the right of entry will be watched very carefully by the Opposition.

We believe in the principle of entry during the day and with reasonable notice. I think the honourable member for Rockhampton said that the Minister mentioned 48 hours' notice. I hope he heard him correctly. But the matter does not end there. No doubt clauses will be written into agreements about imminent danger to the premises or something like that. Usually agreements have a clause which offers some sort of assistance to the landlord which, in effect, allows him to burst in at any time. The provision requiring 48 hours' notice is purely to cloud the issue and to allow the landlord to enter the premises to protect them from someone engaging in riotous conduct. This would merely be an escape clause for the friends of members of the Government who, no doubt, have consulted many landlords before approving of this legislation in their own caucus.

I do know that mention was made of the right to sublet. This, too, sometimes causes considerable argument. I understand that it is proposed to provide that a tenant may, with the written consent of the landlord, assign all right, title and interest under the tenancy or sublet the dwelling-house. Naturally, one has to look for a fixed term of tenancy. If it were for six, nine or 12 months that would put a different complexion on the matter. Whether the landlord could withhold his permission or not would then be a matter of argument—it would be a different ball game. This, too, will undoubtedly exercise the minds of members of the

Opposition who will be studying this measure. The shadow Minister for Justice (Mr. Wright) has approved the fact that the Magistrates Court will continue to have some jurisdiction to determine complaints and order the recovery of possessions unlawfully held over. We do not want to see the rights of people taken away unduly.

As I said, this is a very important measure. After all, whether a person owns or rents a house it is home to him. In developing areas such as mine, many hundreds of people come to live in caravans and rented houses, and every day they seem to face a new problem, and we are confronted with hundreds of forms of seeming injustice.

As I said, I regret that the Minister has introduced this measure with indecent haste. I hope that the Committee will study it very intently. No doubt we will be able to make an improved contribution in the second-reading debate.

Mr. DOUMANY (Kurilpa) (11.15 p.m.): I support the Minister in his introduction of the Bill. At the outset, I point out to honourable members that the Committee is dealing with a subject that is as old as the human race. The business of letting and renting property is an ancient business, and in our community it is probably the closest thing we have to the bazaars of the East.

Many little people are engaged in the business of letting property; certainly many little people also rent property. That is not the sort of picture that honourable members opposite like to paint. They would have us believe that there is a bloated plutocrat on one side of the fence and a disadvantaged person on the other. To be fair to them, I concede that in this debate they have raised points on both sides, but often the Labor Party tends to paint an alarming picture of exploitation.

If we are to look at this question, Mr. Hewitt, undoubtedly we must look at it as a business, because no-one will put his money where his mouth is if he does not receive a reasonable return on the money he invests. I have been on both sides of the fence. I have been a tenant; I have been a landlord. I was a landlord for about two years, and that was enough for me. I assure the Committee that there is far less worry attached to being a tenant than there is to being a landlord.

As honourable members are aware, the business of letting is a very important part of our economy and our community life, and we must look, as the Minister and his committee have looked, to the stabilisation of this business. We must look to a degree of justice for those who participate in it, whether as landlords or tenants, and we must look to the maintenance of standards that are acceptable to the community. If we look at the current economic climate—the climate that has persisted since the Whitlam administration came to office in 1972—and at the high rate of inflation and

the high rates of interest, it becomes fairly obvious that the business of being a landlord of private residential dwellings has not been a happy one. It has in fact been an area of singularly poor returns.

Honourable members are aware that at the moment one can get a return from finance companies of about 12 per cent on medium-term debentures or deposits with nothing to be done and no worries, provided one picks one's institutions carefully. Let us look at that return, which is available as a base level, and compare it with the costs that must be incurred on any property. Honourable members should keep in mind that a cheaper and a little older property built, say, of timber will be dearer to maintain and the base costs will be up. A dearer property built in brick and, say, five years old will cost less to maintain, but the initial cost will be greater. So one might say that it is six of one and half a dozen of the other.

Let me take as an example the return on an average investment by a typical investor in my electorate or in the electorate of the honourable member for Merthyr. He may not be a big investor; in fact, it may be an investment by a family that has been thrifty and put something aside in order to build an asset. The investment may be in one house or in a duplex. Let us assume that the investment is \$25,000, which is a fairly modest sum. I would be very surprised if they could maintain that property, with fixed costs, such as rates, insurance and maintenance, for anything less than about \$750 a year or \$15 a week. That is a basal cost that must be recovered before anything else happens.

If they wanted to equate with the 12 per cent return—in other words, if after paying that \$750 they wanted to net a return of 12 per cent to equate with the sort of return that could be obtained on the open market—they would need to receive a gross return of \$75 a week on their investment of \$25,000. I am not saying they are doing it, but this is the economic picture that presents itself, and, quite frankly, I would not regard that as anything spectacular.

As honourable members know, it is almost impossible to let a house worth \$25,000 at a rental of \$75 a week. If the landlord has managed to divide it into three units, he might succeed in getting \$25 a week for each of those units; but once again I would be very surprised if anyone could find a property worth \$25,000 that is capable of being divided into three habitable flats.

In the light of current interest rates of from 12 to 15 per cent, this industry is by no means a healthy one.

Mr. Lamont: They are lucky to get a 6 per cent return on the property market today.

Mr. DOUMANY: As the honourable member for South Brisbane has indicated, 6 per cent is more likely to be the net return, and that is a very poor return indeed. It is an irrational investment for people who want to have their money residing in some avenue that will allow them to maintain their economic position.

Mr. Wright: But the property is improving in value as well.

Mr. DOUMANY: I take the point raised by the honourable member for Rockhampton in relation to capital appreciation. I would point out to him that it has plateaued quite markedly, and in some cases there has been a slight decline. In other words, it is a negative factor.

Mr. Lindsay: There is also depreciation, the cost of repainting and so on.

Mr. DOUMANY: That is quite correct. Notwithstanding capital gains, there is no doubt that we must be concerned at the supply-and-demand situation, that is, about whether there is sufficient incentive to landlords to stay in business and to add to the supply of properties that can be let. That is a most important consideration, and I am certain that it is uppermost in the Minister's mind. If we maintain a landlord-and-tenant system that provides a serious disincentive to the landlord, we will find that the supply will dry up and rents will sky-rocket. That will result in the imposition of a crushing burden on the needy, because more often than not it is the needy who must resort to renting accommodation from landlords.

That brings me to my next point, namely, the human aspect of this industry. As I have said before, this is a very personal business, and whilst we might legislate to afford protection to either party to a limited extent, we cannot hope to legislate or regulate this industry to the nth degree to cover every contingency. There are, after all, two parties agreeing voluntarily on certain aspects and perhaps overlooking many others, and there comes a time when there is a disagreement or a dispute, or when one party is much stronger than the other and takes advantage of the weaker party, or when one party is more unscrupulous than the other and takes advantage of him.

It is a very personal and human business. We should bear in mind that amongst landlords we have on the one hand, some professionals who are in this business virtually on a full-time basis with a large investment and, on the other, a myriad of amateurs, ordinary people with a small investment who are in the letting business. Some are letting not as an investment but as a temporary expedient. When a person is transferred and is unable to get his price for his property, he will let it on a temporary basis, but it may drag on. The letting business can be very difficult for such people. It is important to protect their interests—protect them from unscrupulous tenants.

There are also professional tenants. Some people do very well for themselves as tenants, and we must protect landlords from them. As every honourable member knows, a large number of people are forced to become tenants because that is the only way they can get accommodation. Some of them have a complete lack of knowledge of their rights, which, together with their economic position, means that they are totally disadvantaged. I am sure all of us have seen shameful exploitation of such people. Deserted wives, sick people and those who have suffered a severe personal blow are particularly vulnerable. I am sure that the Minister is striving to provide maximum protection for them and at the same time trying to preserve the flexibility that is the right and entitlement of every landlord.

This is where the situation is very sensitive. A little while ago the honourable member for Merthyr said that this is a sensitive area. There is no call for ham-fisted action in legislation or regulations, and there is no call for emotional and heavily loaded political debate. We are dealing with legislation that is as close to people's feelings as any legislation can be. I hope that all honourable members in the Chamber, particularly those on the Opposition benches, realise that we want an adequate number of letting properties for private accommodation. There is no doubt that the enormous mismanagement of the national economy in the past three years, with high rates of inflation and interest, has made the whole business of property letting most unattractive for investors and ordinary citizens alike. I cannot see how things will improve, firstly, until economic conditions improve and interest rates are lowered, and secondly, until we get a greater degree of flexibility and freedom for landlords, consistent with the protection of the rights of tenants.

I am opposed totally to rent control. It is anathema to me because it is typical socialist dogma which presumes that, by imposing the dead hand of Government intervention, all problems will be solved. All it does is to drive an artificial price structure into an industry. It deprives the weak and the needy, because they are not able to cope with it. It brings about black markets. It brings about neglect of properties by landlords who get fed up with it and it brings about a shortage of available dwellings for rental. Rent control must be something that we in this Government oppose at all costs.

I commend the Minister on bringing forward this legislation. I trust that when the Bill is printed there will be a realisation that the Minister and his committee have done an honest and diligent job in tackling this most important area of our community's economy.

Mr. BYRNE (Belmont) (11.31 p.m.): In speaking at the introductory stage, I wish to point out that the Bill does not specifically deal with the greatest areas of importance in the Belmont electorate. Within my electorate there are some 1,500 to 2,000 Housing Commission rental homes as well as some 700 or 800 caravans. Many people in caravans, and certainly those in the Housing Commission rental homes, are in a landlord-and-tenant relationship. Indeed, with the Housing Commission rental homes, the Housing Commission itself is the landlord. For those people in caravan parks, the owners of the parks are the landlords. However, there is no reason for us to consider that, because people are in Housing Commission rental homes or caravans, they are lesser citizens and therefore not entitled to the same justice as other people in the community by enjoying the benefits of this legislation.

I think it is most important for the Minister to explain to the Chamber the situation of people who are in caravan parks. What landlord-and-tenant relationship exists in caravan parks and Housing Commission rental homes? In previous speeches I have said that I believe that the Housing Commission—admittedly because of a lack of funds from Government welfare programmes, and certainly from what I see of the houses in my own area—is the worst landlord in the State. That indeed is serious condemnation.

As I have mentioned also in previous speeches, of all the Government buildings those that are worst maintained are Housing Commission rental homes.

The question I pose is this: are there two sets of rules? Do we operate on a double set of standards? Is there to be in this Bill one provision for people who are in a private landlord-and-tenant relationship but a different situation for the people who are Housing Commission tenants, as one might see if one reads the tenancy agreement that the Housing Commission proposes? Similarly, must we also conclude, as I gather, that there is no provision for people who are in caravan parks—although that indeed is still a landlord-and-tenant situation—giving them an entitlement to the same justice, the same rights and the same provisions as this Government believes to be of advantage and benefit to the other people of the State generally?

I appreciate that problems exist in this area. The Crown is not usually bound by Acts of the Parliament. However, I point out that there is indeed a grave necessity for it to be bound by this measure. It would appear that in the past the Government has failed in its obligations on maintenance and those matters on which landlords are to be bound by this Bill.

Mr. Wright: You are aware that there are tenancy conditions that have to be agreed to?

Mr. BYRNE: If the honourable member for Rockhampton had heard what I said earlier, he would appreciate that I said that a tenancy agreement exists between the Housing Commission and its tenants. I also said that the provisions which existed in that tenancy agreement are not quite in accord with the same justice that is proposed.

Mr. Wright: It is completely one-sided.

Mr. BYRNE: I agree.

Surely there is a bounden responsibility on this Parliament to see that the legislation that goes through it produces equity within the community, not only for private landlords and tenants but also for people who occupy Housing Commission rental homes or rent caravans in caravan parks. They are an increasing section of the community.

As the financial times make it difficult for people to provide the financial resources to buy their own homes, as it is difficult for people to provide the deposit and as it is difficult for people to pay the present high interest rates, it becomes essential for some people to determine themselves into caravan parks and Housing Commission homes.

One other point is relevant not only to both of those situations but also to private enterprise and the private situation of landlord and tenant. It deals with the difficulty of settling problems of tenants who are unruly and with whom the neighbours have to put up. It is hoped that with this legislation we may find a further reprieve for people who find themselves living next door to tenants who are noisy or of an unruly nature, or having such tenants move into a house next door to them.

In conclusion I draw the Minister's particular attention to those in Housing Commission homes and ask if he will explain their position and also specifically the position of those in caravan parks.

Hon. W. E. KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (11.37 p.m.), in reply: I do not intend to reply in detail this evening because I wish to put another measure before the Committee tonight. I think we should try to attend to it. In moving the second reading I shall reply in detail to those questions that are not answered by the provisions of the Bill. Once honourable members receive the Bill, they will find answers to most of their questions.

It is a question of time. I would have preferred to introduce the Bill a little earlier. As I said a week or so ago, it was hoped to have it introduced before we went into recess; but it was not physically possible. I think the time is quite adequate between now and the next week or so to consider the major principles of the legislation. Substantially the Bill repeats what already exists in legislation and the new principles will be easy to discover. I do not think honourable

members will have difficulty in following it or that the research required between now and the next reading will be burdensome.

Mr. Wright: It is mainly to get other views.

Mr. KNOX: By all means. I think the honourable member will find that there is adequate time to do that, too. I suggest that he will discover that most of the matters he raised in those other papers have been considered by me and my advisers. We are providing legislation for our circumstances. Some of the matters that he saw in the United Kingdom paper and others from North America—

Mr. Wright: Different law.

Mr. KNOX: They have a different historical background and those laws are not easy to take out of that environment and put into our own. We did read them and they were referred to but they are not, in all circumstances, suitable to our particular legal environment.

Motion (Mr. Knox) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

PROPERTY LAW ACT AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. W. E. KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (11.42 p.m.): I move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

The Property Law Act is now on the verge of coming into operation, and it represents one of the most comprehensive pieces of legislation to be passed by this Parliament for many years. Every endeavour has been made to enable the changes and reform in the law which have been brought about by this Act to be understood by all interested persons, particularly legal practitioners. The many conferences, seminars and discussions which have been arranged have ensured that practitioners are totally familiar with its provisions and conscious of their implications.

During my introductory speech I outlined in detail the principal amendments which are being made to the Property Law Act, and I do not intend to elaborate again on these amendments. I trust by now that honourable members will have had the opportunity to peruse the Bill and to consider fully the various amendments contained in it. It will be noted that some of the amendments merely correct certain drafting defects or errors which were disclosed upon closer examination and discussion of the principal Act.

Those provisions of the Bill which deal with rights of way over private property will resolve the uncertainty that has surrounded this area of the law. This measure will be welcomed by all persons who have been concerned with the application to their land of the common law doctrine of prescription.

I am confident that lawyers and those persons who are concerned with this branch of the law are now fully prepared for the changes that will result and that the Property Law Act will commence with a minimum of inconvenience and uncertainty. The provisions of this Bill will eliminate the problems and errors that have become apparent and will ensure that the Property Law Act will be fully effective when it comes into operation on 1 December.

I have circulated a proposed amendment of which honourable members will have received copies. The background to the amendment is that section 82 of the principal Act relates to tacking and further advances. This section has been modelled on the provisions of section 94 of the English Law of Property Act of 1925. However, an amendment to the English provisions in 1926 was overlooked by the Law Reform Commission when section 82 was being drafted. It is desirable that section 82 should appear in the same terms as the amended English provisions.

Representations have just recently been made to me by solicitors representing the associated banks for this defect to be remedied and the proposed amendment will obviate any danger in certain circumstances to the priority rights of a first mortgagee by a second mortgage being registered in the interval of time that might elapse between the signing of the mortgage or charge and the loan which constitutes the first or original advance.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (11.45 p.m.): As the Minister stated, the Bill we have before us is a further clarification of the Property Law Act 1974. I note too that there have been some corrections of drafting mistakes and grammatical errors. In other areas we note that certain provisions have been extended to cover areas that were not thought of originally and I notice in one part here not only do we have conveyancers but we will have what is termed a notary public. I did not know what a notary public was to start with so I decided to look it up and the dictionary I went to defines it as—

“A person who attests the execution of any deeds or writings, or makes certified copies of them in order to render the same authentic, especially for use abroad.”

The part that I find interesting is that he is appointed to his office by the Archbishop of Canterbury and may be removed from office only by the Court of Faculties. I wonder whether we are ever going to have

documents attested by such a person. But this proves that careful consideration was given to the Property Law Bill when it was printed.

I am pleased to see we have an extension of the area of Right of Way because I have had some local authorities mention to me the various problems they have had when people have been able to come back and say, “We have always used this access. We have always had this right.” It seemed to be the old idea that possession was nine points of the law.

I accept these points of clarification, but I wonder if I can very slightly break a rule here so that we can finish within a reasonable time. I would like, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, to mention some clauses to the Minister and receive an answer from him. I want to know why in clause 4, the amendment of section 55, we are removing the expression “the promisee”. Section 55 (d) reads—

“the terms of the promise and the duty of the promisor or the beneficiary may be varied or discharged with the consent of the promisor, the promisee, and the beneficiary.”

I tried to find out why we would leave this out and I have not been able to come up with an answer. I would be grateful if the Minister would tell me that to avoid wasting time during the debate on the clauses.

We are omitting subsection (2) of section 87 and I would like to know the reason for that total omission.

Furthermore, I note that in the amendment to section 106 we are omitting the note that appears in the heading and substituting the note, “Obligations in short leases.”

We are also clarifying section 106 (1) (a) by including the words, “. . . in the case of a lease of premises for the purpose or principally for the purpose of human habitation.” I wondered would it not be better if we in fact put the clarification in the main part of subsection (1) so as to read, “In a lease of premises” and then go on, “for the purpose or principally for the purpose of human habitation.” I do not know whether the draftsman thought of this, but it seems to me it clarifies that whole issue and describes the type of premises we are talking about at the very outset. I accept that we need to clarify this section. It is reasonable that no-one should be bound by these provisions if the building is a warehouse. Surely it should not have to be kept fit for human habitation if it is not used for that purpose. I accept that but perhaps we could have improved it by making this clarification earlier.

My final comment is on the amendment to section 4, where we are now adding to the definition of "bank". Previously section 4 read in part—

"'bank' means any bank authorized under Part II Banking Act 1959 of the Commonwealth or under any other Commonwealth Act to carry on banking business in Australia;"

I was not aware that we had to cover them by an Act of the State to carry on banking business in Queensland, but it could be that the Treasurer has finally agreed to try to re-establish a State bank. I know that the Commonwealth Banking Agreement can be reviewed every five years, but I think we need an explanation as to why that is necessary. No doubt many of these things have been explained to the Minister by those who have suggested the amendments.

I think it is important that the few points I have raised be clarified. I do not intend to raise any further matters at the Committee stage, and that is why I have sought your agreement, Mr. Speaker, to my giving the Minister notice now—so that he may answer my queries if he can, in his reply.

Mr. GREENWOOD (Ashgrove) (11.51 p.m.): The only aspect of the Bill to which I wish to refer at this stage is that dealing with the section of the Act which follows the old Statute of Elizabeth against Fraudulent Conveyance.

Section 172 of the English Law of Property Act 1925 provides—

"Save as provided in this section, every conveyance of property made, whether before or after the commencement of this Act, with intent to defraud creditors shall be voidable at the instance of any person thereby prejudiced."

It goes on to say—

"This section does not extend to any estate or interest in property conveyed for valuable consideration and in good faith or upon good consideration and in good faith to any person not having at the time of the conveyance notice of the intent to defraud creditors."

So the ordinary principle was there adopted that even though one attempts to void a fraudulent conveyance made by somebody in financial difficulty, made to divest himself of his property, made to prevent his creditors from obtaining their assets from him, all this is stopped provided he conveys it to somebody who gives him value and who gives him that value in good faith and without notice of his intent to defraud creditors.

The provision as it stood in the Property Law Act as first introduced in this Assembly over 12 months ago was in similar terms to the English legislation that I have just read out. But the amending Bill that comes before the House this evening is an improvement not only on the Act that was passed

some time ago but also on the English legislation that served as a model for us. It is an improvement because of the vigilance and dedication to duty of an officer of the Crown Law office. I do not think, Mr. Speaker, that it is untoward of me to recognise in this place the very good work done by Mr. Stanton in assisting those whose duty it is to introduce legislation.

The contribution that is made here is the deletion of the words "good consideration". They came into the English legislation almost as a matter of habit. They came into the English legislation because they had always been there. They came in because they were devised at a time when the doctrine of consideration had not been properly developed.

Mr. Wright: 228.

Mr. GREENWOOD: Thank you. When the Statute of Elizabeth was looked at in Twyne's case in 1602, the phrase "good consideration" was given the meaning "valuable consideration". In that particular case it was said that it had to mean "valuable consideration", because if it was merely for natural love and affection the whole intention of the Act to protect against people who try to divest themselves of their property to their relatives would be frustrated. The words used were, "If consideration of natural blood should be a good consideration within this proviso, that Statute would serve for little or nothing and no creditor would be sure of his debt."

That might have been correct at a time when the only phrase was "good consideration", but as the law developed and as we had it in 1925, when the concepts of both good consideration and valuable consideration were placed in a clause side by side, the natural approach was that the two phrases were meant to be something different. If "good consideration" was meant to be the same as "valuable consideration" why put both in that same clause? This is a danger, in that in the future the clause could be interpreted in such a way as to have "good consideration" meaning something other than "valuable consideration". It might be interpreted simply to mean natural love and affection and this would frustrate the whole object of this section.

The Queensland Parliament will have a better Act now than the 1925 English Act and it will have a better Act than the legislation introduced as a result of the report of the Law Reform Commission. And we will have a better Act not because of the work of the Law Reform Commission or the work of those learned men who drafted the 1925 English legislation, but because of the dedication and scholarship of a member of the Queensland Public Service.

Hon. W. E. KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (11.59 p.m.), in reply: I thank both honourable members for their interest and consideration

of the matters before the House. Before I try to answer the questions that have been raised, it might be appropriate to comment that since the document in this grey volume was tabled in this House some three years ago—the document is dated 28 February 1973—a lot of work has been done, and the legislation that will come into existence on 1 December will provide Queensland with a very modern and up-to-date law, which, I trust, will be a model for other parts of Australia that may want to follow it or may be in a position to follow it.

The principal task was carried out by the Law Reform Commission, particularly by Dr. McPherson, and I want to place on record my recognition of the work done by the commission as well as by the officers of my department, particularly Mr. Stanton, who, as was pointed out by the honourable member for Ashgrove, had the special task of steering the legislation through the various committees that look at it before it is presented to Parliament.

I thank those who participated in the debate for their valuable contributions. What is most important, although it may be overlooked in these debates, is that Parliament itself is prepared to recognise and have confidence in the advice that it receives from these sources, knowing that these matters have been thoroughly examined. While there has not been massive debate on this subject, Parliament will be giving its imprimatur to this legislation, which will be of enormous benefit to the people of the State.

Coming to the questions that were raised—I hope I can follow them—the first concerned clause 4

Mr. Wright: That deals with the omission of “the promisee” in section 55 of the principal Act.

Mr. KNOX: The expressions are being deleted because their inclusion was an oversight. The amendment has no particular significance.

I think the honourable member for Rockhampton raised a question about the definition of “bank” in section 4 of the Act. We have an Agricultural Bank in Queensland and consideration must be given to that matter. The amendment was included for that purpose.

The next question raised concerned clause 8, the amendment of section 87. Am I right?

Mr. Wright: Yes; it concerns omitting subsection (2).

Mr. KNOX: There was a duplication of provisions contained in section 86 (3) That is why the amendment is proposed. Did the next question concern section 106?

Mr. Wright: Yes. It relates to a clarification of what the premises were for.

Mr. KNOX: I can only say that the Law Reform Commission was satisfied that the section, as amended by the Bill, will achieve

the desired result. Section 106 was examined by the Law Reform Commission. I shall read the note given to me in the hope that it will be helpful. It reads—

“Re-examination of section 106 has satisfied the Law Reform Commission that short leases of business premises should not be subject to the special provisions of section 106 (1) relating to liability for repairs. Section 106 (1) was intended primarily to abolish the common law rule that there was no obligation on a landlord to ensure that an unfurnished dwelling let for human habitation was fit for such habitation. Indeed, the heading to the section itself suggests this, and the undesired change in the law with respect to business premises appears to have resulted from drafting error in the course of the Commission’s preparation of the Bill.”

That is the best answer that I can give the honourable member. Was there another question?

Mr. Wright: That is all.

Mr. KNOX: As I have covered the matters adequately, I do not think I need comment further.

Motion (Mr. Knox) agreed to.

[Friday, 14 November 1975]

COMMITTEE

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

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

Clause 7—Amendment of s. 82; Tacking and further advances—

Hon. W. E. KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (12.4 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

“On page 2, omit all words comprising lines 23 to 27, both inclusive, with a view to inserting in lieu thereof the following words:—

‘by—

(a) in subsection (1), adding after subparagraph (b) the following words and subparagraph:—

“; or

(c) if his mortgage imposes on him an obligation to make such further advances”;

(b) omitting from subsection (3) the words “date of the original advance” and substituting the words “time when the original mortgage was created”.”

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 7, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 21, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

The House adjourned at 12.7 a.m. (Friday).