

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 9 DECEMBER 1975

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

PAPERS

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

Report of the Director, Department of Children's Services, for the year 1974-75.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Orders in Council under—

Audit Acts Amendment Act 1926-1971.
Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1974.

State and Regional Planning and Development, Public Works Organization and Environmental Control Act 1971-1974 and the Local Bodies' Loans Guarantee Act 1923-1975.

Harbours Act 1955-1972.

By-laws under the Education Act 1964-1974.

Report of the Gladstone Area Water Board for the year 1974-75.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

ALLEGED OVERSEAS LOAN RAISINGS BY QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier) (11.3 a.m.): There have been various reports by the media during the last few days, including a reference by the former Prime Minister, Mr. Whitlam, to the effect that an authority had been given by the Queensland Government for the raising of overseas funds to the extent of \$320,000,000 for relief of the cattle industry in Queensland.

These reports, including Mr. Whitlam's statement, are completely untrue and are not in accordance with the facts. And particularly would I draw attention to Mr. Whitlam's attempt to mislead the public mind by claiming that my Government would be a party to any negotiations which would circumvent the authority of the Australian Loan Council. Such an attempt is, of course, only an attempt to reduce my Government to the level at which his Government was accustomed to operate.

Let me state simply what the truth is. The cattle industry in Australia has for some time been in a parlous condition. As a consequence of little assistance being obtainable from the Whitlam Government, the Australian Cattlemen's Federation decided some months ago to ascertain what funds might be available from overseas sources, and to establish the terms and conditions on which those funds might be made available, through lending institutions in Australia.

The federation at no time sought the support of my Government in this area, as the entire proposal was regarded as a normal commercial transaction to be contained completely within the industry.

Let me repeat that the reports that Mr. Fancher acted on behalf of the Queensland Government in the matter of seeking funds or raising a loan are false.

Mr. Jones: He's a crook.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: Say that outside!

Mr. Jones: Talk to the people up there.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I warn all honourable members, particularly those on my left, that there will be no persistent interjections, or I will deal with those responsible under Standing Order 123A.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Fancher, as a cattleman—

Mr. Jones interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I warn the honourable member for Cairns under Standing Order 123A.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: Mr. Fancher, as a cattleman, was directly interested in obtaining financial support for the industry in which he was involved. Any inquiry made by him overseas in respect to this matter was made on the authority of, and on behalf of, the Australian Cattlemen's Federation.

It seems to me that one can only assume that those who promote false reports, and here I refer particularly to the statement by Mr. Whitlam relating to this matter, either do not concern themselves with ascertaining what are the facts or prefer to distort the truth for their own advantage.

Lastly, may I refer briefly to the public statements made yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition concerning the contents of a telex message which he claims to have sighted. Let me say that Mr. Fancher has no knowledge of any of the loan matters referred to by the Leader of the Opposition, and it is once again clear that the Leader of the Opposition, in a desperation move to prop up his party, has resorted to fabricating allegations. It seems to me that, as he cannot achieve results by dealing in stolen goods, he now resorts to false pretences.

LOAN-RAISING ACTIVITIES OF FEDERAL A.L.P. GOVERNMENT

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier) (11.7 a.m.): All members of this House are aware of the wide-ranging allegations in relation to loan-raising activities that have been made against certain members of the Whitlam Government which was recently dismissed from office.

Although the then Opposition made strenuous efforts to obtain a full disclosure of these activities, it met with only partial success because the Whitlam Government was determined to avoid revealing all the relevant details. The Opposition's questions were certainly not met with the frankness one would expect of a Government which claimed to believe in open government and which claimed to act in accordance with the Westminster tradition.

In the matter of raising loans, a Government must so conduct its negotiations that certain conditions are satisfied. These conditions are—

1. that the laws in force in its own country are complied with;
2. that the negotiations are conducted within channels that do not jeopardise the financial interests of its own country; and
3. that the manner of its negotiating is such that there attaches no suspicion that any person is being benefited by secret commissions.

Lamentably, the loan-raising activities of the dismissed Commonwealth Government satisfy none of these conditions.

Some weeks ago, certain information came to my knowledge concerning the loan-raising activities of the Whitlam Government and the involvement of secret commissions—and, I reiterate, the involvement of secret commissions. That information was of such a nature and was attributable to such sources that it appeared to me to concern matters of substance that warranted verification through prudent inquiry. This was demanded in the interests of Queensland and Australia and of honest, decent Government.

As a member of the Australian Loan Council, I saw it as my duty to have such inquiries made on my behalf. Those inquiries have now been made. As a result, I am in possession of considerably more material, which satisfies me that I was completely justified in having those inquiries carried out. In one deal alone, it is now clear that two Ministers of the Whitlam Government, together with a number of other people, were due to receive staggering sums of money as a consequence of secret commissions and kick-backs. This material contains implications respecting the conduct of members of the Whitlam Government of such a serious nature that I see the only proper step to be the setting up of a royal commission to take evidence in relation to this matter.

Mr. HINZE: Murphy will be a surfer by the time we're finished with him.

Mr. K. J. Hooper interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I warn the honourable member for Archerfield under Standing Order 123A.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: It now becomes abundantly clear why the Whitlam Government was determined to avoid revealing all the relevant details.

The appropriate authority for initiating such action is the Commonwealth Government. In anticipation that a royal commission will be held, I do not propose to disclose at this time any details of the material or of the persons implicated and so prejudice the conduct of that inquiry. It is, however, my intention to make the material available to the appropriate authorities at a time when it will assist the conduct of that inquiry.

Apart from this statement of intention, I will not comment further, as all the facts will be fully revealed by the royal commission itself.

PRIVILEGE

CALLING OF HENRY WILEY FANCHER BEFORE BAR OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (11.11 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege, Mr. Speaker. In view of the shadow cast upon this Parliament by the association of certain members of the Government with a Mr. Henry Wiley Fancher, a very shady financial dealer, and continuing reports of overseas loans in which the Queensland Government is connected, I ask that you call Mr. Henry Wiley Fancher before the Bar of this Parliament to answer questions on this matter. That is the way it should be handled.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is out of order.

Mr. BURNS: It is a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. Members of Parliament have risen in this House on questions of privilege and you have not ruled them out of order before you even considered the particular question. You did not let me finish my statement.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition knows as well as I do that Ministers may make statements without seeking leave of the House. Any other member of the House must seek leave of the House.

Mr. BURNS: I seek leave to move—

"That Mr. Speaker issue a writ to have Mr. Henry Wiley Fancher called before the Bar of this Parliament to answer questions about his dealings with this Government."

Question—That leave be granted—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 11

Burns
Casey
Dean
Hooper, K. J.
Houston
Jones
Marginson

Melloy
Yewdale

Tellers:
Jensen
Wright

4. UNDERGROUND WATER SUPPLY,
LOCKYER VALLEY

Mr. Gunn, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Water Resources—

(1) As the Lockyer Valley is the most productive area in Queensland and relies heavily on underground water for irrigation to maintain massive production, which is not equalled by any other area in Australia, is he satisfied that there is sufficient underground water to maintain full production in this area if there is a return to the drought conditions of previous years?

(2) Is there any forward planning to recharge the alluvium in this area?

Answers:—

(1) The Lockyer Valley appears to have been developed to its full capacity for irrigation from ground water sources. Over the last five years, the area irrigated has remained almost static, which indicates recognition of this fact by landowners. A precise estimate of water use is not available as irrigation bores do not require licensing in the Lockyer Valley, but it is evident that water levels decline rapidly during long dry periods when irrigation is carried out extensively. Without regular recharge, the available ground water supplies are rapidly diminished. There are a number of periods on record when the current level of water use could not have been sustained. In fact, shortages of supply have occurred in the past, even when the level of water use was much lower than it is now. Irrigators have adopted a practice of using the water when it is available and limiting irrigation when supplies dwindle. In this way optimum production from the available ground water supply is achieved even though production during long dry periods must decline. Between 1971 and 1973, weirs were constructed on Laidley Creek, Flagstone Creek and Ma Ma Creek to determine the extent of recharge benefit by allowing water stored in the weir to infiltrate into the aquifers. Investigation of these three trial recharge weirs is nearing completion. Results obtained so far are encouraging as ground water levels in the vicinities of the weirs have risen considerably. A report on these investigations will be submitted to the Government when finalised. The report will also comment on the desirability of undertaking further recharge.

(2) Until the present investigation is completed, there is no intention of constructing further recharge weirs. The commission has already investigated in some detail three further sites but no funds are available for their construction.

5. VITAL MEDICAL INFORMATION ON
DRIVERS' LICENCE

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

Will he consider allowing a person's blood group and other vital medical information, such as allergy to penicillin, to be printed on a drivers' licence should the licensee so desire?

Answer:—

This appears to be a worth-while suggestion, and the honourable member is to be commended for bringing it to notice. I shall certainly have the position examined.

6. LAND FOR PRE-SCHOOL AT RAVENSHOE

Mrs. Kippin, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Education and Cultural Activities—

Has land been procured for a pre-school site at Ravenshoe?

Answer:—

No. The matter is at present in the hands of the Land Administration Commission and is being expedited as quickly as possible.

7. DEVELOPMENT OF TOURIST RESORT,
NORTH WEST ISLAND

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

(1) What are the terms of the tender for the development of a tourist resort on North West Island?

(2) What area of land will be used for the proposal?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) The terms of the tender for development of a tourist resort on North West Island are contained in a six page notification, which I shall hand to the honourable member this morning. The area to be leased will be determined when detailed plans of the applicants have been thoroughly examined and the most suitable project has been selected. Such area will not exceed requirements to effectively implement the approved project. Not less than 20 per cent of the island shall be available at all times for public use and members of the public shall be entitled to be upon such area.

8. CONTROL OF FIRE-ARMS

Mrs. Kyburz, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Police—

As I am concerned that rifle clubs and retail outlets for fire-arms have had too much to say on the matter, when can the public look forward to legislation to control the sale and use of fire-arms?

Answer:—

It is anticipated that legislation of the kind envisaged will be introduced early in 1976.

9. REPAIRS TO STATE TREATMENT WORKS,
IRVINEBANK

Mrs. Kippin, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Mines and Energy—

What progress has been achieved in effecting plant repairs at the State Treatment Works, Irvinebank?

Answer:—

Since the closedown of the State Treatment Works, Irvinebank, good progress has been made on overhaul of the plant, including secondary vibrator screen, classifiers, rod mill, settlers and tables. Worn liners from the rod mill have been tested, new specifications and drawings prepared, and quotations received and investigated. Work has started on patterns for the new liners. Surveys of sites for a new tailings dam have been completed and plans are being prepared.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

ALLEGED TELEX MESSAGE FROM U.S.A. TO
MR. WILEY FANCHER

Mr. BURNS: I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: Is he aware of the existence of the text of what purports to be a telex message from the United States addressed to Mr. Wiley Fancher on the 3rd of this month—and I read a portion of the text—

“Bracey looking for Fancher and Sunderman in Zurich. Sunderman’s lender driving Todd crazy with claims that Fancher takes dingo loan this week.”;

it is signed, “Burriss, 3-12-75.”? In view of the persistent rumours that Mr. Fancher, who has been revealed as an associate of the Premier, is engaged in overseas loan dealings and that the Queensland Government is connected with his negotiations, has he been informed by either Mr. Fancher or the Premier that the Bracey referred to in the text is in fact a Mr. John Bracey of Edwards Road, Balmoral, Sydney, a person who figures prominently in the Khemlani telex messages? Is he also aware that this Mr. John Bracey left Australia on 2 December this year—the day before the alleged telex text—and is at present on bail of \$5,000 in Sydney in relation to fraud charges involving \$163,000? Does he believe that Mr. Fancher should be placed in a position where he purports to represent the Government of Queensland overseas?

Sir GORDON CHALK: I have no knowledge of the telegram or of the gentlemen referred to, other than Mr. Fancher. I suggest to the honourable member that he table the document.

MT. MULGRAVE PTY. LTD.;
MR. H. W. FANCHER

Mr. BURNS: As the Deputy Premier and Treasurer has acknowledged that he knows about Mr. Fancher, I ask him this further question: Is he aware that a pastoral company, Mt. Mulgrave Pty. Ltd., registered in Queensland, of which Mr. Henry Wiley Fancher was a director, was wound up in the Supreme Court, Brisbane, on 23 October this year on the petition of Mobil Oil Australia Limited, for the sum of \$2,031.08? Is he aware that in the Supreme Court, Townsville, on 8 August this year, the same company of which Fancher is a director was sued for arrears in rate payments, believed to be in the vicinity of \$3,000? In view of the financial instability of Mr. Fancher, is he a fit and proper person to represent Queensland in multimillion-dollar loan deals?

Sir GORDON CHALK: I met Mr. Wiley Fancher for the first time on Sunday afternoon last. I have no other knowledge of the gentleman, nor do I know whether he is the Mr. Fancher referred to by the Leader of the Opposition.

MT. MULGRAVE PTY. LTD.; MR. H. W.
FANCHER

Mr. BURNS: I have a further question without notice to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. As he has now met Mr. Fancher, has the Premier advised him or any other member of the Government of the details of Mr. Fancher’s background, including the fact that the Government’s Corporate Affairs Office in this State has written on three occasions—27 December 1974, 27 May 1975 and again on 23 October 1975—to Mr. Fancher and other directors of Mt. Mulgrave Pty. Ltd. asking for compliance with the company laws of this State? What action does the Deputy Premier and Treasurer, or his Government, propose to take under the Companies Act against Mr. Fancher for his refusal to comply with the laws of this State? Under these circumstances does he believe that Mr. Fancher is a fit and proper person to be representing Queensland?

Sir GORDON CHALK: I indicated in my answer to the previous question that I met Mr. Wiley Fancher for the first time on Sunday afternoon last. I have no knowledge whether the Mr. Fancher I met is the gentleman referred to or whether he is associated with the allegations being made by the Leader of the Opposition. Any action taken for any breach of law in this State is a responsibility of the Government.

STATEMENT BY PROFESSOR PENNY ON
IMMUNISATION

Mr. ALISON: I ask the Minister for Health: Is he aware of reports emanating from southern States quoting the immunology expert, Professor Penny, concerning children

who are immunised becoming adversely affected and becoming sick and possibly dying? Has he investigated the reports, and are they confirmed? Has his department immunisation programmes which might provide a guide for parents?

Dr. EDWARDS: I thank the honourable member for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. Professor Penny is alleged to have made a statement on 4 December to the effect that 5 per cent of all children who received immunisation could be adversely affected, and could become sick and die. At that time I was approached by the Press to see if there was any substance in Professor Penny's statement. I indicated to the Press and the media generally that I would not make any comment until I contacted Professor Penny and made full inquiries about the actual statement he made.

Professor Penny could not be contacted until yesterday. He apologised for his being totally misquoted. He said that a retraction had been printed in the southern newspapers. He made two statements and they put a different connotation on the matter. What he said was—

“Five per cent of all children with recurrent infection will be immune deficient.”

He made no statement about the possibility of risk to those children. He also said—

“Children with an immune deficiency also carry a risk with live vaccines.”

I should like to bring to the attention of the House and the people of Queensland the fact that the Queensland Government and the Health Department fully support the immunisation programme that has been undertaken and publicised throughout the State for a long period. I assure parents that they should continue to discuss this matter with their doctors and that there is no risk with normal immunisation programmes.

CRITICISM OF LAND VALUATIONS, CABOOLTURE SHIRE

Mr. FRAWLEY: In directing a question without notice to the Minister for Survey, Valuation, Urban and Regional Affairs, I draw his attention to an article in this morning's "Courier-Mail" headed "Review called on Land Acts" in which Councillor Barr, the chairman of the Caboolture Shire Council, is reported as saying that valuations in the Shire of Caboolture were a fiasco, and that it would take all day to outline the errors made. As I led two deputations from Caboolture ratepayers, and Councillor Barr being included on each occasion, will the Minister inform the House of the result of those deputations?

Mr. LICKISS: It is true that the honourable member did lead two deputations to me concerning the Caboolture valuations. I was rather surprised to see the remarks attributed to Councillor Barr in the newspaper article,

a copy of which I have here. I was surprised for a number of reasons. The Valuer-General is required to make statutory valuations under the provisions of the Valuation of Land Act 1944-1975. That legislation has been in force with minor amendments and has operated since 1946. The Valuer-General is required to determine the unimproved capital value of land on an area basis in accordance with the Act. That applies, of course, to the Caboolture revaluation.

It is a fact that an appeal, now known as the A.P.M. case, went before the Land Court. The Land Court handed down a decision which varied the valuations made by the Valuer-General.

Councillor Barr has used some rather extravagant terms in relation to the valuations of the shire. For example, he referred, among other things, to a fiasco. The simple truth of the matter is that, when the Land Court handed down its decision on the case, which concerned the method and hence the cost of clearing timber on certain lands, the Valuer-General, under the provisions of the Act, then made necessary adjustments to all comparable land valuations in the area to preserve the relativity between owner and owner.

Councillor Barr, in company with other interested persons and the honourable member for Murrumba, visited my office on two occasions, and I went into great detail in explaining the provisions of the Act and the action contemplated by the Valuer-General in relation to certain valuations in the Caboolture area.

Councillor Barr is reputed to have a knowledge of valuation. I do not propose to comment on that other than to say that in the statements he is now making he is not showing a great deal of expertise on valuation matters. He has had the benefit of discussion with me on the valuation of the Caboolture Shire, and I do not appreciate his present attitude in view of the trouble that has been taken to clarify the situation in his mind as well as in the minds of other people who were expressing some concern about Caboolture Shire valuations.

To put the record straight, I shall now read a letter dated 24 September that I received from Councillor Barr concerning my efforts to relieve the concern of those who had certain feelings in connection with valuations in the shire. The letter is addressed to me, and reads as follows:—

“Dear Mr. Lickiss,

Re: Shire Valuation

“I wish to advise that the 1975-76 rate levy was effected four (4) weeks ago and in those areas where valuation adjustments have been made a quite favourable response has been received.

"General satisfaction with the amended valuations of larger farming properties has been indicated and I am sure that your action in revising certain valuations is appreciated.

"I desire to express my thanks for your interest in the problems which the original valuations created in this Shire and for your courtesy in receiving deputations on the subject and your attention in having anomalies corrected."

It seems strange that Councillor Barr is prepared to write a letter such as that, stating that the problems arising in his shire have been solved, when, in moving in other circles, he is prepared to try to make political capital from the operations of a department that I have the pleasure to have under my ministerial control, and one that I suggest does an excellent job.

I commend the honourable member for Murrumba for the temperate manner in which he attended to the problems confronting his constituents and succeeded in having any necessary consideration given thereto.

BOGUS LETTER BOMB SENT TO "SUNDAY SUN"

Mr. FRAWLEY: I ask the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General: Is he aware of widespread reports that a senior employee of "Sunday Sun", Mr. Ken Blanch—a known A.L.P. supporter—prepared a device that had the appearance of a letter bomb and sent it to "Sunday Sun" from the same Sydney post office at which the letter bomb sent to the Premier was posted? Is he aware that this device was sent to test the security of the Post Office and that the letter was detected at the Sydney Mail Exchange? Is he also aware that this was done without the approval of Mr. K. Murdoch, the head of News Limited, and that when postal investigators inquired into the matter the investigation was suddenly stopped at the direction of the Chairman of the Postal Commission, Mr. Jim Kennedy? Will the Minister therefore raise this matter with the Postmaster-General in the elected Fraser Government after next Saturday, so that an inquiry can be held to determine why Mr. Blanch was accorded special treatment by the Post Office and whether any criminal charges can now be laid?

Mr. KNOX: I am not aware of the circumstances to which the honourable member relates, although there has been a rumour to this effect over the last few days. I will place the matter before the present Minister in charge of the Post Office and also the present Attorney-General, and no doubt some investigations will be made.

MONEY PROVIDED FOR FLOOD RESTORATION, CABOOLTURE SHIRE

Mr. FRAWLEY: I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: Is he aware that the A.L.P. is circulating a pamphlet in Deception Bay and other areas of the

Caboolture Shire claiming that the Federal Government supplied all of the money given to the shire for flood restoration work in 1974? Can the Treasurer inform the House whether that is correct, because I have in my possession a letter from the Caboolture Shire Council, signed by the chairman, thanking me for my assistance in helping the council to obtain increased amounts after its original estimate of cost was found to be too low and more funds were required?

Sir GORDON CHALK: The basis of providing money for disaster or flood relief has existed between the Commonwealth and State Governments for a number of years. The State is responsible for the first \$2,000,000 charge against a disaster during a period of 12 months. The Commonwealth has then to find the balance of the money. Problems arise in that sometimes a financial year expires in the meantime. If the State provides \$2,000,000, and the total cost is \$8,000,000 and the \$6,000,000 is not spent before the end of the financial year, the State, as it were, has to pick up the tab for the first \$2,000,000 in the following year. In the circumstances referred to by the honourable member, I know that the State has played its part in providing money, not only for flood relief, but also to assist local authorities by way of subsidy for work that does not qualify in the particular disaster but has been caused by wash-outs, heavy rains and so on. The State has then assisted by way of the normal subsidy applicable to local authority loan raisings.

EARLIER COMMENTS BY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION ON THE LOANS AFFAIR

Mr. MULLER: I ask the Premier: In the light of the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition this morning about the present loans affair, what were the comments made by him at the time investigations were being conducted into loans in the Commonwealth Parliament?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: Many honourable members will recall very clearly what the Leader of the Opposition said at that time. This morning he used this Chamber to attack an individual whom he has no doubt never met. In the very near future he will have an opportunity to live up to his statements of recent days. We will see how well the Leader of the Opposition shapes up to his allegations at that time. Mr. Fancher may be in financial difficulties with his pastoral properties, but who isn't in difficulties in this State under the conditions created by the Labor people in Canberra? In the near future the Leader of the Opposition will have his opportunity and, in the circumstances, I do not think he will be very happy.

As to what the Leader of the Opposition said about the loans affair on 4 July 1975, he was reported in a Press article headed, "Make the details public, Burns tell Whitlam." The article continues—

"The Queensland A.L.P. Opposition Leader, Mr. Burns, yesterday called on the Prime Minister, Mr. Whitlam, for a detailed public statement on the dismissal of the Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Cairns, and on the Australian Government's overseas loans negotiations.

"It was the hardest attack on recent events in Canberra from an A.L.P. leader.

"Mr. Burns said: 'At all costs we must end, in the interest of the Government and the party, this constipational crisis and controversy in Canberra.

"The Federal A.L.P. Government must practise the same open government that it professes.

"The first priority must be to ease public confusion even if it may mean scorching a few fingers in the process.'"

And my word there will be a few scorched—they will be burnt off. The article continues—

"Mr. Burns said no government could hope to restore confidence while it was surrounded by conflict, immersed in confusion and divided in personality.

"Mr. Burns said: 'Let's clear the air and present the facts rather than have garbled versions dribble through drop by drop, day by day to the Australian people.'"

To which I say, "Hear, hear!" The article continues—

"I make no comment or attempt to debate the circumstances involving the dismissal of Dr. Cairns from the Federal Cabinet.

"Frankly I know as little of the situation as the average man in the street who can read newspapers, listen to radio and watch television.

"I'm being telephoned by Labor supporters at all times of the day asking for developments and I cannot enlighten them.'"

I answer the Leader of the Opposition that he will be enlightened.

The article continues—

"Mr. Burns, a former Federal A.L.P. president added: 'If there are others involved in this controversy as had been hinted, then I believe Mr. Whitlam should divulge all available information in a concise public statement so we can know and judge the nature of any such involvement.

"Normal administration cannot exist in an atmosphere of allegation and counter-allegation, statement and counter-statement, claim and denial.

"The man in the street is not only bemused. He is completely bewildered.'"

We will soon enlighten him.

INVESTIGATION OF MR. FANCHER'S LOAN DEALINGS

Mr. MELLOY: I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: In view of his statement that he met Mr. Wiley Fancher on Sunday last and that he does not know if he is the Mr. Fancher referred to by the Leader of the Opposition, will he investigate the matters raised by the Leader of the Opposition to ensure that he is not involved in any unscrupulous dealings?

Sir GORDON CHALK: Any insinuation that I might be involved in any unscrupulous dealings is offensive to me. I clearly indicated to this Chamber that I met Mr. Wiley Fancher for the first time on Sunday afternoon last. The period of meeting was some 30 to 40 minutes. I did not question the gentleman about where he came from or where he was going. All I did was listen to certain things that Mr. Fancher reported. Apart from that, I have had no dealings with the gentleman. I do not know where he is at the present time and I do not intend to play Sherlock Holmes or anybody else to find out where he is.

Mr. Melloy: There is no implication that you would be involved—and I am sure you wouldn't be, but I think you should protect yourself.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

PREMIER'S DEALINGS IN LOANS INVESTIGATIONS WITHOUT CABINET'S KNOWLEDGE

Mr. MELLOY: I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: As he stated last week that he and Cabinet were unaware of the loan inquiries initiated in Switzerland by the Premier, has his attention now been drawn to the fact that on 13 November this year, two days after the appointment of a caretaker Australian Government, the Agent-General in London, Mr. Rae, told an Australian guest in an hotel in Zurich that he was in Switzerland in relation to important inquiries and would soon be joined by two other people from Queensland, including a police inspector? In view of this evidence that the present fiasco was clearly planned by the Premier in conjunction with the caretaker Prime Minister and others before the Federal election date was announced, will he deplore the high-handed manner in which the Premier has kept Cabinet in the dark on this issue, involving the expenditure of a reported amount of \$250,000 of Queensland taxpayers' money?

Sir GORDON CHALK: One day last week a question was asked in Parliament by the honourable member as to whether I knew the whereabouts of our London Agent-General. I replied that I knew that the Agent-General was not in London. Other than that, I had no knowledge of his whereabouts or what he was doing. That was the situation to the best of my knowledge. I was later asked whether I

had any knowledge of the Premier's association with investigations overseas connected with loans. I indicated that I had no knowledge about that other than a brief conversation which I had with the Premier about a week or 10 days previously. That is the situation as it applied at that time.

KNOWLEDGE OF MINISTER FOR POLICE OF LOANS INVESTIGATION

Mr. MELLOY: I ask the Minister for Police: Is it a fact that, contrary to his statements in the newspapers, he was informed in advance of the Premier's intention to send Inspector Keen to Switzerland in relation to recent loan inquiries? Is it also a fact that he and the Commissioner for Police protested at the involvement of a Queensland police officer in a matter of this nature but were overruled by the Premier? Is it also a fact that the excuse given for the selection of Inspector Keen for this overseas assignment was that he was the only officer available with a passport but that subsequent inquiries have shown that at least another 12 police officers had current passports at that time?

Mr. HODGES: The answer to the honourable member's three questions is:—I am not aware of the circumstances.

ISSUES FACING QUEENSLAND UPON ELECTION OF LIBERAL-NATIONAL COUNTRY PARTY GOVERNMENT

Mr. GIBBS: I ask the Minister for Local Government and Main Roads: What will be the main issues facing Queensland when the Fraser-Anthony team becomes the Government after the 13 December election?

Mr. HINZE: Obviously the honourable member wishes me to be specific and to refer particularly to my own departments. I have in mind, of course, the Main Roads Department and the Local Government Department. There are approximately 100,000 miles of roads in Queensland that we have been talking about for a long time, and I was most unsuccessful in my negotiations with Mr. Charles Jones to have them improved. This situation applied not only in Queensland but throughout Australia.

It was, in fact, why Wal Fife resigned in New South Wales. He was up against a brick wall, so he thought that he had better become a member of the Federal Parliament and have a crack himself. He therefore resigned and a by-election for his seat, which was won by the Liberal Party, was held just the other day. But that is by the way.

I have been asked what will be the main things that will have to be attended to by the Fraser-Anthony Government. Serious consideration will have to be given to ensuring that the national Parliament returns to

the States the amount to which they are entitled for road construction. There are an additional 1,000 motor vehicles coming onto the roads in Queensland alone each week. Our roads are deteriorating, and I am reminded of this fact every time I visit a local authority.

I notice that it is part of the policy of the National Country and Liberal Parties to recognise local government. Those parties have indicated quite clearly that they propose to give back to local authorities, as of right, a share of the national taxation cake. This is a subject on which I have been speaking since I became Minister for Local Government and Main Roads.

There are approximately 900 local authorities throughout Australia, including 131 in Queensland. They are all virtually broke, and they have had to live on hand-outs from the various bodies that have been set up by Whitlam and his cronies in Canberra. They set up the R.E.D. scheme and then they scrapped it. They set up the A.A.P. and the A.I.P. and so many other damn things that I have not been able to keep up with them. But they all failed to the extent that, when the Labor Government came into power there was a surplus of \$900,000,000, and there is now a deficit of \$4,000 million.

The Labor Government then decided to buy back the farm—with somebody else's money.

Mr. Knox: From the sheikhs.

Mr. HINZE: Yes. We have heard all this before. The honourable member for Albert asks where we stand after next Saturday. Frankly, I think that next Saturday will begin only the first stage. I think that the National and Liberal Parties throughout Australia will have success similar to that recently enjoyed by the anti-Labor forces in New Zealand. But, after winning the election, there will be two major things to be done. It is not good and proper for healthy young people to become dole bludgers and live in my area on the Gold Coast, as has been their custom over the last two years. They have been getting money for nothing. Our friends in Canberra wanted to breed a nation of bludgers. These are the people who are now running round in Kombies with "Save democracy" stickers on the rear. Old Gough Whitlam told them something about "Save democracy". He wouldn't know what the word means. But, of course, he has said to all the dole bludgers and others of his ilk, "Save democracy." These people are down on the Gold Coast living like King Farouk. Frankly, I am a little jealous of them. I would like to be in it myself. I have reached my stage of life—56 years old—and I have had to work every day. Old Gough has been able to breed a group of bludgers.

I shall not detain the House any longer as we have a lot of important business to do. I think the National and Liberal Parties also have to get rid of the 3 per cent in all the unions who are Communists. Even when we win the election on Saturday and even if we get rid of the dole bludgers, we will still have the 3 per cent of Comms in every union throughout Australia. We have to say to them "We want an open confrontation with you, brother. If you want a fight it's on", and then knock them right out of the ring. My neighbour could not milk his cows last Sunday morning because the union said, "There's no power. We'll give it back to you on Monday or Tuesday." I said to him, "Which union is that?" He said, "The Electrical Trades Union." So I said, "Go and ask them if they are Comms." He said, "No, they're not Comms in the Electrical Trades Union. They are affiliated with the Trades and Labor Council and they are Comms and that's why I can't milk my cows. That's why I can't get 400 gallons of milk pumped out of my vat." He could not get it up to Brisbane to supply blokes like those we see over on the other side so they could drink beautiful, healthy milk—because the Comms won't let him pump it out of his tank. He couldn't milk his cows because the Comms wouldn't let him!

MONEY GIVEN TO Q.I.T. AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO ATTEND MR. WHITLAM'S RALLIES

Mr. GIBBS: I ask the Minister for Education and Cultural Activities: Is he aware that some Q.I.T. and university students have been given \$15 and, under threat, told to go to the sacked Prime Minister's rallies even though many did not want to go?

Mr. BIRD: I am not positively aware that this money is being given either freely or with a threat, but, from the number of times that this matter has been raised both in this House and outside, it does appear fairly obvious that there is some basis of truth in the story. I believe this further indicates that those in the minority who support the Whitlam Government are just another part of the "rent-a-crowd" that we see everywhere at Whitlam rallies.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO PREMIER'S DARWIN APPEAL

Mr. LAMOND: I ask the Premier: Is he aware that the people of Wynnum donated some \$30,000 to the Premier's Darwin Appeal earlier this year? What was the total amount of funds collected in Queensland for the Premier's Darwin Appeal? Who was the authority in Darwin who received these funds on behalf of the Darwin people, and is the Premier in a position to advise this House how these funds were disbursed to the people of Darwin?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I am aware that the people of Wynnum contributed very generously to the Darwin appeal. The amount mentioned by the honourable member appears to me to be approximately the amount, of which, of course, we have records in our office. The people of Queensland gave close to \$2,000,000 to the Darwin appeal. I am not aware of the actual disbursement of the donations made, but, as the trust is administered by a committee of responsible citizens, I am quite sure that the funds are being used to the best possible advantage. We do know there was some criticism by the Auditor-General in the Federal sphere as to the non-accountability of considerable sums of money. I think this is perhaps understandable in the initial stages, with people trying to get the project under way.

I was there recently and I would have liked to see much more progress up there than has actually taken place. It seems to have taken very much longer than could reasonably be expected. There is still so much to rebuild and the people of Darwin are still suffering. I would have liked to see very much more interest and more action. Very considerable sums were contributed by the people of Queensland as a whole and, indeed, by the people of Wynnum.

INTERSTATE COMMISSION BILL

Mr. LANE: I ask the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General a question in relation to the Interstate Commission Bill: Did this Bill form part of the grounds for the double dissolution of Federal Parliament? If so, it is not a fact that one section of the Bill posed a grave threat to the freedom of the Press in Australia; and is this threat totally consistent with the attitude towards the Australian media currently being adopted by Mr. Whitlam and his desperate followers?

Mr. KNOX: I am aware, of course, that the Interstate Commission Bill is one of the Bills which the Governor-General asked to be considered for a future joint sitting in the event of an election being held on 13 December. As it is one of the 21 Bills which will be considered at a joint sitting subsequent to that date, I think we should be interested in it. The Constitution provided for an Interstate Commission to look after the transitional problems of this nation, particularly in relation to transport. But the socialists have discovered that it can be used for much wider purposes than transport alone.

One of the provisions which the A.L.P. inserted into that Bill setting up the commission was that any person in the community who insulted a member of the commission would be subject to a fine of \$1,000. How does one identify what is insulting to a person? I do not know. Under that provision, any journalist or cartoonist who indulged in any adverse comment on the

commission in the Press, or anybody who wrote a letter criticising members of the commission, could find himself in a position of having insulted a member of the commission and could be in trouble.

This body, of course, was to be set up by the A.L.P. as a way of getting round the Constitution, as a way of subverting the States and standing over them by setting up an authority even greater than Government itself, and in no circumstances should people support the A.L.P. while it supports legislation of that type.

ELIMINATION OF PRICES JUSTIFICATION TRIBUNAL

Mr. LANE: I ask the Minister for Industrial Development, Labour Relations and Consumer Affairs: Is he aware of the statement made by Mr. Whitlam yesterday to the National Press Club in which he condemned the policy of the Liberal and National Country Parties in the current election campaign to do away with the Prices Justification Tribunal? Did he notice the statement made by the former Prime Minister, Mr. Whitlam, in which he said that the unions would not cop this? Does he see an implied threat of an industrial nature in that statement?

Mr. CAMPBELL: The Prices Justification Tribunal is surely one of the socialist arms of the A.L.P.'s economic control and domination of the nation. The fact that the former Prime Minister was obliged to write to the chairman of the Prices Justification Tribunal, after the evidence was so clear that businesses generally in Australia were being squeezed by the determinations of the tribunal, and request it to make greater allowance for profit in its determinations indicates to me, and also to many other people, that the original guide-lines that the Prime Minister gave to the Prices Justification Tribunal when it was established were such as to produce dire results to industry when they were implemented. I believe that the incoming Liberal-National Country Party Government in Canberra will have a good, long, hard look at the Prices Justification Tribunal, because—

Mr. Houston: It has you worried.

Mr. CAMPBELL: It is not worrying me one iota, because the history of price control in this country reveals that it merely authorises price increases, and the idea, which the socialists attempt to create, that price control can keep prices down is a pure myth. There is ample evidence of that in South Australia, where the most rigid price control is in operation. To take one item—bread. In Brisbane, bread is 4c a loaf cheaper than it is in South Australia.

Talk of the Prices Justification Tribunal brings to mind, of course, the attitude of the incoming Government in Canberra in relation to wage indexation, and this has

been a subject on which the former Prime Minister has attempted to create a good deal of confusion. The wage indexation proposals of Mr. Justice Moore were advanced on the basis of a 12 months' trial. If the four Liberal State Ministers had not given the Federal Labor Government and the two Federal Ministers for Labor an assurance of their co-operation, the proposal could not have been implemented. The first of the Labor Ministers was, of course, Mr. Cameron, who was sacked. I have seen a letter from Mr. Cameron to an acquaintance of mine in which he said that he is still at a loss to know why he was sacked. Senator McClelland took over from Mr. Cameron. If it had not been for the whole-hearted support of the four Liberal State Governments in Australia of wage indexation proposals, their effectiveness would not have been nearly so great.

It is interesting to recall that the Communist-led and dominated unions, the militant unions and the Left-controlled unions are continuously making an all-out assault on the principle of wage indexation. I believe that this could be one of the flash points in the projections of Mr. Whitlam and other scaremongers in the election campaign when they try to portray that the incoming Government will find itself in a head-on collision with the trade union movement. I believe that the employees and workers of Australia are more concerned about employment than they are in becoming involved in political strikes.

Countless workers in Australia who saw the Federal Minister for Labor and Immigration, Mr. Tony Street, debate the issue with Senator McClelland last night must have been assured by the temperate and sane approach of Mr. Tony Street to the very important matter of industrial relations.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. CAMPBELL: I haven't finished yet. Experience has shown that Liberal-National Governments have a more humane and sounder understanding of the problems of the work-force than has the Labor Party. I distinctly recall Mr. Whitlam saying in his 1972 campaign, "Give us a Labor Government, and because of our special relationship with the trade union movement the need for industrial disputation will disappear." In the intervening period Australia has had by far the worst industrial experience in its history, both in days lost and wages lost. If that is the record on which Mr. Whitlam is so proud to go to the electors of Australia, I am sure he will get his just desserts on Saturday.

ALLEGED BIAS OF MURDOCH PRESS

Mr. LANE: I ask the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General: In view of allegations by the former Prime Minister (Mr. Whitlam) and Ministers of the former Government that newspapers operated by Mr. K. Murdoch

are biased, can he say whether or not the same people made the same complaint when the Murdoch Press strongly supported the election of a Labor Government in 1972?

Mr. KNOX: I do recall rather vividly that in 1972 the Murdoch Press in Australia vigorously supported the dismissal of the McMahon Government and the election of the Whitlam Government. I am quite sure that every honourable member recalls the Murdoch Press doing that. It caused a lot of concern in the community because it was felt that the Murdoch Press was very influential. I also recall that no journalists employed by the Murdoch Press protested at what might have been interpreted by those of my political persuasion as a very biased approach to the news. At that time not a single journalist protested.

Now that Mr. Murdoch has exercised his freedom of choice in this country—and I am pleased to be able to say we still have it—to change political allegiance and to express political opinions (and on this occasion to support the return of the Fraser administration and support the dismissal from office of the corrupt Whitlam Government), I am amazed that the journalists should go on strike. Aren't people to be allowed to express their opinions? Aren't they entitled to hold a political view in this country without everybody else trying to hamper them? Even if I disagree with Mr. Murdoch on occasions, he still has the right to express his views in his newspapers.

ALLEGED WEARING BY PREMIER OF BULLET-PROOF VEST

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: I ask the Premier: With reference to Press reports that he is wearing a bullet-proof vest, is he aware of the fact that the other four gentlemen in contemporary history who wore bullet-proof vests were Ned Kelly, Al Capone, Adolf Hitler and Richard Nixon? Which of these gentlemen is he trying to emulate?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: The honourable member should not believe all he reads in the Press.

ALLEGED REMOVAL OF FILE FROM FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: I ask the Premier: In view of his sudden interest in inquiries outside the State of Queensland, will he order an investigation into an attempt by the caretaker Government to remove a certain confidential file from the Foreign Affairs Department in Canberra? Is he aware that this file involves a complaint by a former Australian Cabinet Minister against a junior officer in the Foreign Affairs Department for his failure to procure a woman for him in Singapore? Is he aware that the Minister concerned is in fact the caretaker Prime Minister and that the attempted removal of the file was one of his first acts after his appointment to office?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I don't know to which Minister in the previous Labor Government or to which woman the honourable member is referring. I don't know which one the honourable member is referring to. In any event, I am not interested in that sort of stuff even though the honourable member might be.

HOME HILL HOSPITAL

Mrs. KIPPIN: I ask the Minister for Health: Has his attention been drawn to Press advertisements concerning the closure of the Home Hill Hospital in which electors are urged to support Dr. Patterson? Are these claims made by Dr. Patterson substantiated, or is he further misleading the electors of Dawson?

Dr. EDWARDS: I am aware of the advertisement that has been placed in northern newspapers by Dr. Patterson. Honourable members and many people in North Queensland are well aware of the numerous inaccurate statements that have been made by him, not only in the present election campaign but also in recent times, in relation to primary industries and other activities in Northern Australia.

The future of the Home Hill Hospital has been under consideration for some time, and the member for the area (the Minister for Education and Cultural Activities) has made a number of representations to me on this matter.

Mr. Houston interjected.

Dr. EDWARDS: That is only the honourable member's opinion, and, of course, his opinions have never been respected by anybody up to this stage.

As I was saying, the honourable member for Burdekin brought a deputation from Home Hill residents to me during a recent visit to Townsville and the whole matter was discussed. It is, of course, under consideration at the present time, as is the future of the Home Hill area and that of the whole Burdekin region. The Government is conducting a survey into medical services in the region, and the needs of the people and the necessity to provide them with the best medical services available will be kept in mind by the Government in arriving at its decision. As yet no such decision has been made, so Dr. Patterson's statement is absolutely incorrect. It is, of course, only another one of the political stunts undertaken by Dr. Patterson to try to influence the people of the area to support him in the forthcoming election.

ALLEGED WEARING BY LEADER OF OPPOSITION OF BULLET-PROOF VEST

Mr. MOORE: I ask the Premier: Is he aware that the Leader of the Opposition wears a bullet-proof vest—but wears it back

to front because of his fear that, while he is sitting in the Chamber, he will be stabbed either by the person he deposed or by other members of his political party?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I wouldn't know whether the Leader of the Opposition wears a bullet-proof vest, but I would not be surprised to learn that, if he does, he wears it in the way suggested by the honourable member.

ALLEGED DEBTS OF MR. H. W. FANCHER

Mr. JONES: I ask the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General: Is the Wiley Fancher mentioned in the Premier's ministerial statement this morning—the Premier's friend, informant and financial adviser—the same Henry Wiley Fancher of High Street, Atherton, who has outstanding debts to the extent of: \$50,000 owing to Colin and Henry Haymen for a transaction involving Inoruni and Chadshunt Stations; \$22,000 owing to Bill Harris, formerly station manager of Mt. Mulgrave Station; \$16,000 to Mr. Wallace for contract mustering; \$6,000 to Clausen Shipping Company for freight; money to sundry other debtors, including Mactaggarts, Dalgety, Olympic Tyre Company, Mobil Oil, Atherton and Cook Shire Councils and hire-purchase companies and other smaller accounts for goods, wages and services? Has he received any complaint or knowledge of these debts and, if so, what action has been taken to assist in the recovery of these debts?

Mr. KNOX: If the honourable member had given me notice of this question I would have made the necessary inquiries.

Mr. Jones: And covered it up.

Mr. KNOX: I would not have done that. I would have made the proper inquiries. I question the integrity of the honourable member in raising the question under these circumstances. If he genuinely wanted to find out, he would have rung me to let me know he was going to ask the question so that I could discover the information. I am not in a position to discover it.

Mr. JONES: I rise to a point of order. The Minister is imputing improper motives to me. This is the last day of the sitting; my question without notice is quite in order. If the Minister does not choose to answer it, that is on his shoulders.

Mr. KNOX: Without receiving notice by some means other than across the floor of the House, no person in this House, no person in the gallery, no person listening to this debate, would expect me to be able to answer a question of such detail without reference to the files and records of the Corporate Affairs Office or any other office. I question the honourable member's integrity in asking a question of this nature without

first asking me to get the information prepared. As it is not possible for me to answer the question off the cuff, I ask the honourable member in the circumstances, to place it on the business paper.

Mr. JONES: I do so accordingly, and I trust that it will be answered on the first day of the next sitting.

FUNDS FOR ABORIGINES AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS LEGAL SERVICE

Mr. ARMSTRONG: I ask the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General: In relation to Federal funds for the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Legal Service, has he seen a claim by Labor's Senator Keeffe that the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Legal Service was facing a serious crisis caused by the action of the caretaker Government? Is it not a fact that the same service recently approached the Queensland Government in a desperate bid for financial assistance because the Whitlam Government slashed the funds for that service in its last Budget?

Mr. Houston: He could not know that. That is too much to ask him.

Mr. KNOX: Unlike the honourable member for Cairns, the honourable member for Mulgrave had the courtesy to contact me and tell me that he was going to ask this question and thus give me a chance to make the necessary inquiries.

The answer to this question is that I have seen a statement by Senator Keeffe to the effect that he protested to the Governor-General on the grounds that the moneys available for the legal aid services for the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders had not been forwarded. I do not know the circumstances under which he launched that protest but I do know that the amount of money provided for the legal aid services for these people was reduced considerably by the Whitlam Government. Some weeks ago I received a letter from the legal aid service that looks after Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders indicating quite clearly that funds had been reduced considerably by the Whitlam Government and asking if the Queensland Government would take over the services. We examined the request and we have virtually taken over quite a number of these services that were provided previously by the Public Defender. The situation is simply this: the funds for the legal aid services for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were reduced prior to the present caretaker Government's taking over and arrangements have in fact been made to look after these people in other ways by the use of State facilities and agencies.

A.L.P. ADVERTISING

Mr. ARMSTRONG: I ask the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General: Has his attention been drawn to A.L.P. advertisements in "The Cairns Post" and other papers claiming credit for the introduction of free school dental services, equal pay for women, votes for 18-year-olds, legal aid, etc.? Is this fair advertising, or were the schemes in existence before the advent of the A.L.P. Government in 1972?

Mr. KNOX: Most of the matters mentioned by the honourable member were already in existence before the Labor Government took office in 1972. Of course, one of the things they took away from the children was free milk. Do members opposite remember that? They took the milk away from the children. They took away most of the assistance parents received from allowances for school fees and so on. The deduction allowed for taxation purposes was chopped down to billy-o, with the result that a parent cannot even pay for the school fares out of the taxation allowance under the Labor Government, let alone the school fees.

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

GOVERNOR'S SALARY ACT
AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. Sir GORDON CHALK (Lockyer—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (12.20 p.m.): I move—

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

The principle of the proposed legislation was accepted by honourable members at the initiatory stage. Consequently, there is nothing further that I desire to add. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. MELLOY (Nudgee) (12.21 p.m.): The Opposition has considered the Bill introduced by the Treasurer. At the initiatory stage we outlined our attitude to it. We have nothing further to add. We agree with what is provided in it. In the circumstances, we feel that the increase is justified.

Motion (Sir Gordon Chalk) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

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

PAY-ROLL TAX ACT AMENDMENT
BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. Sir GORDON CHALK (Lockyer—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (12.23 p.m.): I move—

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

When I introduced the Bill, I pointed out to honourable members that its primary purpose is to increase the present general exemption of \$20,800 provided for in the Act to \$41,600, and to progressively reduce the exemption down to the level of \$20,800 for annual pay-rolls in excess of \$72,800. The Bill provides a generous new concession to small businessmen, as well as continuing the present concession to the larger employer taxpayer, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (12.24 p.m.): The main thing I point out to the House is that, although the Treasurer has said that this Bill represents a magnificent concession to the small businessman, I believe that in reality, when the situation is analysed, all that the Bill does is bring the levels of exemption back to somewhere near money values when the Act was introduced. An employer with more than four or five employees will still have to pay tax. Taking into account that in the Federal field the rate was 2½ per cent, then 3½ per cent, and then 5 per cent following the last increase—those with more than five employees will still have to pay pay-roll tax, and in some cases they will be paying more than they were in 1971.

I think that the time may well come when the Treasurer will have to include in taxation Bills clauses that allow for indexation. All political parties are now considering income-tax indexation, and I believe that the people will accept such indexation from any party. However, I believe that tax indexation could also be included in legislation such as the Bill under discussion so that employers who pay ordinary cost-of-living increases are not carried into higher pay-roll tax brackets. After all, for every 11 employees an employer is required to pay in pay-roll tax an amount equivalent to the average wage of one employee. It is therefore apparent that the amount to be paid in pay-roll tax can be quite substantial.

I hope that, when this legislation is next under consideration, the principle of indexation will be built into its provisions so that it will not have to be brought regularly before Parliament to be kept up to date.

Hon. Sir GORDON CHALK (Lockyer—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (12.28 p.m.), in reply: The honourable member for Bulimba has raised quite a legitimate point. The problem that has faced the Government with this tax has been more or less the

joint arrangement among the various States. In fact, I found some difficulty in providing even the concessions that are now being made. There were States that felt that we should not go as far as we have in fact gone. No doubt at some appropriate time it will be possible to incorporate in the legislation a provision such as that referred to by the honourable member for Bulimba. At present we are endeavouring to provide the relief outlined in the Bill; consequently that is the basis on which it has been presented.

Motion (Sir Gordon Chalk) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 to 20, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

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

URBAN PASSENGER SERVICE PROPRIETORS ASSISTANCE BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. K. W. HOOPER (Greenslopes—Minister for Transport) (12.30 p.m.): I move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

Honourable members, by their contributions to the debate on the introduction of this Bill, have clearly shown their interest in the problem of providing public transport to our urban dwellers. Obviously many of their points are not relevant to the Bill, but I will endeavour to deal with questions that have been raised which are relevant, now that honourable members have had an opportunity to study the Bill.

The honourable member for Bulimba raised the question of land development and the provision of public transport, but this is something of the nature of what comes first—the chicken or the egg. Some land developers do pay a subsidy towards the provision of transport services, but this is a matter between the operator, generally the Brisbane City Council, and the particular developer concerned.

The provision of public transport is, of course, relevant to the demand for certain types of property by certain classes of prospective purchaser. Young working married couples, for the first few years, generally use their private motor vehicle to commute from outlying suburbs. The remoteness of land at that time does not really present a problem to them although it does later on when transport for a family becomes a pressing need.

The objective of the Bill, as honourable members will now appreciate, is to endeavour to maintain and improve bus services provided by the private sector at a time when rapidly escalating costs have been the main cause of the failure of small businesses, and private bus proprietors are generally in the category of small business. Compared with the Brisbane City Council, the major transport operator for the city of Brisbane, which has a fleet at the present time of 588 buses, the largest private operator in the Brisbane area would have a fleet of 43 buses. Nevertheless, the private operator's cost per kilometre is less than that of the publicly owned operator who has a larger infrastructure to maintain. That is why the private operator can generally provide a service in fringe areas which do not have the patronage to justify the same type of service that is provided in the more heavily populated areas.

As I indicated in the introductory debate, the Bill will provide for assistance in four areas. It provides—

- * A guaranteed loan scheme for the purchase of new buses;
- ◊ A general subsidy up to 10 per cent per annum on gross fare revenue where this is needed to maintain the viability of a service;
- ◊ An interest subsidy at the rate per annum of interest being charged by a lender on a loan for a new bus, or at 6 per cent per annum, whichever is the lesser, for a period not exceeding five years; and
- * A subsidy of 3 per cent or such greater percentage as the Governor in Council may approve as compensation for fare revenue lost by a private operator in providing concession fares to pensioners.

I will deal with each area in turn. In relation to these four areas, the proprietors concerned are those who provide and carry on an urban passenger service in provincial cities as defined by the Local Government Act, in urban centres determined by the Bureau of Census and Statistics as having a population of more than 10,000 persons, and the metropolitan district of Brisbane. This takes in the city as well as contiguous parts of local authorities included in the Brisbane Statistical Division where urban passenger services are provided. I might mention that this metropolitan area is the same area as determined by the then Federal Minister for Transport as the area deserving of Commonwealth financial assistance.

Under the States Grants (Urban Public Transport) Act 1974, grants to Queensland are made for projects designed to improve the quality, capacity, efficiency or frequency of the public transport system in the Brisbane Statistical Division. The Commonwealth assistance scheme does not extend to provincial cities or urban centres.

Dealing now with the guaranteed loan scheme, the Bill provides that the Minister for Transport, on behalf of the Government, may provide a guarantee to an approved lender over a loan given to a private urban bus proprietor for the purchase of a new bus or one in a satisfactory condition less than five years old to the extent of the loan given or two-thirds of the cost of the purchase price of the bus, whichever is less.

It will be noted that the Bill also defines an approved lender as a bank, financial institution or person approved by the Minister for a particular loan. This will answer the query raised by the honourable member for Bulimba concerning the lender.

Obviously it is hoped that banks, with the guarantee to be given, will deal more sympathetically with applications by bus proprietors for financial assistance at normal rates of interest to enable them to replace their buses. The period of the guarantee will not exceed five years, and the Bill provides for safeguards so far as the Government is concerned as to the ability of the borrower to repay the loan, and the terms under which the guarantee is given.

In addition, as is the practice in similar matters, the Bill provides for the powers, rights and remedies of the Minister in the event of the borrower being unable to meet his commitments. This also applies if the lender fails to comply with the terms, provisions and conditions in respect of the loan by failing to take security or releasing mortgages or other securities, or waiving any right or remedy he might have.

Proprietors of bus services seeking guarantees will be required to make an application to the Commissioner for Transport, setting out sufficient details to enable the Minister to consider the application. If the Minister is of the opinion that the guarantee should be given, a recommendation will be made to the Governor in Council accordingly.

The second main point which I mentioned was the provision for a subsidy to be paid to a proprietor of a private urban bus service to reduce the amount of interest being paid on a loan obtained for the purchase of an approved bus. The maximum rate of subsidy to be provided is 6 per cent, which is more than half of the present maximum allowable bank overdraft rate. This interest subsidy will reduce each year as the loan is repaid up to a period of five years.

It is hoped that this interest subsidy will encourage, as well as assist, private urban bus proprietors to update their vehicles and to provide a better image to the public of the services being provided. This does not mean that luxury-type coaches should be provided for urban services, but

rather a comfortable and efficient bus of reasonable standard suitable for short distances.

The third area of assistance I mentioned was the payment of a general subsidy to proprietors of private urban passenger services up to a percentage of their gross fare revenue not exceeding 10 per cent per annum.

It is not intended—and I would share the concern of honourable members if this were so—that this subsidy is merely to prop up inefficient operators. This is not the intention, and it is to be hoped that, when financial and economic conditions improve and the results of studies being undertaken do increase patronage on buses, the efficient operator will not have recourse to application for such a subsidy.

The objective is to make the services viable and to tide over until a period of stability in the industry is reached. With rising costs of owning and operating a motor vehicle and the inevitable further increase in the price of fuel, an improvement in public transport must provide an incentive to greater use by the public generally.

The proprietor will have to make an application for a subsidy, and the Commissioner for Transport will be required to make such inquiries and investigations as are necessary. A recommendation will then be made to the Minister for Transport as to whether the application should be granted and also the amount or rate of the subsidy.

The honourable member for Bundaberg is out of date in his thinking and obviously has not taken the trouble to find out the problems that face the urban bus proprietors at the present time. Much of this stems from the inefficient management of the nation's economy by his socialist A.L.P. Federal colleagues. Every endeavour will be made to introduce to the industry cost-saving measures and some rationalisation of undertakings where this is necessary to increase profitability or, in many cases, to reduce present operating losses on some routes.

At the same time, the general subsidy will enable proprietors to provide, with some confidence, pioneering services in fringe areas where the growth of population will, in time, make those services viable. This is not to say that every unprofitable route will get a subsidy. The proprietor's entire operations will be examined. There could be a trade-off between a very profitable route and a less profitable one or even one that temporarily has made a loss. But, in the process of this overview, it is intended that no operator should end up in bankruptcy by trying to provide too many unprofitable route services.

The rate of the subsidy will be determined for each proprietor from the financial returns submitted by him, which will be thoroughly

investigated. It will be based as a percentage of gross fare revenue sufficient to increase his return on funds employed in his business to a reasonable level in line with normally accepted levels of profit in commercial practice. It will keep him viable, but not to the extent of making excessive profit. All reasonable expenses will be taken into consideration, but any extravagance or inefficiency will not be subsidised. At the same time the measures proposed will enable the proprietor to obtain a fair return without having to pass on all cost increases in the fare structure which, by rapidly escalating, drive away rather than encourage patronage.

Some urban services are more profitable than others, and accordingly the rate of the percentage of subsidy will vary. In some cases, with a return of patronage, no subsidy will be necessary. If we can revitalise the private bus sector and encourage the public to support it, this will reduce the cost to the Government.

We do not subscribe to the destructive "user must pay" principle which was adopted by the former socialist Government in Canberra, with such damaging results to the aviation industry in providing services to remote areas of the State.

Several members raised the question of marginal or unprofitable services and, as I have indicated, the over-all operation of the proprietor will be taken into account. This scheme will enable the Commissioner for Transport to require in the public interest, where it can be justified, that services be provided to marginal areas. But if the public do not use a service then obviously we cannot have empty buses running backwards and forwards on the remote chance that someone may wish to use them. There must be a balance between what is reasonable and what is practicable.

As I have indicated, the Bill also provides for concessional fares for single trips on private urban bus services for pensioners who hold the Commonwealth concession entitlement cards issued by the Department of Social Security or the Department of Repatriation and Compensation. This is the card that is used to obtain concessions on the railways and by the Brisbane City Council when issuing a pensioner card of its own.

The extent of the concession will be based on half the normal single adult fare. The range of concessions will vary according to the fares being charged for adults, and the approved fares of proprietors who will be required to give the concession will be varied accordingly. For example, where the single adult fare is within the range of up to 14c, the pensioner fare would be 5c. If it is within the range from 35c to 44c, it would be 20c, and so on.

The Bill provides for compensation to be paid to proprietors who are required to give these concessions, which will come into effect

as soon as possible after assent is given to the Bill. This concession will enable pensioners to make more trips than they can afford at present and increase their mobility to attend functions, to obtain medical treatment or to visit the nearby shopping centres.

Apart from the measures of assistance, the Bill provides for a committee of review to consider and to make recommendations on applications for the review of applications for subsidies or for any other matters the Minister might wish to refer to it in connection with the administration of the assistance schemes. It will be headed by the Deputy Commissioner for Transport, and will have as members the licensing officer of the department; an officer of the Treasury Department; and an independent member, being an accountant in public practice.

Any proprietor who is dissatisfied with the percentage of subsidy which has been determined will be entitled to apply to this committee for a review of the subsidy. The committee will thoroughly investigate the claim and may make its recommendation accordingly on any additional facts or factors which it may wish to consider.

I fully appreciate the contributions which have been made by so many honourable members in respect of this measure. The suggestions made, while not in many cases directly relevant to the Bill, will certainly be borne in mind in regard to public transport generally.

I was very interested to hear the contribution by the honourable member for Townsville South, who displayed a wide understanding of the problem of the operators of private buses in provincial cities and the difficulties that they face in trying to maintain a profitable service with declining patronage.

Provision is made to prescribe by regulation machinery for implementing its provisions, such as the form of applications to be made and the calculation of subsidy payments.

Authorised officers under the State Transport Act will have sufficient power to investigate the operation of services in relation to financial assistance to be provided. They will ensure that the requirements of the Auditor-General in respect of the disbursement of public moneys are met at all times.

I was pleased to note the various favourable references by honourable members to officers of the Department of Transport, for which I thank them.

In the administration of the Transport Act, we have made it a practice to consult with local members on matters important to them and to keep them informed. Conversely, the local knowledge of a member and his assessment of his area's transport problems and needs have proved of great assistance to the commissioner, his staff and me.

Honourable members have already indicated their support in principle of the Bill, and the implementation of its provisions should be appreciated by the proprietors of urban services, pensioners and the public generally.

Mr. JONES (Cairns) (12.47 p.m.): Opposition members consider this measure to be technically a money Bill, so in accordance with convention we will not attempt to obstruct or to defer it. It has our full support. As the Minister would be aware, we have had correspondence with him in relation to the Bill.

To relate the provisions of the Bill to my own area—considerable difficulties have been experienced by private bus operators, particularly in provincial cities, in the replacement of fleets, the deterioration of plant, the ever-increasing cost of maintenance and the administration of services.

I believe that the guaranteed loan scheme concerning the provision of new buses will give great impetus to bus proprietors, who will be able to provide higher-standard, safer and more comfortable vehicles. I am pleased to note that for vehicles less than five years old there will be consideration, more or less in retrospect, of the two-thirds provision. No doubt this flows from the measure brought in last year by the Victorian Minister for Transport, who announced that under the new scheme the grant for the provision of buses would be up to \$20,000 per vehicle or 90 per cent of the over-all cost. I think I heard the Minister say that in Queensland this would be up to 75 per cent of cost.

As to the period of repayment—the Bill provides for a guarantee over five years, whereas the Victorian legislation provides for repayments over 10 years with an interest rate of 3 per cent charged on a quarterly basis. I think the Minister said that our interest rate would be 6 per cent over five years, reducing each year.

The fare subsidies are very interesting. They are well warranted, particularly as they relate to pensioners. Private bus operators will now be able to participate in a scheme under which they receive assistance from the Government, and not before time. As the Minister indicated, the assistance is based on the scheme that operates in our railways, that is, a 50 per cent fare rebate for pensioners. That is accepted as a fair practice in our community today.

The interest subsidy of 6 per cent for five years (reducing each year), will benefit bus operators who are replacing their fleets. We are not trying to prop up inefficient operators, but this proposal will help bus proprietors to operate more profitably, provide better transport facilities and overcome the problems facing them in maintaining fares at a level that people can afford, thus ensuring that they do not find it cheaper to use methods of transport other than he

local bus. I am pleased that the Minister is taking cognisance of the situation and rendering assistance.

Subsidy is to be provided on the basis of up to 10 per cent of the gross fare revenue. That is a fair and equitable way of determining a subsidy to help make bus services viable. Under the Victorian scheme a reduction in registration fees is provided for, and a seating tax is also applicable. In the Victorian Budget an allocation of \$1,000,000 is made for subsidies, plus \$1,500,000 for the purchase of buses over a 10-year period.

Bus operators have experienced great difficulties. I might indicate what has happened generally by referring to the figures taken out by a Cairns bus operator. In 1972-73 his taxable income exceeded \$8,000; in 1973-74 it was \$4,000. Deterioration in his five buses was noticeable. It was obvious that he was in dire straits in maintaining his operations at a viable level. In 1973, when he last purchased a bus, it cost him about \$18,000. To purchase and register the same vehicle in 1975—only two years later—would cost him about \$26,000 or \$27,000.

We acknowledge the difficulties confronting bus operators; obviously, as legislators, we are aware of them. In accordance with what is proposed, the Minister has accepted the position and I am sure that this help will be welcomed by all private operators in provincial and metropolitan areas.

I heard some comment on the Commonwealth announcement of the two related studies into urban public transport services. A survey was taken of 20 Australian cities with a population in excess of 30,000 people. This legislation has possibly arisen from that transport study and the Victorian legislation referred to by the Minister.

We all approve of the Bill. It is our wish to see the implementation of this legislation as soon as possible. We welcome and support the measure. I am sure that it will be of benefit not only to the metropolitan and near-metropolitan areas but also to provincial centres such as Cairns, which I represent. I have much pleasure in indicating the Opposition's support of the measure.

[*Sitting suspended from 12.56 to 2.15 p.m.*]

Mr. AHERN (Landsborough) (2.15 p.m.): In his second-reading speech the Minister said that there seemed to be general support for the legislation. I draw his attention to my remarks and those of the honourable member for Cunningham at the introductory stage, when we said that the legislation seemed to us to discriminate against smaller communities. I asked that, during his reply in the second-reading debate, the Minister give us some comments on the position of smaller communities in relation to the subsidy programme and the general

assistance programme for private urban transport to operate in Queensland as a result of the Bill.

The Treasurer said in his last Financial Statement—

“Three new schemes of assistance to private metropolitan bus services will be introduced as soon as possible after the 1st October, 1975.

“A pensioner concession will be provided for travel on urban private buses to the extent of 50 per cent of the adult fare normally charged.

“To enable private bus fares generally to be held down and at the same time help to ensure that the services remain financially viable, the State will subsidise gross fare revenue of urban bus operators. The scheme is designed to lift the operators’ return to a reasonable level with a maximum subsidy of 10 per cent. of the gross fare revenues.

“In addition, in order to improve the urban bus system generally, the State will guarantee loans, under certain conditions, for the purchase of new buses. The State will also subsidise the interest on new loans for new buses to a maximum of 6 per cent. with such assistance decreasing by one-fifth of the original subsidy each year over a period of five years.

“\$600,000 has been set aside for these purposes.”

In the interim, those of us who were interested in this proposal commented far and wide that the Government was going to assist urban transport operators; but what we did not understand, and what we were not told by the Treasurer at the time, is that the urban situation is to be the subject of a restrictive definition. The Minister made this clear during his second-reading speech when he said that assistance is to be restricted to those who carry on urban passenger services in provincial cities as defined under the Local Government Act, or in urban centres determined by the Bureau of Census and Statistics as having populations of more than 10,000 persons. I do not understand why the Government has introduced this restriction which, in my opinion, will discriminate against smaller communities in the guaranteeing of loans, pensioner subsidies and the general subsidy.

It seems to me that bus operators in urban centres with populations of fewer than 10,000 are entitled to some assistance. They provide public transport and they are licensed under the State Transport Act. They are subject to the same cost pressures that have to be met by other transport operators. Yet pensioners who use those bus services are to be denied the benefit of the subsidy. The operators are to be denied the guarantees and the general subsidy payments. It seems to me that the situation will arise with identical communities where we will say, “These people here are entitled to participate in this programme but those are not.” That is

ridiculous; that is discriminatory. On behalf of the many smaller communities in the State I ask for reconsideration of this proposal. It seems to me that, where a system is licensed by the State Transport Department, some assistance for it ought to be considered by the committee of review.

After a study of the Bill, it seems to me that the Minister has very wisely given to himself and to the committee of review broad terms of reference but also broad powers of discretion. The Minister might decide, on the advice of the committee, that a particular transport operation is not entitled to the subsidy. Fair enough. I agree, for the reasons enumerated by the Minister, that this is necessary and appropriate so that we will not find ourselves subsidising something that ought not to be subsidised; but I cannot agree with the arbitrary cut-off point that has been decided on, I suppose by the Treasury—knowing the way these things are drafted—in an endeavour to contain costs. It seems to me that this is unnecessary. The small amount of subsidy that would be involved is not enough to ruin a whole programme which is very worthy in intent and motive by saying, “Some small communities are not going to be included.”

I ask the Minister to consider this proposition. How are we to consider a service centred in an area such as Maroochydore, which may have a population of fewer than 10,000 but an operator servicing a number of smaller communities as well? How is he going to determine which buses are subsidised and which are not? He operates a facility through Buderim to other areas. How are we going to determine which routes are subsidised and which are not? If we determine, for instance, that Buderim is not subsidised but Maroochydore is, how do we justify it? I would suggest that this decision should be reviewed. The example that I have delineated is probably not the ideal one.

Probably the best example is that of the service to a smaller community immediately on the outskirts of Buderim. It is serviced by the operator from Maroochydore through Buderim. If we are to subsidise the operator to Buderim but not through to the smaller community on the other side I say, Mr. Speaker, that this legislation is discriminatory. This Government has not been guilty of discrimination in the past; it has assisted smaller communities on the outskirts of larger ones. The few thousand dollars involved is small excuse indeed for introducing an element of discrimination. I ask the Minister to consider this matter on behalf of people living in smaller communities, particularly the pensioners who use the bus service. The operator of that service faces the same problems as urban transport operators face in only marginally bigger centres.

Hon. K. W. HOOPER (Greenslopes—Minister for Transport) (2.25 p.m.), in reply: Very briefly I want to say in reply to the

honourable member for Landsborough that I really do understand his problem and I give an undertaking that this matter will certainly be reviewed.

He made the point that it was not the decision of the Department of Transport alone. I make no further comment on that, and I think that the honourable member knows what I mean.

Mr. Jones: I know what you mean.

Mr. K. W. HOOPER: Yes.

Some of the services to which the honourable member for Landsborough referred are in fact receiving Government subsidies—not from the Transport Department but from the Education Department. However, urban services are in a different category altogether, and they are not receiving any assistance.

The honourable member could well say to me that some of the people who travel less than two miles on a bus in, say, Maroochydore or Buderim are not receiving the benefit of subsidies from the Education Department. He has made his point, and I agree with him. I will certainly have the position reviewed. I cannot make any fairer offer to him than that.

I listened very intently to the contributions made by the honourable member for Landsborough today and in the introductory debate, and I thank him for them. He represents an area that is very little different from many other small areas in the State, and he put before the House the point of view of people in those areas.

I also thank the honourable member for Cairns for his support of the Bill, and I again commend it to the House.

Motion (Mr. Hooper) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3—Interpretation—

Mr. AHERN (Landsborough) (2.27 p.m.): I wish to make a brief comment in answer to the Minister's reply to my contribution to the second-reading debate.

Clause 3 defines urban centres, urban passenger services and provincial cities under the Local Government Act, and it controls the payment of subsidies in various categories under the Act. The Minister has given a personal undertaking to me to review the situation, but I do not want his judgment to be clouded by the fact that some operators receive a small subsidy from the Education Department.

Although I have used examples from my own electorate because that is the area I know best, there are very many small areas in Queensland—far more than Buderim, Maroochydore and the other places to which I have referred particularly—that have urban transport operations which will just miss out under this definition.

On study, I am certain it will be found that these operators receive only a very small subsidy from the Education Department—in fact some of them may not receive any—so the anomaly still exists. Even in my electorate, the subsidy received from the Education Department by operators on some of the runs is not related to the number of runs they operate purely as commercial operations for the public during the day. In such instances, all of the arguments that are applicable there apply also to bigger communities.

The fact that an arbitrary decision has been made that a population of 10,000 will be the cut-off point will produce an anomaly—make no mistake about that, Mr. Hewitt—and some towns and pensioners in Queensland will miss out. That will not look good from the point of view of the Government's programme, and I regret that an arbitrary decision such as that is included in the legislation.

Clause 3, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 4 to 22, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

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

AUCTIONEERS AND AGENTS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. W. E. KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (2.31 p.m.): I move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

I thank honourable members for their comments during the introductory stage of this Bill. Now that they have had an opportunity to consider it, they will see that most matters which they referred to are provided for in the Bill.

Since the commencement of the Act in 1972 the practice of multiple listing has caused considerable controversy and has been under examination for some time. The repeal of section 43 which relates to this matter is considered to be in the best interests of the community as a whole. I might say that merely repealing the clause does not make the present practice illegal. In

some quarters people are saying that it has been abolished, but that is not so. Far from it! Multiple listing is to be encouraged as a desirable feature of the commercial field of real estate, but it does not require to be entrenched in legislation, as it has been in this State. It isn't elsewhere, and I think that the amendment to the Queensland Act is desirable.

Another provision on which adverse comments had been received is that which prohibits the sale of land to which title is not assured. The position in Victoria and New South Wales has been examined in relation to this matter, and it is considered that the prohibition of the sale of unregistered land will be of benefit to the community. This proposal applies only where the land is subdivided into more than five allotments, and members will observe that due consideration has been given to the provisions of the Miners' Homestead Leases Act and the Land Act. To allow the industry to adjust cash flows and the balance periods of existing contracts to expire, this proposal will not commence until April 1978.

The Bill increases from six to seven the number of members of the Auctioneers and Agents Committee, and provides that, of the seven members, six shall be appointed by the Governor in Council without restriction on the field from which they shall be drawn, while the registrar shall remain, *ex officio*, the other member.

The quorum of the committee is four, but, as most members are also engaged in other business activities which can lead to their unavailability at times, it has been found that on occasions it has been impossible to get a quorum. It is considered that the appointment of an additional member will overcome this problem.

Two new sections—section 22A and section 31A—are being inserted so that the committee may suspend a licensee's licence or a licence held in respect of an employee or a certificate of registration where it appears to the committee that trust moneys have or may have been stolen or fraudulently misappropriated, or for any of the reasons set out in the sections.

Provision is made under section 13A for appeal against any decision of the committee under these new sections. These new sections provide, when necessary, a speedy means of dealing with a dishonest licensee, employee or salesman.

Another important new section is section 71A, which makes it unlawful for any person to sell lists of properties for sale or letting unless that person is a licensed real estate agent. While not coming within the definition of "real estate agent", this practice, it is considered, is in fact the business of a real estate agent. Many complaints have been received and it would appear that clients are

not receiving a proper service. Section 71A will therefore ensure that any business carrying on the practice will be licensed and subject to control, particularly in relation to charges made.

It is believed that the proposals contained in the Bill will be approved by all members.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (2.36 p.m.): I remember speaking on this matter some time ago when the Bill was first proposed. At that time I made the point that it seemed to me that such a Bill would be a victory for the Q.L.R.E.A. and, in particular, Mrs. Luxton. Having had time to consider the legislation, I stand by my comments. I think back to the years during which Mrs. Luxton and members of her association fought to remove the multiple listing section, section 43. No doubt she and her members are very pleased to see that at long last this has been achieved. They have waited a long time for this to happen.

I hope that as that section is now removed from the legislation we will not see the same problems continue to arise simply because multiple listing is to be allowed at common law. That is the only fear I have. As it was, section 43 provided certain requirements as to the length of time a person could list homes. In fact, the period was 60 days. It would seem to me now that in common law these people could tie someone up for a longer period. But we will have to face that one when it comes.

Many arguments have been put forward both for and against multiple listing, and I am very pleased to see that at long last the Minister has come down on the side of those who are against. Unsavoury practices have been engaged in. We have seen the situation in which, instead of selling properties, some people simply went around trying to list them. I knew of university students and some other people who were nothing like students who simply tried to make a quick quid by going from suburb to suburb listing houses and obtaining a \$2 commission for doing so.

I note also that the Minister has acknowledged other points made in a document put out by the Q.L.R.E.A. and the R.E.I.Q. concerning the sale of unregistered land. This should please everybody. The Minister has imposed some controls on this practice. Although the ordinary person will not be affected, the developers certainly will be stopped.

But I wonder whether it will stop the type of firm that buys homes—we are talking not about land here but about ordinary homes—and sells them before the conveyancing takes place. I am thinking of groups such as Queen Street Realty and Peter Kurts. I accept that very often they provide the only opportunity available to some people to obtain houses. However, over all they have a negative effect on the economy and seem

to inflate the prices of homes. For example, they buy a home for \$12,000 and within three or four weeks, during which they claim they have improved it slightly, they raise the price to \$14,000. The result is naturally that other vendors in the neighbourhood suddenly want \$14,000 for their homes.

Furthermore, they use a financing system that is wrong. Some three weeks ago a young couple in Rockhampton were to buy a house on which originally the principal was \$13,000. By the time they had that home paid off, it would have cost them \$37,000. Their original equity in it would have been very small. When I argued with a certain person about this matter, he said, "The property will appreciate, so in later years at least they will be able to say that they own much more than their equity of \$13,000."

We need to do something not only in relation to land—that is what the Minister is catering for in this Bill—but also in relation to houses that are alleged to be sold by A to B in cases where the middle man who buys the house does not pay any money. No doubt, Mr. Speaker, you are aware of this practice. A simply sells a house to B, who immediately sells it to C. In such an instance no conveyancing takes place between A and B; the house simply passes from B to C. The middle person does not need to register his name. This problem needs to be overcome.

Getting back to the legislation—I am pleased to see that the control that the R.E.I.Q. had on the committee will be removed. That is the way I read the provision that names will be selected from a panel put forward by the Real Estate Institute of Queensland. This is worth while. People from the industry rather than from a certain group have a right to be represented on the committee. I am sure that not only the Q.L.R.E.A. but also the private real estate agents will be happy about this proposal.

I am very pleased to note that, when a member has been involved in defalcation of trust moneys, the committee is to have some power of suspension. That power is certainly required. Under English law an appeal provision is required and that also is covered.

I am pleased that we are legislating to cover house listers. I have had nothing but complaints from my own area and other parts of Queensland about firms which have said, "We will find houses; give us \$20 and we will give you a list of five homes." The people who have paid have found that the home listed either was never available for rental or was taken two or three weeks earlier, and they have not been able to obtain a refund.

While it is necessary that home listers be licensed as real estate agents, I hope that groups such as the University of Queensland Union, which provides a good service for its

own members, will not be affected. I am fairly sure that it is not licensed. I wonder if the Minister or his advisers could tell me if the new section 71A will prevent groups such as the students' union from carrying on this service. If it does, that is wrong. Such union bodies should be able to find homes for people attending universities and colleges of advanced education. Accommodation is one of the worst problems facing students. They are not worried by fees at the moment (although they may be after 13 December) and they find university and college life fairly easy, but they have serious difficulty in finding private accommodation.

Mr. Lindsay: And in paying union fees.

Mr. WRIGHT: There are such problems, but I am sure that students are a lot happier than they were a few years ago when the honourable member and I were studying at the university.

I ask the Minister to explain whether the new provision will prevent the students' union and other groups from helping people within their organisation. They engage in house-listing and in some instances, they charge a fee for doing so.

The Q.L.R.E.A. referred to the educational standard of people engaged in the industry. Nothing in the legislation relates to this. I hope that, in due course, we recognise the need to provide for this matter. People engaged in the real estate industry should know quite a lot about the law. It is not an occupation to be entered into lightly during a boom, but, unfortunately, many people did. As has been shown by those who failed in the industry in the past three or four years, many of them did not last long.

Over all, a number of major changes are to be effected. I expect some problems to arise. I am worried that too much litigation takes place between would-be purchasers and real estate agents. Money is lodged by way of deposit and the contract contains a clause relating to availability of finance. If finance is not available at a rate which the purchaser is happy to pay, he will go to the real estate agent and say that he does not wish to continue with the contract. But the real estate agent simply says, "You have to." That causes litigation. I have seen too much of it. I hope that something can be done to prevent it. It is only natural. If people sign a contract, naturally they should be bound by its terms, but surely we should ensure that people are not caught. Too many people have been caught in this way.

It is important that we clean up the problems relating to real estate, and I think that the legislation goes a fair way towards doing that. I, like many people in the industry, will be watching its operations closely.

I wonder how the multiple listing section will function when it has only a common law basis. That may cause some problems. I remember that, at one stage, the honourable member for Landsborough said that this would be met in the schedule. He may care to comment on what the Bill provides. The Opposition is happy with the legislation, over all, but, as I said, we will be watching its operations carefully.

Mr. LAMOND (Wynnum) (2.44 p.m.): In rising to speak to this measure that was brought before us on 4 December, I congratulate the Minister on his common-sense approach. We all recall the proposed legislation that was brought before the House on 27 April. It caused considerable uproar among the members. By allowing that legislation to lie on the table for this period, the Government gave honourable members an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the amendments and with the industry generally. I feel that the Minister's action in calling a seminar earlier this year was a very forward move. It has enabled him to come forward with very common-sense legislation. It has allowed him and his committee to get the feelings of those people in the industry who operate within the Act as well as other people who are affected by the industry. While the Minister has a great deal of experience in this section of his portfolio, I think he used the common-sense approach to government of going to the people to obtain their thoughts on this legislation.

Unethical behaviour by a minority is not peculiar to the real estate industry. We find in professions, industries or trades that there is always a section that will abuse the worth-while efforts and actions of the majority.

Mr. Lindsay: Even in politics.

Mr. LAMOND: The honourable member is quite correct. It applies even in politics.

It is generally said that groups who operate in such a way are unethical; but I feel that it should be known to the members of the House that institutes and associations of real estate agents, while they may differ in their approach or suggested methods of operation, all strive to achieve ethical conduct by their members. That they have in common. Ultimately, that results in an upgrading of the relationship between their members and the public and an upgrading of the industry generally.

Accepted methods of sale, whether by private treaty, by a system of conjunctional selling, which we refer to as multiple listing, or by auction, can be correctly controlled by sound legislation. The amendments to the Act allow for all of these methods of selling to be carried out, provided the agent is correctly appointed. The amendments to the Act give implied rights to the agent to obtain redress at common law if he feels

that the dealings between himself and his principal have not been satisfactorily concluded.

It should be noted by the House that most organisations—and I speak specifically of the Real Estate Institute of Queensland—have systems of arbitration which are controlled by a group of members of the institute. Having served as the chairman of the R.E.I.Q. arbitration committee for some time, I know that on all occasions when members are reported to the institute for unethical conduct or for actions which are not quite within what is regarded as acceptable in the calling, they are called before the committee to state the facts as they know them. If they are found to be at fault, they are dealt with quite harshly. I know that there are few agents who, when called before the committee and dealt with, have a desire to come before the committee again. Honourable members should be aware that the industry has within itself a system of correcting all or many of the problems that occur.

The Minister, in not proceeding with the removal of subparagraph 5 (a) from section 83 has, I feel, attended to this matter intelligently.

There are conditions under the contract of sale (prepared on the recommendations of the institute and the law society) that a deposit should remain intact—should not be distributed—for the entire period until such time as the transaction is completed or until such time as an authority is supplied by both parties. I feel this could be looked at to ensure that the deposit does remain intact.

The amendment of section 62 provides a general tidying up of the section that deals with the purchase by agents of properties listed with them. I see no great problems here, and I think that this is a satisfactory clause. In fact, I suggest to the Minister that he might go a little further and insist that, when an agent purchases a property that has been listed for sale with him, an independent valuer be employed to value the property. A copy of the valuation should then be made available to the vendor before an enforceable contract is prepared.

The clause that amends section 6 contains these words—

“The Committee shall consist of the Registrar and six other members appointed by Order in Council.”

I trust that in the selection of those members the Minister will seek the advice of the section of the industry that is well experienced in this field. I agree that it is good thinking not to mention any specific organisations in the legislation because, as we all know, with the passage of time specific organisations can fall by the way. I appeal to the Minister to turn to those who have had long experience in the industry and

to make use of their expertise before licences are granted to people who ultimately will operate in this industry.

In referring to the prohibition of sale of unregistered land, the Minister said that this prohibition will apply to subdivisions of more than five allotments. He also said that this provision will not be enforced until 1978. I know of a few cases, even during the boom period, where contracts of sale were correctly prepared and where there was the big problem of deposits being held by the vendors. I think that the sale of unregistered land in many cases allows the purchaser and subdivider to plan for the future, and I do not think there is anything wrong with a contract made between the parties at a time when the land is capable of being registered provided it is suitably prepared to include the terms of the sale, the various services to be provided and a clause under which the purchaser has the right to have his deposit refunded in full within a prescribed period. I feel that this section could be given close consideration. With his ability to produce sound legislation, the Minister could provide that contracts for the sale of this type of land protect both purchaser and vendor.

I congratulate the Minister on the new section 71A. Unfortunately, in the past, unethical people have set up offices, some of them quite sizeable, in various places and offered a service which in fact did not exist. As the Minister knows, many young people can ill afford to pay \$20 or \$25 for a list of properties for either rental or sale which in many cases do not exist. The Minister said that many such complaints were received.

The Bill is a general tidying up of many of the loose ends that there have been in the Act. As one who has been in the business of real estate for 25 years and worked under various Acts, I can say that in principle the Bill will give to those in the industry the right to operate, provided they have been correctly appointed, and the right to carry out their responsibilities to the public by effecting sales by private treaty, conjunctional selling or auction. I congratulate the Minister on his approach to the principle of this Bill and the procedure he adopted right from when the original Bill was introduced in April this year.

Mr. AHERN (Landsborough) (2.55 p.m.): I would not like the House to be given the impression that there is complete unanimity of opinion about the amendments before us at the moment. In fact, just a few months ago I received a deputation in my office made up of representatives of real estate agents in my electorate who operate generally on the Sunshine Coast. Not all of them are members of the Real Estate Institute of Queensland. The petition which was presented to me on that occasion had been signed by almost all of the agents in

my electorate. It indicated quite clearly their opposition to the amendments before the House at present, in particular the amendments to sections 43 and 70 of the Act.

The provisions relating to sole agency will be removed and the situation will return to that which applied before these sections were originally amended. So we are not specifically returning to the provisions of common law; we are returning to the situation which applied before the Act was amended to bring sole agency under the control of the Act. The opponents of the Bill are saying that there is nothing wrong with sole agency and that there is nothing wrong with multiple listing except that they believe it should operate under a contract and that common law should apply. I think that is contradictory because, as it was put to me, the common law provision that is now recited in the Bill as the way to resolve the conflict that arises from time to time means that it cannot work and means that it will involve expensive and often extensive litigation.

The fact that we saw fit to include sole agency in the Act endorsed it as a respectable means of agency and the remedy available in the Act was, I think, a really good provision. If it is agreed that sole agency is a good method, then I think we must agree that common law is not the best form of redress; it is expensive and often the litigation can be extensive and therefore many people do not have recourse to it.

I have not been in touch with the Real Estate Institute of Queensland about this problem so I do not know its attitude to the legislation, but I know what the attitude of my local real estate agents to it was. They felt that sole agency was a highly ethical form of behaviour. A person with a property to sell would enter into a contract with a reputable real estate agent, which meant that there was a ready form of redress in law in the event of a breach of contract by either party. Then the agent, confident of an easily accessible remedy if there should be a breach, could commit himself to a considerable expense on the staff and procedures necessary to ensure that he would be able to sell that property within a prescribed period. If he made a successful investment, he would be able to recover a fee for selling and from that fee he would easily be able to deduct the considerable expenses he had incurred without recourse to a common law action. It should be borne in mind that it was operating for years before the Minister chose to give it legislative approval. There was no easy means of redress, and it was not easy to sort out problems that arose. Agents who were confronted with breach of contract would throw up their hands rather than become involved in any action that might lead to the recovery of moneys lawfully owed.

In my opinion, there is a wide feeling of sorrow within the real estate industry generally that section 70, which deals with sole agency, is to be repealed. I am concerned that it will mean a return to the disorganisation of the past. Surely it is completely ethical for a person to enter into a contract with an agent knowingly—and I use that word advisedly—if he wishes to do so. If people had been entering into contracts unknowingly, surely it was not necessary to throw out the baby with the bath water. It was necessary only to alter the procedures to make certain that people knew they were entering into sole agency arrangements—new forms; if necessary, new cooling-off periods; new procedures to ensure that the vendors knew absolutely and beyond all doubt that they were entering into a sole agency arrangement, and that the words “sole agency” were loud and clear on every form that they had to sign. People could have been given an opportunity to back out, if necessary, after a cooling-off period of three, four or five days. The words “sole agency” could have been written across the form to be signed, and perhaps the form could even have been witnessed by an independent party. If these procedures were lacking in past legislation, that legislation should have been amended to ensure that people—the widows, the orphans and the others that have been mentioned—knew that they were signing a sole agency arrangement and could not deny that they knew. Instead, the entire provision is being thrown out, without any attempt being made to patch it up, and there will be a return to the situation that existed in earlier years.

I am still concerned that it will be necessary to bring this legislation back to this Chamber at some time in the future and say, “Sole agency practice is something that should be written into our law.” It should be easily redressable, and members of the public should be made aware that they are entering into a sole agency arrangement. They should be able to do so if they wish. On the other hand, they should be able to list a property with 100 agents if they wish.

The fact that the R.E.I.Q. seems to be lying down and saying, “This is inevitable” is, I believe, a comment on all of us, Mr. Speaker. In my opinion, there has been over-reaction to the wishes of a minority. On behalf of the real estate agents in my electorate, I say that I think in future it will be necessary for the Government to say, “This is not working in practice. Litigation is extensive and expensive. We must reintroduce the sole-agency provision.”

I wish now to make a few comments about the multiple listing bureau. Without any doubt, the bureau fulfilled a need in Queensland. The procedures followed by multiple listing bureaus under the Act were expensive, and some form of protection other than the law of contract was required. It was just not good enough. I do not believe that the

new provision will operate satisfactorily and give the necessary protection. I do not think it will make available a proper distribution of the commission. The multiple listing bureau now operating is not making a very great profit; in fact, I think it is barely paying its way. It can have the protection of the Act if it wants it.

Those are the comments I should like to make on behalf of the real estate agents in my area. They are almost unanimous. They do not want this legislation. It is here because of the majority view. I feel that we have over-reacted to the wishes of a few people in the industry who are almost not represented in my area.

Hon. W. E. KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (3.6 p.m.), in reply: I thank honourable members for their interest in the Bill. The honourable member for Rockhampton referred to the fact that some of the amendments were here as the result of further consideration. I might recall that the Bill originally was deferred at my request for further consideration, and quite a number of members opposed its reconsideration, including the honourable member for Rockhampton. I do not think there was any need for a division on that occasion; I think honourable members should have accepted my explanation that the matter would be further considered. I think that, as a result of the further consideration, the proposed legislation has been improved. I thank honourable members for their interest over that time and the contributions they have made.

The honourable member for Wynnum referred to the difficulties that we face with developers. We have accommodated them by the proposed amendments. Our knowledge, based on Victoria's experience over 12 years, indicates quite strongly that what was done in that State, which we are now virtually copying, has been beneficial to the industry and the purchasing public.

It is important that the changing period should have with it the least possible difficulties. I hope that, by our including the starting time of April 1978, the transition will be of the least possible inconvenience to all persons concerned. As the honourable member said, under the existing conditions nobody was really being hurt, but at the same time people were not seeing the land they were ultimately going to buy in the form in which they were going to own it.

The honourable member for Landsborough hinted at the possibility of a great deal of litigation. I disagree with him. I do not think there will be a great area of litigation. We have recognised in the legislation, as was the case prior to 1972, that people made agreements between themselves, and without the intention of going to court, and when problems arose they settled matters amicably among themselves—and

they will do so in future. There is not a great deal of litigation in other States where similar provisions exist. Because people have an onus shifted onto them, instead of their merely leaning on the Act, I am quite sure that when they enter into agreements they will know their obligations, and that will avoid the litigation that the honourable member fears might occur.

I am quite sure that the multiple listing bureau will continue to flourish. No doubt arrangements will be made here, as they have been successfully made in other States. Indeed, the multiple listing bureau provides a very valuable service to the community. There is nothing in our proposals that will hinder the continuance of that service.

Motion (Mr. Knox) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 to 28, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

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

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

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

“That this House, at its rising, do adjourn until 11 o'clock a.m. on a date to be fixed by Mr. Speaker in consultation with the Government of this State. Mr. Speaker shall, not less than seven days prior to the meeting date so fixed, give notification of such meeting date to each member of the House.”

Motion agreed to.

VALEDICTORY

Hon. Sir GORDON CHALK (Lockyer—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (3.12 p.m.): I move—

“That the House do now adjourn.”

This second session of the Forty-first Parliament has been one of the busiest on record. A large number of Bills have been presented—in fact more than 50 Bills have gone through all stages in the current legislative programme. I sincerely believe I am quite correct in saying that all of the matters involved relate to the progress of Queensland and the welfare of its citizens.

The importance of these issues was reflected in the high standard of debate from honourable members on both sides of the Chamber. We must remember that, in many aspects, this Parliament is a comparatively new one.

It was only this time last year that the Government was returned to office, and we saw quite a number of new faces in the Parliament. I believe that all honourable members have demonstrated their sincerity and their concern for the interests of this State, and this is good to see.

Because of the volume of legislation brought before the House, some pressure has fallen at times both on members and on the parliamentary staff, and I am not unmindful of the pressure on the latter. Nevertheless, thanks to the co-operation of everyone concerned, the tasks of the House were completed.

I extend my thanks to my Cabinet colleagues for the part they have played and the assistance they have rendered to the Premier and myself in all matters involving Cabinet responsibility. Thanks also are due to the Leader of the Opposition and other honourable members opposite for their contribution to the operations of this Assembly. It is true that the Opposition in this Parliament is small in number; it is equally true that there is therefore a greater responsibility on the Leader of the Opposition and those who surround him. Whilst I might not see eye to eye with them on some of the philosophies that are enunciated on that side of the Chamber, I regard the Opposition as a vital part of any Parliament. To Mr. Burns, Mr. Melloy and Mr. Houston—three members who have played a fairly active part in presenting the views of the Opposition—I say, “Thank you for the co-operation you gave both the Premier and me when we have made approaches to you on matters concerning the conduct of this Parliament.”

I join in the sincere concern expressed by other honourable members about the serious illness suffered by the honourable member for Port Curtis (Marty Hanson). Many honourable members on this side of the Chamber have had what might be termed political brushes with him, but each of us was shocked, firstly, at the suddenness of his illness and, secondly, at its seriousness. I know that Mrs. Hanson is very concerned. I am sure I voice the sincere wish of every honourable member when I say that I hope Marty is restored rapidly to good health and that he will come back to the Chamber full of vim and fight—as we have known him in the past.

Once again, appreciation is due to the Clerk of the Parliament (Mr. Cyril George) and his staff for their assistance and guidance. Because of your close association with the Clerk of the Parliament, Mr. Speaker, I know that you would agree with me that Parliament could not function without his guidance and that of the staff associated with him. I thank Mr. George and his officers for their help during this session.

The Government also extends its thanks to the Chief Parliamentary Reporter (Mr. McCarthy) and to the Hansard staff who

record our debates. I have been in this Parliament for 29 years and have heard and made many speeches. Reading them later in "Hansard", I have always marvelled at their clarity and smoothness. I am sure that all honourable members, particularly the newly elected ones, appreciate the part that our Hansard staff play in polishing, as it were, speeches to give a true indication of our thoughts and a clear record that can be read and fully understood by our constituents and the people of Queensland generally.

Mr. Murray: They make much better speeches than any of us.

Sir GORDON CHALK: The honourable member is quite right. I fully agree with that statement.

I commend the busy, behind-the-scenes team headed by the former Parliamentary Counsel (Mr. O'Callaghan), which has done a fine job during this session; in the same context, I mention Mr. Murray. Ministers of the Crown have certain responsibilities in presenting draft legislation to the Government parties. It is only through the sincere co-operation and the long hours of work of the Parliamentary Counsel that Bills can be prepared and presented to the Chamber. I express my appreciation and that of all Cabinet Ministers and Parliament generally to the Parliamentary Counsel and his staff.

I thank the Parliamentary Librarian and his staff, the members of the typing pool, Miss Glennie and her Refreshment Rooms staff, and the messengers headed by John Fisher. I should be remiss if I did not refer particularly to John Fisher. Irrespective of the side of the House from which we come and irrespective of our problems, we would all say, I am sure, that John Fisher has always been a most efficient officer. I pay him high tribute.

We are grateful to members of the Police Force for the security of these premises. I shall not become involved in any discussion on security, but members of Parliament need certain protection. I know that all of us, when approaching or leaving the House, go through some of the difficulties of being spoken to by members of the public. We have problems also with telephone calls and so on. However, all of us have at all times received what I might call the co-operation of the Police Force. I would ask my ministerial colleague Mr. Hodges, who is in charge of the Police Force, to convey my thoughts to the Commissioner, Mr. Whitrod.

We are all appreciative of the efforts of members of the Press gallery, who are responsible for bringing the proceedings of the House to the notice of the public. Perhaps many good speeches are delivered that never see the light of day in the Press. On the other hand, incidents that take place here sometimes find their way into the Press

and one wonders why. Generally speaking, though, Parliament could not function—it could not carry out its responsibilities—if it were not for the fact that it has the Press to report its proceedings to the public, to provide the public with an indication of what its parliamentarians are doing and the part that Parliament is playing in legislating for the welfare of the State.

Finally, I take this opportunity to extend the compliments of the season to you, Mr. Speaker, to all honourable members and to the staff of the House. As I said, it has been a busy session—one that has not been without its problems—but nevertheless I believe that as parliamentarians we have played our part and have fulfilled the responsibilities that we were elected to carry out. As we approach the festive season, I extend to all members, to their wives and families and all others who are closely associated with them seasonal greetings and the wish that 1976 will be a year of good will and, above all, prosperity to this State and the Commonwealth of Australia.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. BURNS: (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (3.22 p.m.): I join members of the Opposition with the remarks of the caretaker Premier, if I might call him that, on this occasion.

Mr. Knox: Be careful to wear that vest back to front.

Mr. BURNS: Considering the way the Premier has been acting, I thought that perhaps the question asked this morning was phrased incorrectly. Perhaps that danger is more real on Government benches than on ours.

It is pleasing to be involved with a motion that thanks all the people who have been so very kind to us over the year. This Parliament could not operate—and we as politicians could not operate—without the assistance of the many hundreds of people who make up the staff of Parliament House and the staff of the Government of Queensland. Whether we like it or not, it finally falls to someone else to carry out the requests that we forward on behalf of our constituents. We are very, very lucky to have the support of thousands of loyal people—not only those in the Government service itself who work for us and support us over the years, but also those very many people who support us in politics. It is a wonderful thing. I appreciate the opportunity to say "Thank you" and place it on record.

I listened to what the Deputy Premier had to say about the staff at Parliament House. When we look around, we can see many hundreds who help throughout the year. I think of the Library, the typists, Miss Glennie and the girls in the Refreshment

Rooms, the clerks, the messengers, the gardeners, the drivers, the cleaners, the guards and the maintenance staff. Whenever we walk around Parliament House we are always met with cheerful smiles. The staff respond to requests from 82 members and a lot of other people on occasions, and I suppose there must be the day when they feel that they all ought to snarl back; but they do not, and I think that is wonderful. As we come in of a morning, the ladies who polish the floors always say "Good morning" in a nice, friendly way. If one happens to have got out of bed on the wrong side, one at least feels a little warmed by their greeting. I appreciate it. There are times when I do not feel like smiling at anyone or passing a kind word; yet they always seem to be able to have it available and ready for each and every one of us, irrespective of politics.

A Government Member interjected.

Mr. BURNS: I don't get out of bed on the wrong side. I very rarely go to bed. I am too busy these days.

I turn now to Baxter McCarthy and the members of the "Hansard" staff. I heard the Deputy Premier, or caretaker Premier, talking about the way they record speeches. Sometimes a speech by Bob Moore reads like one by Bob Menzies. That shows what a wonderful job the "Hansard" staff does on our behalf. I am not having a go at Bob Moore when I say that!

One of the most remarkable things is to come to work in the morning and find reams of paper that have been churned out overnight for us to read. I refer here not only to the "Hansard" staff but also to the printers who have, overnight, been able to provide us with pulls of what happened in Parliament the previous day. Theirs is a very hard task done under constant pressure of time, and I think in turning out their work they do a remarkable job.

I also give my thanks to the Press and particularly today to Keith Fryday, who is retiring. We do not always say that we have received a fair deal in Press coverage, but I do not think that anyone blames the working journalists, who, like the rest of us, have a job to do and who do their best. They write their stories, and if they do not appear in the Press it is not their fault. At times we might get grumpy about the Press, but we should never take it out on the working journalist himself.

To the officers of Parliament—the Clerk of the Parliament, the messengers, the girls on the switchboard and all of the others who look after us here—I say on behalf of the Opposition, "Thank you very much" for what you have done for us this year.

Mention was made of Marty Hanson. I tried to see him just the other day. Unfortunately he is still on the dangerously ill

list, but Mrs. Hanson is very pleased with his progress. She felt that in the last day or two he has shown sufficient progress for them to have more hope than they had previously. He is not allowed visitors, but it is said that he listens to his family when they talk to him, and I am sure he is pleased with all the messages that we have tried to pass on to him from those in Parliament who are his friends, irrespective of their politics.

He has been very kind and loyal to me and to all of his fellow members. If one sees him in the Parliamentary Refreshment Rooms or the Parliamentary Library, one cannot help noticing how well he mixes with people. He has never been one to stand off from others and he has always been very kind. I am sure that we all concur in the hope expressed by the Deputy Premier that he will be back with us. We hope that he recovers quickly. It has been a very difficult time for Mrs. Hanson and her family—even a wedding had to be cancelled because of Marty's illness—and I hope that things turn out much better than at one time seemed likely. I thank Sir Gordon for what he said about Marty, because we all miss him very much. He is a good worker and a very good mate.

To the members of the Parliamentary Labor Party I say, "Thank you." I could almost mention my 10 colleagues, but if I referred to Jack Melloy, Evan Marginson, the Whip and the secretary there would not be many left! They have all worked very, very hard. I think all members will agree that in a Parliament of 82 it is very difficult for an Opposition of 11 to at least hold its own and to take part in every debate. They have all worked tremendously hard and I appreciate the efforts they have made. I think that they deserve our congratulations.

I should also like to mention my own staff—Annette, Maree, Deidre, Morry Meadows, Jack Stanaway and Malcolm McMillan—and to convey to them my personal appreciation of their efforts on my behalf.

To you, Mr. Speaker, I say, "Thanks." Although I have not always agreed with your rulings, I must say that you add that dignity and decorum that we need so much. We must all respect the institution of Parliament itself because that is the only way in which Parliament will work.

To the Chairman of Committees and the Temporary Chairmen I say that we have appreciated the way in which you have handled proceedings and given us a fair go. We thank you very much for that.

To honourable members of all political persuasions I give my best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. I hope that good health sticks with you and that you are all here next year. I should hate to think that we would have to hold a by-election as the

result of the death of one of our colleagues. I should like to think that we will all finish our three-year term so that at the end of that period we can fight elections on a political basis as we expect to do at those times.

Good luck, good health, a happy and prosperous Christmas and New Year to all from members of the Opposition.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable members: Like Lady Godiva, I have come to my "close"! I should like to say that I appreciate the assistance that I have received from Ministers, the Leader of the Opposition and all members of Parliament in the conduct of the operations of Parliament.

I am quite sure we all agree that having a Minister in charge of the House has made the job much easier than it was in the past. I feel it has been a move in the right direction and I would like to offer the Minister my personal congratulations.

I would also like to offer my personal congratulations to the Chairman of Committees and his panel for the assistance they have given during the session. I am quite sure Parliament has worked very harmoniously because of that assistance.

I also offer my thanks and appreciation for the co-operation of the Clerk of the Parliament and his staff, the Hansard staff, the Parliamentary Library and the Refreshment Rooms and all the other parliamentary staff, the reporters and the other

people who have been mentioned, because I feel that without their co-operation we could not function efficiently and would not get anywhere. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his co-operation. I thank the Whips particularly. They have made my job much easier than it has been in the past and I am quite sure we all appreciate that. I feel sure that the co-operation will continue.

I also join with honourable members in expressing my very best wishes to Marty Hanson for a speedy recovery. I hope it will not be long before he resumes his seat in this Parliament, because Marty is one of the flock to us. I would like to see him back fully recovered so I can have the opportunity of throwing him out. Marty has been a stalwart for many, many years. I feel sure that I express the wish of every honourable member when I wish him a speedy recovery and I hope sincerely that this will be forthcoming.

Without further ado I offer all honourable members my sincere thanks and appreciation. I wish you and yours a merry and bright Christmas and a happy, bright and prosperous New Year and may 1976 be everything that we all wish for.

Motion (Sir Gordon Chalk) agreed to.

The House adjourned at 3.33 p.m.
